

6 WORLD

8 NATION

- PM Sharif says Hormuz to reopen instantly
- Taiwan needs US weapons for self-defense as threat from China grows, diplomat tells AP
- Vijay-led TVK regime sticks to policy of Dravidian parties on key issues
- BJP minister Mahajan, Sanjay Raut exchange sharp words over Shiv Sena (UBT) crisis

Doctor-turned politician represents the aspirations of our tribal communities: Himanta Habbey Teron to be NDA candidate for Dy Speaker's post

HT Bureau
DIPHU, June 18: In a significant political development for Assam's hill districts, Amri MLA Dr Habbey Teron has been nominated as the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) candidate for the post of Deputy Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced the decision on Thursday through a post on social media platform X and expressed confidence in the first-time legislator.

"I am pleased to announce that Dr Habbey Teron, Hon'ble MLA from Amri (ST) Hills, will be our candidate for the post of Deputy Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly. A medical professional by training and the first elected representative from the newly created Amri constituency, Dr Teron represents the aspirations of our tribal communities and will further



strengthen the voice of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao in the legislative process. I extend my best wishes to Dr Teron," the Chief Minister wrote.

Dr Teron's nomination marks a significant milestone for the hill districts. A medical practitioner by profession, he hails from Amri in West

Karbi Anglong, a region known for its remote terrain and border areas adjoining Meghalaya.

Born in 1975 to ex-serviceman Lindok Teron, he completed his MBBS from Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh, in 2008 before entering public life.

Dr Teron was elected from Amri Assembly constituency in the last Assembly elections.

He defeated independent candidate Bikram Hansa by a margin of 23,910 votes, securing 50,273 votes.

His nomination for the Deputy Speaker's post is being seen as a move by the NDA to enhance representation from Assam's tribal hill regions in the state's legislative leadership.

The assembly's budget session begins on July 6.

Veteran BJP leader Ranjeet Kumar Dass was elected the Speaker (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Memo demands Assembly resolution on talks

ASDC stages demo, seeks tripartite dialogue on Article 244(A)

Staff Reporter
DIPHU, June 18: The Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) on Thursday staged a massive sit-in demonstration demanding tripartite talks involving the Centre, the Assam government and local stakeholders for the implementation of Article 244(A) of the Constitution and the creation of an Autonomous State comprising Assam's three hill districts.

Along with the ASDC, other frontal organisations — the Karbi Nismo Chingthang Asong (KNCA), the Karbi Students' Association (KSA, Jemson Timung faction) and the ASDC Youth Front (ASDCYF) — also participated in the demonstration.

The protest, held in front of the Old Khorsing Terang Memorial Park, drew a large number of members and supporters who travelled from various parts of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts.

Addressing the gathering, ASDC president Sonasing Terang said Arti-

cle 244(A), inserted through the 22nd Constitutional Amendment in 1969, explicitly provides for the creation of an autonomous state within Assam.

He lamented that despite this constitutional provision successive Central governments have failed to implement it despite 41 years of sustained agitation.

"On July 11, 2025, representatives of the ASDC, KNCA and KSA met Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma at Dispur, where he agreed to facilitate tripartite talks. Later, on March 13 last, the state government provided a written assurance that official talks would resume immediately after the Assembly elections. We fully expect the government to honour this commitment," Terang said.

ASDC general secretary Jotson Bey raised concerns over the non-implementation of past accords, particularly the 1995 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with the ASDC and the 2011 Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) signed with the United People's Democratic Sol-

idarity (UPDS).

Meanwhile, ASDC assistant general secretary Daniel Teron voiced strong opposition to Clauses 5.1(a) and 5.1(b) of the MoS signed between Kuki insurgent groups and the government, which propose the creation of two new Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) seats in the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and four in the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council.

Teron further argued that the Sixth Schedule does not permit community-specific reservation of seats and demanded that the clauses be scrapped.

KNCA president Maikon Rongpharpi and other leaders also criticised the KAAC Chief Executive Member (CEM), stating that despite the BJP being in power at the Centre, in the state and in the council, the demand for an autonomous state remains unfulfilled. The demonstration concluded with the submission of a joint (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Karbi Anglong witnesses rapid progress under Modi govt: Tuliram Ronghang

Staff Reporter
DIPHU, June 18: Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member (CEM) and Ronghang MLA Dr Tuliram Ronghang on Thursday said the Modi government's 12-year tenure has been marked by trust, development and public welfare, with special emphasis on women's empowerment, farmers' welfare and the upliftment of weaker sections.

Speaking at a Jan Kalyan Shivir organised to mark the observance of "12 Years of Trust, Development & Public Welfare" at the Sarsing Teron Langkung Habe Memorial Town Hall in Diphu, Dr Ronghang said Karbi Anglong has witnessed rapid progress owing to the support and initiatives of the Central Government.

"The establishment of lasting peace in the region through the intervention of the Government of

India has created a conducive atmosphere for development. A new work culture, peace and a development-oriented environment have emerged in Karbi Anglong," he said.

He further reiterated that the all-round development of every community residing in the district remains the foremost priority of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.

The programme was attended by MP Amarsing Tisso, MLAs Niso Terangpi and Dr Habbey Teron, KAAC Executive Member

Richard Tokbi, KAAC Deputy Chairman Abhijit Kro, Deputy Commissioner Aranyak Saikia and several members of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.

Speaking on the occasion, an Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM) beneficiary shared her experience and said government (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Controversy over covering Zubeen Garg's mural with paint in Guwahati



GUWAHATI, June 18: A mural of popular singer Zubeen Garg in Ganeshguri area of the city was covered with paint by the authorities as part of the beautification plan ahead of the proposed visit of Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takachi.

However, following widespread criticism from the family and fans of Garg, who died by drowning in the sea in Singapore in September last year, it was decided that the picture

would be painted again.

The mural, titled 'Comrade do not die,' was painted by graffiti artist Marshall Baruah below the Ganeshguri flyover, and it was allegedly covered with paint by the Gauhati Municipal Corporation (GMC).

Garg's wife Garima Saikia Garg questioned the removal of the painting in a Facebook post, asking whether the singer's image had

made the city look "unclean or was it not necessary".

She said that she was not angry or resentful about the removal, as emotional connections and bonding matter more but wondered whether wiping his image made the city look more beautiful.

"Zubeen is 'immortal' and will continue to live on in the minds, hearts and conscience of the people, irrespective of whether the mural is there or not," she added.

The artist and hordes of Zubeen's fans reached the venue in the evening, with Baruah asserting that he will again paint his image on the wall.

He claimed that the police prevented him from painting again and told him that he could do so after July 3. The Japanese Prime Minister is likely to visit Guwahati in early July.

A tense situation prevailed at the venue as fans raised slogans of 'Jai Zubeen-da' and urged the artist to paint his image again. A discussion followed, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

CM holds review meeting with officials of education department



GUWAHATI, June 18: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday held a meeting with officials of the education department and discussed a host of issues, including budgetary provisions and implementation of schemes. Officials from the finance department were also present at the meeting chaired by the CM. "HCM Dr @himantabiswa today chaired a review meeting with the Education Department on School, Secondary, Higher and

Technical Education, along with officials from the Finance Department," according to a social media post by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO).

Sarma also reviewed the budgetary provisions across all education sectors.

He discussed the implementation status of Nijut Moina and Nijut Babu schemes, distribution of free scooters, bicycles and textbooks and the progress of the free admission scheme, it said.

Sarma also reviewed the progress of schemes at Government Model Colleges and Tea Garden Model Schools.

Teacher recruitment drives across categories, strategies to reduce dropouts in higher education, creation of new posts and upgradation of high schools to the higher secondary level were also discussed at the meeting, it said. The chief minister directed all departments to ensure timely execution and effective implementation of ongoing initiatives. (PTI)

Laitluangkima becomes ZPM's first Rajya Sabha MP

AIZAWL, June 18: Mizoram's ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) on Thursday secured its first-ever representation in the Rajya Sabha as party leader K Laitluangkima won the election to the lone Upper House seat from the state.

Laitluangkima secured 26 of the 36 votes polled, defeating Zothansangi Hmar of the opposition Mizo National Front (MNF), who received all 10 votes cast by her party's legislators, according to Assembly Secretary and Returning Officer Zothansanga Ralte.

Three legislators abstained from voting, including BJP MLAs K Beichhua and K Hrahmo, as well as lone Congress legislator C Ngunlianchunga.

ZPM legislator W Chhuanawh was unable to vote due to health reasons, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Pradhan reviews preparedness for NEET-UG re-exam

NEW DELHI, June 18: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan chaired a high-level review meeting on Thursday with senior officials from the Ministry of Education, state governments, the National Testing Agency (NTA) and higher education institutions to assess preparedness for the NEET-UG re-examination scheduled for June 21.

The NEET-UG for admissions into medical courses took place on May 3 this year but the NTA cancelled it on May 12 amid allegations of a paper leak. The CBI is currently investigating this matter.

Addressing the meeting, Pradhan emphasised the importance of maintaining the "highest standards of integrity, transparency and efficiency" in the examination process and di-

rected all concerned authorities to remain vigilant and fully prepared for the free and fair conduct of the re-examination.

The minister said officers designated by the ministry would reach all states to coordinate activities related to the re-examination process and report to the command centre headed by the NTA Director General.

Pradhan also asked designated nodal officers of state governments to ensure that students were provided all necessary facilities to enable them to appear for the re-examination in a stress-free environment.

School Education and Literacy secretary Sanjay Kumar, Higher Education secretary Vineet Joshi and NTA director general Abhishek

Singh, among others, attended the meeting.

Kumar requested the state governments' nodal officers to ensure they took adequate steps regarding re-examination preparations.

Joshi said the time between now and the re-examination date was crucial and stressed the need for proactive coordination, timely dissemination of instructions and strict compliance with all prescribed protocols.

The NTA Director General said the NTA is working with all concerned stakeholders, including the district-level coordination committees headed by the District Magistrates, state police departments and intelligence agencies, to ensure the re-examination is conducted smoothly. (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Four of five glacial lakes in Arunachal basin expanded between 2016 and 2026: Study

NEW DELHI, June 18: Four out of five potentially dangerous glacial lakes located at Mago Chu Basin in Arunachal Pradesh's Tangang district expanded in size between 2016 and 2026, according to a satellite-based assessment released on Thursday.

Glacial lakes result by melting glaciers. Sudden releases of water from these lakes can trigger floods in downstream areas, a phenomenon known as glacial lake outburst (GLOFs).

While GLOFs have occurred since the ice age, scientists say the risk has increased significantly due to rising global temperatures and accelerated glacier melt.

The assessment, conducted by Noida-based geospatial intelligence firm Suhora Technologies,

found that one of the lakes -- Sanhappo Lake -- showed particularly notable expansion during the study period.

According to the analysis, the lake's area increased from 55.87 hectares (ha) in 2016 to 87.02 ha in 2026, before expanding further to 88.81 ha by June 15, 2026.

The report noted that the expansion of glacial lakes does not, by itself, indicate an imminent flood event. However, it reflects a general trend of glacial retreat and increasing meltwater accumulation.

As glacier lakes grow larger, they can become more dangerous because they are mostly dammed by unstable ice or sediment composed of loose rock and debris.

The boundary around a glacier lake can (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Drugs worth ₹ 14.5 cr seized, 7 arrested



GUWAHATI, June 18: Drugs valued at ₹ 14.5 crore have been seized and seven persons arrested from two districts of Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Thursday.

The drugs were seized from Sribhumi and Nagaon districts in a series of operations, the chief minister said in a social media post.

"Our war against drugs is absolute and unyielding. In a series of successful operations, @sribhupolice and @nagaonpolice seized narcotics worth ₹ 14.5 crore," (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

ICG inducts indigenously constructed hovercraft, bolsters maritime capabilities

NEW DELHI, June 18: The first of the six hovercraft being built by a firm for the Indian Coast Guard, which aims to enhance ICG's operational effectiveness across a broad spectrum of maritime duties and reinforce its ability to respond to emerging challenges, was inducted into service on Thursday, officials said.

The air cushion vehicle has been designed and constructed in India and reflects the growing strength of the nation's maritime industrial base, they said.

In a significant milestone towards strengthening the ICG's capabilities and advancing the national vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, the first indigenously constructed air cushion vehicle (ACV), H-561, was inducted into service on June 18 at Chowgule & Company Private Limited, Goa, the force said.

"The hovercraft aims to enhance ICG's operational effectiveness across a broad spectrum of maritime duties and reinforce its ability to respond to emerging challenges. Its induction would further the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat and serve as a reflection of the growing strength of the maritime industrial base of the country," it said.

The induction ceremony was held at the

shipyard's Rassaim facility in the presence of senior officials of the ICG and representatives from the shipbuilding industry.

The occasion marks the successful culmination of sustained efforts by multiple stakeholders towards enhancing indigenous defence manufacturing capabilities and fostering self-reliance in critical maritime platforms.

The project represents an important step in promoting indigenous innovation, strengthening domestic shipbuilding expertise and supporting the government's commitment towards building a resilient and self-sufficient defence ecosystem, the officials said.

The induction of the ACV into the ICG fleet underscores the organisation's continued focus on modernisation and capability enhancement in support of its mandate to safeguard the nation's maritime interests, the officials said.

"The vessel will contribute to the operational effectiveness across a broad spectrum of maritime duties and reinforce its ability to respond to emerging challenges in the maritime domain," the ICG said.

The occasion also highlights the close collaboration between the ICG, the defence ministry and India's (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

'Most membranes inside cells are made of a double-layer structure called a bilayer' IIT Bombay study identifies safer pathway to tackle cholesterol, fatty liver

MUMBAI, June 18: Researchers from IIT Bombay and partner institutes have discovered a cellular mechanism that reduces the liver's release of harmful blood lipids without triggering fat accumulation, opening a potential new avenue for treating cholesterol, triglyceride and fatty liver disorders.

The mechanism can interrupt VLDL (very low-density lipoproteins) release from the liver by targeting the physical movement of lipid droplets instead of enzymes, receptors, or genes traditionally used for lowering lipids in the bloodstream, said the researchers.

IIT Bombay researchers collaborated with the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Pune and IISER Kolkata for this study.

Interrupting this cellular mechanism does not cause lipid buildup in the liver - a critical safety advantage for future drug development, said the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay.

The findings open a potential new avenue for treating disorders such as



high cholesterol and high triglycerides, as well as conditions like fatty liver disease, it said.

Professor Roop Mallik's laboratory at the Department of Biosciences and Bioengineering at the IIT Bombay has been studying this lipid-transport process for more than a decade.

"Earlier work from our group

showed that the motor protein kinesin-1 specifically drives lipid droplets towards the edge of the cell where VLDLs are assembled and released in the bloodstream," explained Prof. Mallik, who led the research.

The breakthrough came when Prof Mallik's team discovered earlier that the tail region (amino acids present at

the end region of a protein sequence) of the kinesin-1 protein disrupted the positioning of lipid droplets in liver cells without affecting other cell organelles.

Researchers found that this difference is rooted in the structural features of the organelles, which are specialised structures inside a cell that perform specific functions, much like organs do in the human body.

"Most membranes inside cells are made of a double-layer structure called a bilayer. But lipid droplets are unique because they are surrounded by a single-layer membrane, called a monolayer," Dr Archisman Mahapatra, co-first author of the study, explained.

Building on this foundation, Prof Mallik's team identified a short peptide (a short chain of amino acids) called KTDP, derived from the tail region of kinesin-1, to selectively block the protein from attaching to lipid droplets.

Working with Prof Neelanjana Sengupta's lab at IISER Kolkata, the researchers (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

India to allow import of 3.78 lakh UK cars at concessional duty in first 15 years of trade pact

NEW DELHI, June 18: India will allow the import of 3.78 lakh units of conventional-engine passenger cars, including those in the mass segment, from the UK at concessional customs duty during the first 15 years of the implementation of the trade pact between the two countries.

Under the pact, tariffs on automotive imports will fall from about 110 per cent to 10 per cent, with quotas on both sides.

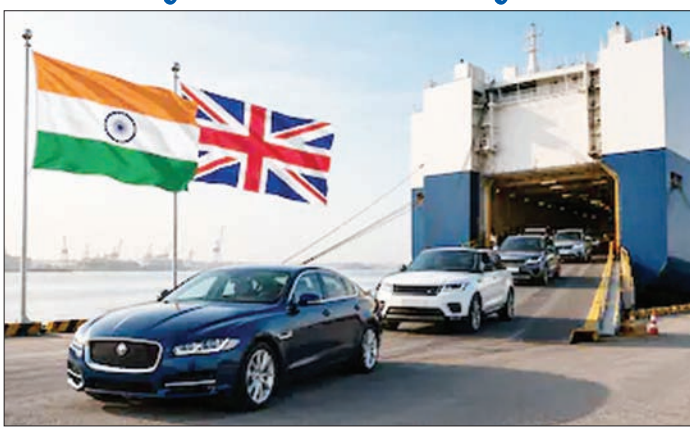
According to the India-UK CETA document, released on Wednesday, India will get access to the UK's electric, hybrid/hydrogen passenger cars segment with duty-free exports to that country from the sixth year in the price segment ranging from GBP 20,000 to GBP 80,000, with the total quota reaching a peak of 88,000 units from the 15th year and continuing in the subsequent years.

This will benefit Indian manufacturers such as Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Mahindra & Mahindra, and Maruti Suzuki, among others.

Commenting on the pact, Rahul Bharti, Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Affairs, Maruti Suzuki, said: "We believe India has the competitiveness to welcome liberalisation and use it for export opportunities."

"We have already started exporting eVITARA to Europe, with about 36,000 units already exported within 9 months of the launch, and the UK being the top market. Therefore, we believe this FTA will be positive for Make in India for the world," he said.

A spokesperson of Tata Motors



Passenger Vehicles said, "The India-UK FTA is a positive step towards deepening bilateral trade and advancing sustainable mobility. The phased, quota-based framework creates a calibrated pathway for opening new export opportunities for Indian-made EVs in the UK while supporting long-term competitiveness of the domestic industry."

The two countries announced the implementation of the comprehensive trade and economic partnership agreement (CETA) from July 15.

For imports from the UK to India, the quota for conventional-engine passenger cars will peak in the fifth year across specified categories of vehicles at 37,000 units, with customs duties reduction reaching a final 10 per cent. The duties will not be reduced beyond this.

In the first year, the quota for passenger cars of engine size more than 3,000 cc (petrol) and over 2,500 cc (diesel) is 10,000 units, with customs duty being re-

duced to 30 per cent from 110 per cent.

For cars with engine size of 1,500 cc (petrol), 2500 cc (diesel) and 3,000 cc (petrol), the quota is 5,000 units, with duty being reduced to 50 per cent from 66 per cent.

In the mass market segment of engine size of up to 1,500 cc, the allowed quota of import in the first year of the pact is 5,000 units, with customs duty being reduced to 50 per cent from 66 per cent, as per the document.

A total of 20,000 units of passenger cars across the three categories will be allowed to be imported in the first year under the agreement.

In the fifth year, the import quota for passenger cars of engine size more than 3,000 cc (petrol) and over 2,500 cc (diesel) is 19,000 units, while for cars with engine size of 1,500 cc (petrol), 2,500 cc (diesel) and 3,000 cc (petrol), the import quota is capped at 9,000 units, and a similar quota is fixed for cars with en-

gine size of up to 1,500 cc at 10 per cent concessional duty.

From the 15th year, the total quota will remain constant at 15,000 units annually with duties fixed at 10 per cent across the three categories.

India has not opened its market for vehicles priced below GBP 40,000 (CIF), ensuring complete protection for the mass-market EV segment in which India seeks global leadership through its homegrown firms like Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra, besides Maruti Suzuki.

In the first five years, India has not given any concessions for electric/hybrid/hydrogen-passenger cars, but from the 6th year, such vehicles priced between GBP 40,000 CIF to GBP 80,000 CIF (inclusive), the duties will be reduced to 50 per cent with a quota size of 400 units, while for those vehicles priced above GBP 80,000 CIF, the duties will be lowered to 40 per cent with an import limit of 4,000 units.

In the tenth year, the customs duty will stabilise at 10 per cent for the two price segments of electric/hybrid/hydrogen-passenger cars.

It added that, notwithstanding anything provided in this pact, zero-emission vehicles (electric or hydrogen fuel vehicles), which are two-wheeled vehicles, buses or trucks, are excluded from any commitment or obligation to reduce or eliminate. Customs duty on a good and no preferential customs duty concessions shall be implemented by India on that good under this agreement. (PTI)

North East India GSTAT Bar Association formally constituted, opens membership

Professional body launches membership drive to strengthen GST appellate practice and Bench-Bar collaboration in the Northeast

GUWAHATI, June 18: The North East India GSTAT Bar Association has formally announced its constitution and the launch of membership applications during an interaction programme with members of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT), Guwahati Bench.

The association, registered under the Societies Act, has been formed for professionals engaged in GST practice and those aspiring to appear before the GST Appellate Tribunal. Headquartered in Guwahati, the body will operate across the northeastern states, excluding Sikkim.

The interaction programme was attended by members of the association and was graced by Somnath Ganguli, Vice President and Judicial Member of the GSTAT, Guwahati Bench, and

Jogirnanjan Panigrahi, Technical Member of the tribunal.

The programme commenced with a welcome address by Honorary Joint Secretary CA Dr Ayush Saraf. The executive members of the association were introduced during the meeting, following which Honorary Secretary CA Raginee Goyal outlined the objectives of the newly formed body.

Goyal said the association aims to contribute to the development of GST jurisprudence, promote professional excellence among practitioners and strengthen constructive engagement between the Bar and the Bench.

Addressing the gathering, Somnath Ganguli highlighted the importance of an effective appellate mechanism under the GST framework and appreciated the initiative taken by professionals in establishing the association.

Jogirnanjan Panigrahi shared his perspectives on the functioning of the tribunal and emphasised the significance of cooperation between the Bench and the Bar in ensuring efficient adjudication and disposal of cases.

The programme concluded with an interactive session during which members exchanged views on issues relating to GST litigation and appellate practice.

A vote of thanks was delivered by Honorary Treasurer CA Manoj Nahata.

The association expressed gratitude to the members of the GSTAT, Guwahati Bench, and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the growth and effective functioning of the GST appellate system across the northeastern region.

India-UK social security pact to benefit 90-95 pc of Indian professionals working in Britain

NEW DELHI, June 18:

About 90-95 per cent of Indian professionals employed by Indian companies operating in the UK would benefit from the social security agreement between the two countries, a move that will reduce costs for firms and enhance the competitiveness of Indian service providers in the British market, an official said.

The two countries, on June 17, announced that the Agreement on Social Security or the Double Contribution Convention (DCC) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) will come into effect on July 15.

The DCC will give a major boost to IT majors like Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys.

Professionals of Indian-origin contribute about USD 0.5 billion each year to the UK so-

cial security. Under the DCC, employees temporarily transferred by companies from India to the UK, or vice versa, will be exempt from making social security contributions in the host country for up to five years.

It was a key demand of India. Around 75,000 Indian professionals are working in Britain, while over 900 Indian firms have operations there. The average annual salary of a professional in the UK is estimated at GBP 40,000-50,000.

According to estimates, about 15 per cent of the salary is paid towards social security contributions. Normally, a professional becomes eligible for social security benefits in the UK after around 10 years of service.

"If an employer is contributing in India for the social security of the employee, they do not have to pay in the UK. For that, they have to share a certificate of coverage. From July 15, Indian employers can start enjoying this exemption," the official said.

However, the exemption is not available for Indians working for other foreign companies in Britain.

The agreement will support mobility and continued social security coverage of the employees on temporary over-

seas assignments. This will enhance India-UK partnerships in the service sector, leveraging the high skills and innovative service sectors of both countries.

The announcement is important as the UK is the second-largest export market for the USD 283-billion Indian IT industry, and contributes 17 per cent to its export basket.

India's services exports to the UK stood at USD 21.6 billion in 2024, while imports were USD 13.7 billion.

Meanwhile, UK Business and Trade Secretary Peter Kyle, in a statement, said trade is going to be cheaper, quicker, and easier for businesses on both sides.

"We have extended the benefit for UK nationals moving to India to work and continue to build entitlement to a UK State Pension from 36 months to 60 months. They will continue to pay National Insurance Contributions during that period, without also having to pay social security contributions in India," he said.

This is reciprocal for both British and Indian professionals and will be applicable to highly skilled professionals on pre-existing visa routes.

This is in line with the UK's arrangements with other countries such as Korea, Japan, and Canada.

Kyle said that this will

ICICI Prudential Life launches ULIP with guaranteed maturity benefit

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 18: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched ICICI Pru Signature Secure, a Unit Linked Insurance Plan (ULIP) featuring an in-built guaranteed maturity benefit, which the company describes as a first-of-its-kind offering in the Indian life insurance sector.

The product, a non-participating linked individual savings life insurance plan, has been designed for customers seeking tax-efficient wealth creation along with the assurance of guaranteed benefits and life insurance protection.

Under the plan, customers make a one-time investment and remain covered through life insurance during

the policy term.

At the end of the five-year term, policyholders receive the higher of the fund value or the guaranteed maturity benefit, providing protection against market volatility while retaining the potential for market-linked growth.

Illustrating the product structure, the company stated that a 45-year-old customer investing ₹5 lakh can opt for a life cover of ₹6.25 lakh and receive a guaranteed maturity benefit of ₹7 lakh at the end of the policy term.

Commenting on the launch, Vikas Gupta, Chief Product Officer of ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said customers traditionally seeking guaranteed returns have relied on fixed deposits, bonds and similar instruments.

Contd. from Page 1...

Habbey Teron to

of the 126-member house in the first session of the 16th assembly in May. The NDA returned to power in Assam for the third successive term with 102 seats. The BJP won 82 seats and its alliance partners – the AGP and BPF – bagged 10 each.

Memo demands Assembly

memorandum to the Assam Chief Minister through Karbi Anglong Deputy Commissioner Aranyak Saikia. The memorandum urged the state government to adopt a resolution in the upcoming Assam Assembly session to pave the way for the proposed "Karbi Anglong-West Karbi Anglong-Dima Hasao Autonomous State" and immediately initiate official tripartite talks. A copy of the memorandum was also submitted to the KAAC CEM.

Controversy over

and it was decided that Baruah would once again paint the singer's image at the same spot. The artist began painting in the evening while fans kept a strict vigil at the venue.

GMC Mayor Mrigen Sarania claimed that no instruction was given to cover Zubeen's image, but the direction was to clean the city. The police, however, refrained from commenting on the controversy. (PTI)

Karbi Anglong witnesses

assistance under various schemes has significantly improved the economic condition of Self-Help Group members and strengthened their livelihood opportunities.

The Jan Kalyan Shivir was organised as part of the nationwide observance of "12 Years of Trust, Development & Public Welfare" with the objective of creating awareness about various flagship schemes of the Central and State governments, facilitating on-the-spot delivery of eligible services and addressing public grievances through the convergence of concerned departments.

As part of the district-wide observance, Jan Kalyan Shivirs were organised simultaneously across all development blocks of Karbi Anglong.

The programmes were held at Samelangso Indoor Stadium near the Block Campus under Samelangso Development Block, Mini Stadium at Bakalia under Langsompel Development Block, Okereng Mini Stadium under Howraghat Development Block, Dillai Sports Complex under Bokajan Development Block, Romgongve Development Block headquarters and the Multi-Utility Building at the Nilip Development Block office campus.

Laltluangkima becomes

Ralte said. In the 40-member Mizoram Assembly, the ZPM holds 27 seats, followed by the MNF with 10, while the BJP and Congress have two and one legislators, respectively.

The victory marks a significant political milestone for the ZPM, which was founded in 2017. Laltluangkima became the party's first Rajya Sabha member and the eighth person from Mizoram to be elected to the Upper House since 1972, when the state was still a Union territory.

Historically, the Congress has won the Rajya Sabha seat six times with former MP Hiphei serving two consecutive terms between 1990 and 2002, while the MNF won the seat three times, with Lalhmingliana serving two consecutive terms from 2002 to 2014.

The outgoing Rajya Sabha member is K Vanlalvena of the MNF. Born in October 1963, Laltluangkima holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from St Anthony's College, and later pursued Christian Communication Studies at Trinity and All Saints College in England.

He also earned a Master's degree in Plumbing from an institution in Maryland, USA. Before entering politics, he served for 12 years as Manager of the Synod Electronic Communication Department of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church.

He was also the founder of Kristian Naupang, a children's magazine published by the church. Laltluangkima joined active politics in 1997 through the MNF (Nationalist), which later was rechristened as the Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) founded by Laldubhoma.

He first contested the Assembly election from Bilkhawthlir constituency in 1998 but lost to MNF candidate Lalchamlana by a margin of 1,256 votes. He currently serves as member secretary of the ZPM's Political Affairs Committee and is also the party's official spokesperson. (PTI)

Pradhan reviews

According to the ministry, detailed deliberations covered examination preparedness, coordination mechanisms, security protocols, logistical arrangements, grievance redressal mechanisms and adherence to examination guidelines. The ministry said 222 participants attended the meeting, which was conducted in a hybrid mode.

Senior officials from various states/Union Territories, nodal officers of centrally funded institutes, vice chancellors and directors of higher educational institutes across the country participated.

Meanwhile, the NTA has also urged NEET-UG candidates to remain calm and focus on their preparation, assuring that extensive arrangements have been made to ensure a safe, secure and fair examination.

In a message on X, the agency said the re-examination will be conducted on Sunday as scheduled and asked candidates not to be swayed by rumours of postponement or by the "noise on social media".

"Rely only on official communication from the NTA," it said. "We want to reassure you that extensive arrangements are in place for a safe, secure and fair examination, in close coordination with relevant ministries, state governments and security agencies. The integrity of this process is our highest priority, and robust, multi-layered safeguards have been put in place," it said.

The agency also warned against malpractice, saying, "Any attempt at malpractice will be dealt with firmly – because protecting honest, hardworking students is exactly what this is about."

Regarding the cancellation of the May 3 examination, the NTA said the decision served the candidates' interests and that lessons from the incident were used to strengthen the examination process.

"The difficult decision taken on May 3 was made solely in your interest. The moment a problem was identified, we acted to protect the fairness of the process for every sincere candidate. We have carried those lessons forward and strengthened the system further this time," it said.

The NTA also highlighted the availability of mental health support for students facing examination-related stress. "If the pressure feels heavy, please know you are not alone. The MANAS mental-health helpline (14416) is available, and support is there for anyone who needs it. Reaching out is a sign of strength," the message said.

The agency said, "The NEET UG 2026 examination is just three days away. Stay calm, rest well, and focus on doing your best. That is all that is asked of you." (PTI)

Four of five glacial

break due to several triggers, including large landslides or ice avalanches entering the lake, which can result in a GLOF. In a statement, Amit Kumar, co-founder and COO of Suhora Technologies, said, "With the monsoon season approaching, continuous observation of glacial lakes becomes increasingly important and satellite-based observations can complement field investigations by providing timely information on lake expansion, glacier retreat and broader landscape changes across remote high-altitude environments.

"Such assessments help build long-term datasets that can support scientific research, planning, and informed decision-making," he added. (PTI)

Drugs worth

Sarma said in the post. The CM said the crackdown on drugs and peddlers will continue. (PTI)

ICG inducts indigenously

industry in delivering advanced indigenous solutions aligned with national priorities. Such initiatives serve as important catalysts for strengthening the country's defence manufacturing capabilities and furthering the vision of self-reliance in the maritime sector, it added.

The induction of ACV H-561 marks another noteworthy achievement in India's journey towards indigenous capability development and reflects the collective commitment of all stakeholders towards building a modern, capable and future-ready maritime force, the ICG said. (PTI)

IIT Bombay study

used computer simulations and identified that KTDP forms a significantly stronger and more stable bond with the unique monolayer surfaces of lipid droplets than with standard bilayer cell membranes.

The team then tested the impact of KTDP in cultured rat liver cells, which naturally secrete VLDL particles, making them a useful model for studying fat metabolism.

After the findings in cultured rat cells, researchers utilised zebrafish as a model organism owing to their human-like lipoprotein systems, said IIT B. Since zebrafish larvae are almost transparent, the researchers could directly visualise these lipids under the microscope without harming the animals.

The work is at a preclinical stage, requiring future studies to assess long-term safety, optimise peptide delivery, and evaluate efficacy in mammals. However, the study points toward a promising direction that has so far received little attention in the treatment of metabolic diseases, it said.

"Current therapies are effective at lowering cholesterol, but options for reducing triglycerides remain limited. We believe this work could eventually contribute to new strategies for addressing that challenge," added Prof. Mallik. (PTI)

EXTENSION OF PLATFORMS AT TINSUKIA DIVISION

E-Tender Notice No. TSK/Engg/29 of 2026 Dated: 16-06-2026. Works tenders through "E" Tendering system for and on behalf of the president of India are invited for the works as detailed below: **Brief Description of Item:** At Tinsukia Division- Extension of PF No.-1 by 125m at Dullajan towards Tinsukia end, PF No-2 by 78 m at Naharkaliya towards Bhojo end and PF No. 1 by 135m at Namrup towards Bhojo end in connection with ABSS. **Tender Value:** ₹4,72,79,662/- **Earnest Money:** ₹9,45,600/- **Date & time of Closing of tender:** At 15.00 hrs. & opening at 16.00 hrs. on 08-07-2026. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15.00 hrs. on 08-07-2026 in the website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM(W), Tinsukia

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

Serving Customers With A Smile

AFFIDAVIT

I, Longki Teron, DoB-12/01/1997, C/O Bura Teron, a resident of village Chopi Kilok Gaon, P.O. & P.S. Baithalanso, district West Karbi Anglong, Assam, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare on this 24th day of March, 2025, at Nagaon Court premises, that my actual and correct name is "Longki Teron" which is recorded in all official and non official documents including in my Aadhar card vide No-4524 2906 4293, but my name had been wrongly recorded in my Bank Pass-book of Assam Gramin Vikash Bank under Bargaon Branch vide A/C No-7469010085767 as "Lori Teron" instead of "Longki Teron". As a matter of fact "Longki Teron" and "Lori Teron" are the names of the same and one person i.e. myself. I swear this affidavit to confirm and correct my name and use it as a piece of documentary evidence before the concerned authority as where and whenever required.

E-AUCTION FOR PARKING CONTRACT

E-auction for Parking Contract at following Railway station for a period of 03 (Three) years over Tinsukia Division. **Auction Catalogue No.:** TSK-PARKING-08; **Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots):** 11:00 hrs. on 03-07-2026; **Auction Close Date/Time:** 11:30 hrs. on 03-07-2026; **Rate Unit:** Annual Licensing Fee; **Trips/Days:** 1096.

Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	PARKING-TSK-DBY-MX-27-26-2 (Parking - Mixed)	Parking Lot for Two Wheelers, Three Wheelers and Four Wheelers at location Digboi Railway station.

The e-auction catalogue has already been uploaded on 16-06-2026 through IREPS website.

Divisional Commercial Manager (IC), Tinsukia

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

Serving Customers With A Smile

District administration reviews preparedness measures, identifies 183 relief camps ahead of monsoon season

Kokrajhar admin reviews flood preparedness ahead of monsoon

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 18: The Kokrajhar district administration, in collaboration with the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on Thursday reviewed flood preparedness measures to ensure readiness for the ensuing monsoon season.

The review meeting was held at the conference hall of the District Commissioner's office and was chaired by District Commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty.

The meeting was attended by circle officers, field-level functionaries and representatives of various line departments.

During the meeting, the District Commissioner assessed the district's preparedness plans and directed all departments to maintain close coordination and remain ready to respond promptly to any flood-related emergency.

Discussions focused on the status of relief camps, evacuation plans, emergency response mechanisms and inter-departmental coordination.

Officials informed the meeting that 183



relief camps and relief distribution centres have been identified across the district, with camp in-charges already designated.

The administration has also constituted district and sub-divisional level relief camp monitoring teams, while Revenue Circle-level task force committees have been notified and trained.

Capacity-building programmes on flood

response and relief camp management have been conducted for frontline workers, including ASHA workers, ANMs, ICDS personnel and school teachers.

Officials stated that 289 villages in the district have been identified as flood-prone and corresponding flood hazard maps have been prepared.

Databases of vulnerable groups, includ-

ing children, pregnant and lactating women, elderly persons and persons with disabilities, have also been compiled to facilitate targeted assistance during emergencies.

The meeting reviewed the district's Flood Contingency and Response Plan as well as departmental preparedness and emergency response plans outlining the responsibilities of various agencies.

Chakravarty also reviewed coordination arrangements with response agencies such as the SDRF, Fire and Emergency Services, Civil Defence, Aapda Mitra volunteers and non-governmental organisations.

Availability of essential resources, including green fodder for livestock, was also discussed.

Emphasising the importance of preparedness, the District Commissioner instructed all departments to strengthen field-level coordination and ensure effective implementation of preventive and response measures to safeguard lives and property during the flood season.

FAMEX 2026 strengthens disaster preparedness in Dima Hasao

DDMA and NDRF conduct school safety drills and railway tunnel assessments to strengthen monsoon disaster response



HT Correspondent

HAF LONG, June 18: The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Dima Hasao, in collaboration with the 1st Battalion of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), has intensified disaster preparedness efforts across the district through the ongoing Familiarization Exercise (FAMEX) 2026 ahead of the monsoon season.

The multi-day exercise, which began on June 15, is being conducted at educational institutions and critical infrastructure sites to enhance preparedness, awareness and emergency response capabilities.

The programme commenced at Good Shepherd High School, Gunjung, under Maibang Block, where NDRF personnel conducted technical sessions and live demonstrations on search and rescue techniques, emergency first aid and school safety measures.

Students and teachers actively participated in the awareness programme aimed at improving disaster readiness.

On June 16, the exercise continued at Langting St Mary's High School, where students and faculty members were sensitised on emergency response mechanisms during disasters such as flash floods and landslides, which frequently affect the hill district during the monsoon season.

As part of the exercise, another disaster preparedness programme was organised on June 18 at PM Shri Maibang Higher Secondary

School.

The session focused on evacuation procedures, campus safety assessments and strengthening disaster response protocols within educational institutions.

To expand the scope of the exercise, the DDMA and NDRF divided their operational teams into two units to simultaneously conduct awareness and infrastructure-focused activities.

While one team continued school-based awareness programmes, the second team undertook a Railway Tunnel Familiarization Exercise across vulnerable railway infrastructure in the district.

The joint team inspected Railway Tunnels Nos 5, 9, 11 and 14 to identify disaster-prone locations, assess structural safety, gather technical information and strengthen coordination with Northeast Frontier Railway authorities.

Officials said the exercise would help improve preparedness for rescue, relief and evacuation operations in the event of natural disasters or monsoon-related emergencies affecting railway infrastructure.

According to DDMA officials, FAMEX 2026 will continue at other designated locations across the district before concluding next week.

The exercise is aimed at enhancing community resilience, improving inter-agency coordination and strengthening disaster response mechanisms across Dima Hasao.

Digital dentistry workshop held

HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, June 18: A workshop on "Digital Dentistry: Monolithic Denture Fabrication with Next-Generation Dental 3D Printer" was organised at the Cachar Cancer Hospital and Research Centre (CCHRC), Silchar, bringing together dental professionals, healthcare practitioners and members of the public to explore emerging technologies in digital dentistry and additive manufacturing.

The programme was jointly organised by the 3D Printing Centre of Excellence (3DPCoE), AMTRON, Tech City Guwahati, under the PM-Devine project of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), in association with the Cachar Cancer Hospital and Research Centre and the Industry 4.0 Innovation Centre, an autonomous society implementing the Hi-Tech Toolroom project at Tech City, Guwahati.

The workshop aimed to create awareness about modern digital dental technologies and their potential to improve oral healthcare services in Cachar and other parts of Assam.

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Kumari Kavita, Maxillofacial Prosthodontist and Head of the Dental Division at the PM-Devine 3D Printing Centre of Excellence, who discussed the evolution of digital dentistry, intra-oral scanning, digital workflows and the fabrication of monolithic dentures using advanced 3D-printing systems.

No flood threat in Hojai despite controlled water release from Kopili project

HT Correspondent

HOJAI, June 18: The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Hojai, on Thursday said there is no immediate flood threat in the district despite the controlled release of additional water from the Khandong dam of the Kopili Hydroelectric Project at Umrangshu.

According to the DDMA, the North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) released additional water from the reservoir following a significant increase in inflow caused by recent heavy rainfall in the catchment areas.

The authority clarified that the release was carried out in a regulated manner as part of standard reservoir management procedures and does not pose any immediate danger to downstream areas.

As per the latest water-level report issued by the Water Resources Department at 2 pm on Thursday, both the Kopili and Jamuna rivers were flowing below their respective danger levels and were showing a receding trend.

Farmers receive paddy seeds, inputs under CSS-ATMA scheme in Bokajan

More than 50 farmers receive high-yielding paddy seeds and agricultural inputs under CSS-ATMA scheme

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 18: High-yielding Sali paddy seeds and essential agricultural inputs were distributed among farmers at Sarihaing under the Bokajan Agriculture Development Officer (ADO) Circle on Thursday under the CSS-ATMA 2026-27 scheme.

The programme was attended by Bokajan MLA Surjya Rongphar, Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Food and Civil Supply Board Chairman Philip Teron, Labour Department Board Chairman Kharsing Timung, Agriculture Development Officer Sannidhya Saurav Buragohain and Krishi Vi-

gyan Kendra (KVK) Subject Matter Specialist (Horticulture) Shourou Dutta, among others.

During the programme, more than 50 farmers were provided with certified Sali paddy seeds of the Ranjini Sub-1 variety along with other agricultural inputs aimed at improving crop productivity and supporting farming activities in the area.

Addressing the gathering, MLA Surjya Rongphar encouraged farmers to expand cultivation and make effective use of the various agricultural schemes being implemented by the state and central governments.

He stressed the importance of

adopting improved farming practices to enhance agricultural output and income.

ADO Sannidhya Saurav Buragohain highlighted government initiatives designed to support farmers and urged cultivators to remain in regular contact with the Agriculture Department for technical assistance and guidance throughout the cultivation season.

Following the distribution programme, the Agriculture Department and Krishi Vigyan Kendra jointly organised a Khet Bachao Abhijan (Save the Crop Campaign) awareness session.

During the programme, Shourou

Jan Kalyan Shivir 2026 begins in Baksa



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 18: The three-day Jan Kalyan Shivir 2026 commenced in Baksa district on Thursday with the objective of ensuring doorstep delivery of government services and welfare benefits to citizens.

The campaign was formally inaugurated at Adalbari Community Hall and is being conducted simultaneously across the district's five development blocks.

The programme will continue until June 20.

The inaugural function was attended by MLAs Thaneswar Basumatary and Maneswar Brahma, MCLA Diganta Goyary, Baksa District Commissioner Kinnei Chngsan, IAS, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Project Director of DRDA Baharul Islam, APO of

DRDA Labanya Das and other officials.

Addressing the gathering, District Commissioner Kinnei Chngsan highlighted various Central and State government welfare initiatives implemented over the past 12 years.

She said several women-centric schemes and social security programmes had contributed significantly to improving the lives of beneficiaries across the district.

Chngsan referred to initiatives such as Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY, subsidised food distribution under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and various state welfare schemes, urging citizens to make use of the services available through the Jan Kalyan Shivir.

MLA Maneswar Brahma said

developmental and welfare programmes launched by the Central and State governments had played an important role in the upliftment of farmers, youth, women and economically weaker sections across the BTC region.

He highlighted schemes such as PM-Kisan, PM Mudra Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, CMAAA and Nijut Moina among those benefiting people in the district.

MLA Thaneswar Basumatary described the Jan Kalyan Shivir as an important platform for connecting eligible beneficiaries with government schemes and bringing essential services closer to the people.

He appealed to citizens to actively participate in the programme and avail themselves of the benefits on offer.

As part of the campaign, help desks and departmental exhibition stalls have been set up to disseminate information on various government schemes, services and welfare initiatives.

Several achievers from the health sector, progressive farmers, members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and individuals associated with social welfare activities were also felicitated during the programme in recognition of their contributions and achievements.

Scientific goat rearing training programme begins at Patharighat

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, June 18: A 12-day off-campus training programme on scientific goat rearing commenced at Krishak Swahid Bhawan in Patharighat under Darrang district on Thursday, with the objective of promoting sustainable livelihood opportunities and entrepreneurship among rural residents.

The programme was inaugurated by Sipajhar Anchalik Panchayat president Jayanta Kumar Sarmah in the presence of ASRLM official Trilochan Nath, representatives of the Block Mission Management Unit

(BMMU), Sipajhar, and officials of the Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI), Darrang.

Addressing the participants, Sarmah highlighted the importance of skill-based training programmes in strengthening rural livelihoods and empowering women economically.

He expressed satisfaction over the joint initiative undertaken by RSETI and the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM), stating that such programmes play an important role in promoting self-employment and sustainable income generation.

PDUAM Dalgaoon to host national seminar on Northeast's role in freedom struggle

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, June 18: Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Adarsha Mahavidyalaya (PDUAM), Dalgaoon, will organise a two-day national seminar on June 29 and 30 under the sponsorship of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), New Delhi.

The seminar, titled "Tradition of Resistance and Voices of Freedom: Revisiting the Northeast's Contribution to India's Struggle for Independence," aims to bring together academicians, historians, researchers, scholars and students from across the country to deliberate on the region's role in India's freedom movement.

According to the organisers, the seminar will focus on resistance movements in the Northeast and seek to highlight the contributions of the region and its people to the struggle against colonial rule, a subject that has often received limited attention in mainstream historical discourse.

Several eminent scholars are expected to participate in the event, including Prof Rajiv Handique, Academic Registrar of Gauhati University; Prof Akhil Ranjan Dutta of Gauhati University; Prof Dinesh Baishya; and Prof KC Kapoor, retired professor of Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh, among others.

An organising committee has been constituted for the smooth conduct of the seminar.

Principal of PDUAM Dalgaoon, Dr Laxmi Prasad Hazarika, is serving as the Chief Patron, while Dr Kumar Chandan Jyoti, Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science, is the Convener of the event.

Dr John Berry White Medical Museum to open on July 1

Long-delayed heritage project to be inaugurated on National Doctor's Day



bility (CSR) programme at a cost of ₹ 2.1 crore, was originally scheduled for completion in April 2019.

Speaking after the meeting, MLA Prasanta Phukan said the museum would finally be opened to the public on July 1 and that its maintenance and management would be overseen through a dedicated committee.

"This is a prestigious project for Dibrugarh. It remained neglected for a long time, but we have now decided to hand it over to the Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation. A

committee will be formed to oversee its functioning and future development," Phukan said.

He added that beautification measures, including landscaping and installation of solar lighting, would be undertaken to improve the museum premises.

DMC Mayor Dr Saikat Patra said the civic body would be responsible for the cleanliness and maintenance of the museum.

He stated that the proposed management committee would include representatives from the IMA, AMCH and the district health department.

The project traces its origins to a Memorandum of Understanding signed between OIL and the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) on January 10, 2018.

However, despite repeated deadlines, the museum remained closed following renovation and restoration work.

The museum is housed at the historic Dr

John Berry White Medical School site, located along AT Road in Dibrugarh.

Established in 1900, four years after the death of its founder Dr John Berry White, the institution marked the beginning of medical education in Northeast India.

Dr White, a British surgeon who served in Assam for over two decades, donated his life savings to establish the medical school.

His vision eventually led to the establishment of Assam Medical College in 1947, making Dibrugarh a pioneering centre of medical education in the region.

Residents and members of the medical community have welcomed the decision to finally open the museum, describing it as an important step towards preserving the region's rich medical heritage.

"This project holds great historical significance as medical education in the Northeast began here. We are happy that after years of delay, the museum is finally set to open," a senior citizen of Dibrugarh said.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The enemy of art is the absence of limitations.
- Orson Welles

Oil flow from Hormuz post deal

The US-Iran deal marks a genuine easing of one of the most dangerous geopolitical shocks to hit the energy market, but it should not be mistaken for a reset button. The immediate risk of a military breakdown has declined, and that matters for every stakeholder: Washington, Tehran, Gulf producers, Asian importers, shipping insurers and consuming economies already battling inflation. Yet the oil market that existed before the war cannot simply be restored by diplomatic signature. The risk premium has not vanished. It has changed its structure, moving from the visible fear of missiles, mines and naval confrontation to the less dramatic but equally consequential uncertainties of compliance, sequencing and trust. Before the war, oil prices were already showing a downward tendency. Slowing demand growth, stronger non-OPEC supply, the gradual cooling of speculative positioning and concerns over the durability of consumption in China and Europe had all placed pressure on crude. That bearish environment has not disappeared, but it has been overlaid by a new political memory. Traders, refiners and governments have now priced in the fact that the Strait of Hormuz can again become a pressure point at short notice. That experience has value in the market, and value in oil markets usually translates into a premium.

The most optimistic reading is that the deal opens the way for flows through Hormuz to recover more strongly than many had expected. If sanctions relief proceeds and the ceasefire holds, volumes could rise towards 14 million barrels per day by January, supported by the return of Iranian exports, greater confidence among shipowners and a gradual retreat of the geopolitical premium. That would be a major improvement from the wartime disruption and would ease pressure on import-dependent economies. It would also reduce the urgency of emergency stock releases, shipping escorts and costly rerouting. But even this constructive scenario does not imply a return to pre-war pricing. It implies a transition from acute crisis pricing to conditional normalisation.

The distinction is important. Markets do not only price today's physical barrels; they price the probability that tomorrow's barrels may not arrive. A ceasefire can lower the probability of immediate disruption, but it cannot erase the fact that the region remains crowded with unresolved flashpoints. Lebanon remains one of them. Any escalation involving Iranian-aligned actors, Israel, or Western military assets could quickly test the understanding behind the deal. Even if Tehran and Washington intend to hold the line, regional allies and proxies may not interpret restraint in the same way. Energy markets are particularly sensitive to such ambiguity because a small perceived threat to chokepoint supply can have an outsized impact on price expectations.

Lebanon must get out of the clutches of Hezbollah

By: Manish Rai

Lebanon is once again facing a crucial moment. In March 2026, Hezbollah launched missiles into Israel, thereby opening a new front of the war, following the outbreak of the US-Israeli war on Iran and the assassination of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The fragile political, economic, and security environment of Lebanon has exacerbated the country's political and economic crisis, which has since intensified.

For the first time since the Lebanese Shiite party initiated the war against Israel in October 2023 by attacking in support of Hamas and later by supporting Iran in March this year, Tehran has directly intervened to rescue it. In response to an Israeli airstrike on a southern suburb of Beirut on the evening of June 7, the Islamic Republic of Iran launched 11 ballistic missiles that were directed toward northern Israel. Despite the Iranian's efforts, the intense Israeli assaults have diminished Hezbollah's military capabilities up to a significant extent. It is exceedingly challenging for Hezbollah to replenish its strategic arsenals in the absence of a Syrian "land bridge," although it now produces drones locally.

Until recently, Iran's support made the Shia Islamist group the most potent non-state actor in the Middle East. It possessed an extensive arsenal of rockets and missiles, as well as tens of thousands of foot soldiers. Nevertheless, the political and military influence of Hezbollah has significantly decreased in recent years. Since 2023, Israel has diminished its leadership and rank-and-file. Additionally, Hezbollah has lost the support of its key allies; in the case of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, insurgents overthrew it, while Israel and the USA militarily degraded Iran.

Hezbollah's origins as an armed resistance movement against the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon have been gradually diluted over the past decades as a result of its involvement in the Syrian civil war and its pursuit of regional objectives in collaboration with its primary sponsor, Iran. The repercussions of these events have been a decline in the support of Hezbollah in Lebanese society and a reduction in its regional reputation as a formidable armed group.

This resulted in Hezbollah being in a relatively vulnerable position in the ongoing conflict with Israel. On the domestic front also, pressure on Hezbollah is increasing as the Lebanese parliament elected Joseph Aoun, a former army commander, as its new president in January 2025. In his inaugural address, the new president explicitly stated that he desired the state to maintain the monopoly over armaments. Hezbollah was the sole Lebanese armed group that refused to abandon its weapons following the 1975-1990 civil war, contending that its arms were essential for combating Israeli occupying troops in southern Lebanon.

The international community, through the UN Security Council, has repeatedly requested Hezbollah to disarm. Nevertheless, Hezbollah has consistently disregarded these requests. They disregarded UN Resolution 1701, which mandated the establishment of a zone devoid of armed personnel, with the exception of the Lebanese army. They disregarded the Lebanese Taif Agreement and UN Resolution 1559, which ended the Lebanese Civil War and called for the disbandment and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias.

In the past, Hezbollah has demonstrated that it has no intention of ever laying down its armaments. Critics view the situation as a unique chance to disarm the group, given its military and economic vulnerabilities. To be more precise, Hezbollah has become increasingly socially and politically isolated in Lebanon. In July 2024, a survey was conducted, revealing that Hezbollah's support outside the Shia community was at its lowest point in history, with only 30% of the Lebanese population placing their trust in the party (Roche and Robbins 2024).

The party's involvement in numerous sectarian conflicts with various religious communities in Lebanon over the past few years has been a significant factor in this development. It is accurate to assert that Hezbollah is currently in its most challenging situation since its inception. The party's isolation within Lebanon and the strikes inflicted by Israel render it unlikely that the situation will improve in the near future. At the same time, Hezbollah is unlikely to disappear; it will continue to exist due to its strong, disciplined, and organized political and militant structure, along with the ongoing support from Iran. (IPA Service)

Assamese language: The soul of Assam's cultural identity

The Assamese language is not just a tool of communication but a living, breathing embodiment of Assam's soul, culture, and identity. For centuries, it has served as the silent custodian of the state's evolving ethos—nurturing its collective memory, transmitting traditions, and giving voice to its people's hopes, sorrows, and aspirations. In every syllable spoken, in every folk song sung, and in every script written, Assamese reflects the historical and spiritual journey of a land uniquely defined by its unity in cultural diversity. The roots of Assamese civilization are deeply interwoven with this language. It stands today not only as a literary medium but as a cultural lifeline that upholds the rich heritage of Assam amid the overwhelming tides of globalization.

Tracing the lineage of Assamese takes one back to ancient times when the language was already a vital part of everyday life in the Brahmaputra valley. But it was during the 19th century, with the arrival of the Baptist missionaries, that the Assamese language underwent a remarkable transformation. These missionaries played a pivotal role in standardizing the language and initiating a renaissance in its literary and cultural development. The launch of Arunodoi in 1846, the first Assamese-language newspaper published from Sivasagar, marked a turning point. More than just a publication, Arunodoi became the voice of the Assamese spirit, awakening cultural pride and linguistic consciousness. It encouraged the growth of modern prose and poetry, and through it emerged a new generation of Assamese intellectuals who dedicated themselves to the enrichment of their language.

The literary contributions that followed this awakening were remarkable. The earliest traces of Assamese literature are found in the ancient Charyapada, the mystical verses of the Buddhist Siddhas. These songs, rich in spiritual and philosophical themes, testify to the language's antiquity and literary strength. The literary tradition further evolved with the contributions of medieval poets like Baro Chandidas and Ramai Pandit, whose works reflected a growing depth in religious and philosophical thought within Assamese society. However, it was the advent of Srimanta Sankardeva in the 15th century that gave Assamese literature its golden age. Through his poetic and dramatic works such as Kirtan-Ghosha, Gunamala, Borgeet, and Ankiya Nat, Sankardeva transformed Assamese into a powerful vehicle for cultural expression and religious reform. His writings conveyed spiritual ideals and moral values, promoting unity and social responsibility through the accessible medium of language and art.

Sankardeva's close associate, Madhavdeva,

further enriched the literary tapestry of Assamese with his devotional compositions like Nam-Ghosha and Bhakti-Ratnavali. These texts elevated the Assamese language to new spiritual heights, portraying divine love, humility, and the path of devotion. His dramatic and lyrical innovations, especially in Jhumura, added vibrant dimensions to Assamese performing arts and ensured their preservation through generations. Together, these two saint-poets did not merely write—they gave the Assamese people a cultural and religious identity, anchored in their own tongue, which fostered pride and unity that still resonate today.

In the modern period, figures such as Lakshminath Bezbaroa and Hemchandra Barua brought fresh energy and direction to Assamese literature. Bezbaroa's visionary writing captured the essence of Assamese folk life, history, and cultural consciousness. Through stories, poems, and essays, he reinvigorated the Assamese language with creativity, insight, and a sense of national pride. Hemchandra Barua, on the other hand, played a crucial role in standardizing prose writing, providing much-needed linguistic clarity and structure. Their combined contributions helped to modernize Assamese literature, bridging the past with the present, and ensuring the language remained a dynamic, relevant force in Assam's evolving cultural narrative.

The close connection between Assamese language and folk culture has been vital in sustaining the state's living traditions. Folk songs like Borgeet, Ojapali, and Goalpariya are more than just artistic expressions—they are vessels carrying generations of emotions, stories, rituals, and beliefs. The lyrical beauty of Borgeet, composed by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva, articulates the deepest spiritual yearnings of the Assamese people. Ojapali, an intricate performance blending dance, music, and narrative, conveys mythological tales and moral lessons through the Assamese language. Likewise, the rustic charm of Goalpariya songs captures the spirit of Assam's rural life—its innocence, struggle, and celebration. These traditions survive not in isolation but through the nurturing bosom of the Assamese language, which gives them form, voice, and continuity.

Beyond the stage and page, the Assamese language lives in daily rituals, festival songs, folktales, and colloquial expressions. Every Bihu celebration, every lullaby, and every marriage song carries the imprint of Assamese, keeping social customs and values intact. Language, in this context, becomes the bridge that connects generations. Through it, customs like traditional attire, cuisine, and agricultural practices are narrated and passed

on. This deep interdependence between language and folk culture makes Assamese a living archive of the people's collective identity.

Religion and spirituality have always had a prominent place in Assamese society, and the language has served as the principal means of spiritual discourse. From the Bhakti movement inspired by Sankardeva and Madhavdeva to the various religious festivals celebrated across the state, Assamese has acted as the sacred medium for prayer, reflection, and community bonding. Religious texts, chants, and hymns written in Assamese have instilled values of compassion, tolerance, and social responsibility. This spiritual legacy, encoded in language, has enriched the moral and ethical fabric of the community. The Assamese language, through religious literature, not only nurtures inner growth but also provides a communal identity rooted in shared beliefs and practices.

In the current era of globalization, the survival of regional languages like Assamese is threatened by the dominance of more widely spoken tongues. Yet, Assamese has shown remarkable resilience. A monumental milestone came on October 3, 2024, when the Government of India granted classical language status to Assamese. This recognition is not merely symbolic—it acknowledges the language's antiquity, literary richness, and independent historical tradition. With this new status comes renewed opportunities for academic research, linguistic development, and global recognition. It is a powerful reaffirmation of the language's intrinsic worth and the cultural pride of the people who speak it.

This classical status has injected new energy into the movement to preserve and promote Assamese. Government support and increased funding promise to encourage more initiatives in education, literature, and cultural preservation. Public enthusiasm for the language has grown, especially among youth, who now see it as a prestigious marker of identity. The celebration of this status has triggered a cultural reawakening—one that encourages a return to roots without rejecting modernity.

The digital age, while posing challenges, also opens up vast possibilities for the promotion of Assamese. With the emergence of online dictionaries, Assamese keyboards, mobile applications, and educational websites, the language has found a new home in the virtual world. Social media platforms are increasingly being used to share Assamese poems, stories, songs, and cultural discussions. YouTube channels, blogs, podcasts, and e-books are making Assamese accessible to a global audience. These platforms have democratized content creation, allowing young speakers and writers to engage creatively with their mother tongue and showcase their culture to the world.

Educational reforms and digital inclusion are now necessary to keep this momentum alive. Developing Assamese-language apps, e-

learning tools, and multimedia courses can make the language attractive and accessible to younger generations. Integrating Assamese into the school and college curriculum as a compulsory subject or elective can also help nurture interest. Cultural events, literary workshops, and inter-state cultural exchanges will create a stronger ecosystem for the language to thrive. Collaboration between government institutions, educational bodies, media platforms, and civil society is essential to implement these initiatives effectively.

However, this journey is not without obstacles. Globalization has popularized English and Hindi as dominant modes of communication, often at the cost of regional languages. Among the youth, there is a growing preference for these languages, leading to a gradual erosion of Assamese usage in daily life. Overcoming this requires conscious efforts from families, educators, and cultural organizations. Language is not just taught in classrooms—it is learned at home, through stories, conversations, and experiences. Parents and teachers must emphasize the beauty and value of Assamese in shaping personal and collective identity. The survival of the language depends on its practical use, emotional appeal, and cultural resonance in everyday life.

Cultural festivals, literature fairs, and awareness campaigns can help reinforce the importance of Assamese in public consciousness. Content creators and artists must be encouraged to produce engaging and relatable material in Assamese, especially for digital platforms. Local film and music industries also have a role to play in making Assamese culture more vibrant and visible. The state's rich heritage must be showcased through documentaries, animations, and audiovisual stories that appeal to young minds.

The Assamese language is more than an ancient script or a spoken dialect—it is the soul of a civilization that has flourished on the banks of the Brahmaputra for centuries. It has carried the weight of history, the wisdom of saints, the voices of poets, and the dreams of generations. From the sacred verses of Charyapada to the digital poems shared on Instagram, it has remained flexible, inclusive, and alive. Its survival is not only a linguistic concern but a cultural imperative. Preserving the Assamese language means safeguarding the identity of an entire people. It is a sacred duty, a collective responsibility, and a journey that binds the past, present, and future in one unbroken thread.

In the heart of every Assamese speaker lies an emotional connection to the language that shaped their worldview. It is this emotional bond that must now be harnessed to propel a new cultural revival. The Assamese language is not fading—it is transforming. With conscious effort, creative adaptation, and communal pride, it can continue to thrive, telling the world the unique story of Assam in its own timeless voice.

Why banning telegram won't save India's broken exam system

The crisis of paper leaks in India has long ceased to be an intermittent glitch in the administrative machinery. It has snowballed into a structural disaster, a chronic malfunction that routinely shatters the aspirations of millions of young people. Every few months, a major national or state-level competitive examination is compromised, followed by a familiar cycle of public outrage, official denials, subsequent admissions, and a scramble for immediate, performative damage control.

Among the various knee-jerk reactions that authorities rely on to appease a furious public, the tendency to target communication platforms stands out as particularly shortsighted. The idea of imposing a six-day ban on Telegram to curb paper leaks is a classic example of this reactive, superficial approach to governance. It is a strategy that misdiagnoses the disease by focusing entirely on a single symptom. Even if we accept the premise that Telegram is currently the primary digital highway for the distribution of leaked exam papers, shutting it down for less than a week achieves absolutely nothing. The trade in stolen intellectual property does not depend on a single application. If one digital pipeline is blocked, the illicit market will instantly carve out new channels across the vast ecosystem of the modern internet. Targeting the platform rather than the source of the leak is an exercise in futility that leaves the actual criminal networks completely untouched.

To understand why a short-term ban on an application is useless, one must look at how digital communication operates today. Telegram has become popular among bad actors for undeniable reasons. It allows massive group sizes, supports the transfer of heavy files without heavy compression, and offers features that mask user identities. But these are features of modern software, not an exclusive monopoly.

The moment Telegram becomes inaccessible in India, the networks driving the paper leak economy will not simply disband and look for honest work. They will migrate. The demand for leaked papers is driven by desperate candidates and greedy intermediaries willing to pay exorbitant sums of money. This demand creates an incredibly lucrative black

market, and markets always find a way to connect sellers with buyers. Within hours of a Telegram shutdown, alternative platforms like Signal, Discord, WhatsApp, or specialized forums on the dark web would see a massive surge in traffic. Links to encrypted Google Drive folders, Mega uploads, or decentralized file-sharing networks would circulate through private text messages and alternative social media feeds. In a hyper-connected society, information cannot be effectively quarantined by blocking a single app. The technology is far too fluid, and the users are far too adaptable. A temporary ban is merely a speed bump for tech-savvy syndicates that operate with sophisticated digital tools.

The focus on Telegram also reveals a profound misunderstanding of the chronology of a paper leak. An examination paper does not originate inside an encrypted chat room. It is created by human beings, printed by commercial entities, stored in physical treasuries, and transported by logistical networks. The actual breach of security occurs long before any digital file is uploaded to the internet. The vulnerability lies within the human chain that handles the question papers. It happens when a corrupt official at a printing press takes a photograph of a master sheet, when a custodian at a local storage vault is bribed to open a trunk a few hours early, or when an insider at an examination center manipulates the system.

This is where the crime is committed. By the time a scanned copy of a question paper lands on a Telegram channel, the damage has already been done, the security has been breached, and the integrity of the examination has been permanently compromised. Treating Telegram as the villain is equivalent to blaming the postal service for delivering a blackmailed letter. Arresting the mail carrier or shutting down the post office does nothing to catch the blackmailer. It is a displacement of responsibility that allows the corrupt individuals inside the educational boards, the printing presses, and the state administrations to remain hidden in the shadows.

The economic and psychological realities of the Indian education system are what truly fuel this crisis. In a country with a massive youth population and a severe scarcity of sta-

ble, well-paying jobs, competitive exams are treated as high-stakes lotteries. Securing a seat in a government medical college or landing a position in a state bureaucracy is seen as the single definitive path to financial security and social mobility for an entire family. When the stakes are this high, the temptation to bypass the rules becomes overwhelming for those who can afford it. Parents are willing to liquidate assets, take out massive loans, and pay millions of rupees to secure a leaked paper for their children. This desperation has turned paper leaking into a highly organized, multi-million-dollar industry. These syndicates operate with corporate-like efficiency, employing scouts, tech experts, and legal minds to protect their operations. A temporary digital ban is a minor operational inconvenience for an industry backed by this much capital and desperation. They have the resources to adapt to any technological barrier the government throws at them, while the state relies on outdated administrative tools to fight a modern, decentralized criminal network.

The consequences of these performative bans fall squarely on the wrong people. While the criminal syndicates easily bypass the restrictions using virtual private networks or alternative applications, millions of innocent students suffer. Telegram has evolved into one of the largest decentralized educational repositories in the developing world. Because it allows for the free sharing of massive files, thousands of independent educators, non-profit organizations, and student communities use it to distribute study guides, lecture videos, and practice papers. For students living in rural areas or coming from low-income families, these free channels are the only alternative to prohibitively expensive commercial coaching institutes. When the government arbitrarily blocks access to the platform, it disrupts the legitimate preparation of the very students who are already disadvantaged by the system. The wealthy students can still access their premium coaching resources, and the corrupt students still get their leaked papers through alternative digital channels. The honest, self-studying student is left stranded, cut off from their primary source of learning materials because the state chose a clumsy, blanket restriction over targeted investigative work.

The state's reliance on temporary bans points to a broader, more alarming trend of administrative

often politically connected or wealthy enough to manipulate the slow-moving judicial system. There must be dedicated, independent investigative units tasked solely with tracking educational corruption, operating outside the influence of local politicians. The punishment for compromising a national examination must be severe enough to act as a genuine deterrent, including the permanent confiscation of all illegally acquired assets and long-term imprisonment. When the risks of participating in a paper leak outweigh the immense financial rewards, the syndicates will begin to fracture.

The institutional culture of the bodies conducting these examinations must change from top to bottom. Organizations like the National Testing Agency and various state public service commissions have consistently displayed an attitude of defensiveness and denial whenever a leak is reported. Their immediate reaction is almost always to protect their own reputation rather than investigate the claim honestly. This lack of accountability creates a safe haven for internal corruption. Educational boards need to operate with absolute transparency, subject to regular, independent third-party audits of their security protocols. When a failure occurs, there must be immediate administrative consequences for the leadership, establishing a culture where negligence is not tolerated. Without internal accountability, no amount of external technological bans will ever secure the integrity of an exam.

The obsession with blocking platforms like Telegram is a dangerous distraction from the real work of educational reform. It treats a symptom as the cause and punishes the general public for the failures of the state. The paper leak crisis in India is not a technological failure caused by the existence of encrypted chat applications; it is a moral and systemic collapse of the administrative apparatus tasked with managing human capital. The youth of the country deserve an environment where their hard work is rewarded and their futures are not sold to the highest bidder in a digital underground. Achieving this requires the state to abandon performative gestures and engage in the difficult, necessary work of purging corruption from within its own ranks. Until the focus shifts from blocking the channels of communication to securing the sources of information, the integrity of Indian examinations will remain a mirage.



DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan



AUTHOR
By: Satyabrata Borah

Law, Liberty and Social Change: The societal impact of the Allahabad High Court's live-in relationship ruling

By: Mowsam Hazarika

The recent observation of the Allahabad High Court—that a married man engaging in a consensual live-in relationship with an adult woman does not constitute a criminal offence—has triggered a wide-ranging debate across India. While the ruling is rooted in legal reasoning, its implications extend far beyond the courtroom, touching upon deeply embedded social values, cultural norms, and the evolving understanding of personal freedom in contemporary Indian society.

At the heart of the judgment lies a clear and unambiguous principle: the law cannot be guided by social morality. The court's assertion that "morality and law have to be kept apart" reinforces a constitutional vision where individual rights are paramount. In doing so, it underscores that the judiciary's duty is not to enforce prevailing moral standards but to protect the legal rights and liberties of citizens.

Personal Liberty in a Changing Society
India is witnessing a gradual but unmistakable shift in how relationships are perceived and lived. Urbanisation, education, economic independence, and exposure to global ideas have contributed to a growing emphasis on individual choice. Live-in relationships, once considered taboo, are increasingly visible, especially among younger generations.

In this context, the High Court's ruling strengthens the legal foundation for personal autonomy. It affirms that consenting adults have the right to decide how they wish to live, irrespective of whether their choices align with traditional expectations. This is particularly significant in a society where family and community often play a dominant role in shaping personal decisions.

At the same time, the ruling does not celebrate or endorse such relationships from a moral standpoint. Rather, it draws a firm

boundary: what may be morally contested is not necessarily legally punishable. This distinction is crucial for a democratic society that seeks to balance diversity of thought with the rule of law.

Tension with Traditional Values

Despite these evolving realities, marriage continues to hold a central place in Indian society. It is not merely a personal contract but a social institution intertwined with cultural, religious, and familial expectations. A live-in relationship involving a married individual challenges this institution at multiple levels.

For many, the ruling may raise concerns about the weakening of marital norms and the potential destabilisation of family structures. Questions about trust, commitment, and responsibility inevitably arise, particularly when such relationships impact legally wedded spouses and children.

These concerns cannot be dismissed lightly. The emotional and social consequences of such arrangements are real and often complex. However, the court's role is not to adjudicate these moral dilemmas but to determine whether a legal offence has been committed. In this case, it has clearly stated that no such offence exists when the relationship is between consenting adults.

Reinforcing the Rule of Law
One of the most significant aspects of the ruling is its strong stand against moral policing and societal coercion. The case itself involved a couple facing threats, including the possibility of honour-based violence. By directing authorities to ensure their protection, the court reaffirmed that the state has a duty to safeguard the lives and liberties of all citizens, regardless of social approval.

This position is consistent with the jurisprudence of the Supreme Court of India, which has repeatedly emphasised that the right to choose one's partner is a fundamental aspect of personal liberty. The High Court's emphasis on

police accountability further strengthens this principle, making it clear that inaction in such cases is not acceptable.

In a society where social pressures can sometimes escalate into violence, such judicial interventions play a critical role in upholding the rule of law. They send a clear message that individual rights cannot be overridden by collective disapproval.

Gender Dimensions and Social Realities

The ruling also brings into focus important gender dimensions. Women in live-in relationships often face greater stigma, vulnerability, and social backlash. By recognising their right to live with a partner of their choice, the judiciary provides a degree of protection against coercion from families or communities.

However, the issue becomes more complicated when one of the partners is already married. In many cases, it is the legally wedded spouse—often a woman—who bears the emotional and social burden of such arrangements. This highlights a gap between legal permissibility and ethical responsibility.

While the law may not criminalise such relationships, there remains a need for broader discussions on fairness, accountability, and the protection of all parties involved. Legal clarity should not be mistaken for moral endorsement, and societal discourse must engage with these complexities in a balanced and empathetic manner.

Bridging the Gap Between Law and Society

Legal pronouncements often move faster than societal attitudes. While courts may recognise and protect individual freedoms, social acceptance tends to evolve more slowly. This gap can lead to friction, misunderstanding, and even conflict.

In metropolitan areas, such rulings may find greater acceptance, reflecting changing lifestyles and attitudes. However, in rural and conservative settings, resistance is likely to persist. The challenge,

therefore, lies in fostering awareness and dialogue that bridge this divide.

Educational initiatives, public discourse, and responsible media engagement can play a crucial role in shaping informed opinions. Rather than reacting with outrage or blind acceptance, society must engage with the underlying issues—balancing respect for tradition with an openness to change.

A Broader Reflection on Rights and Responsibilities

The ruling ultimately raises a fundamental question: how should a society balance individual freedom with social responsibility? While the law protects the right of adults to make personal choices, it does not absolve individuals of the consequences of those choices.

A mature society must recognise that freedom and responsibility go hand in hand. Respecting personal liberty does not mean disregarding the emotional and social impact of one's actions. Similarly, upholding social values should not translate into coercion or violence.

Conclusion

The observation of the Allahabad High Court is a reflection of India's ongoing transition—a society negotiating the delicate balance between tradition and modernity. By clearly separating law from morality, the court has reaffirmed the primacy of constitutional values and individual rights.

At the same time, the ruling invites a deeper societal introspection. It challenges us to rethink our assumptions about relationships, freedom, and responsibility. As India continues to evolve, the true test will lie in its ability to embrace change while preserving the principles of justice, dignity, and social harmony.

In the final analysis, the judgment is not just about live-in relationships—it is about the kind of society India aspires to be: one where the law protects freedom, and where society learns to coexist with diversity of choices.

Karmyodha Narendra Modi's Journey from Antyodaya to Global India

By: Lalit Garg

In the history of Indian democracy, certain personalities transcend the boundaries of political leadership and come to define an era. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emerged as one such figure. In June 2026, he set a new record as the longest-serving continuously elected Prime Minister in independent India's history. This achievement is not merely a matter of numbers or tenure; it symbolizes the trust, public support, and developmental journey that have reshaped India's politics, economy, governance, and global standing. In a democracy, a leader's true success is measured not by the length of time in office but by the impact of his work. If the ultimate test of governance is delivering the benefits of development to the last person in society, then the greatest contribution of the Modi era has been its success in taking development out of government files and policy declarations and bringing it directly into the lives of ordinary citizens. This reflects the philosophy of Antyodaya—the upliftment of the last person—articulated by Deendayal Upadhyaya.

Since independence, India has undertaken a long and remarkable development journey. Jawaharlal Nehru laid the institutional foundations of a newly independent nation. Democracy, scientific temper, public institutions, education, research, and industrial development all gained momentum under his leadership. However, over time it became evident that formulating policies and ensuring their benefits reached the intended beneficiaries were two entirely different challenges. For decades, a long chain of intermediaries stood between government schemes and citizens, causing significant leakage and inefficiency. When Narendra Modi assumed office in 2014, India faced multiple challenges, including economic sluggishness, allegations of corruption, incomplete projects, bureaucratic inertia, and declining public trust. At such a critical juncture, he sought to transform the traditional style of governance by placing technology, transparency, and accountability at its core. This was not merely a policy shift; it represented a transformation in the very philosophy of governance.

One of the most significant achievements of the Modi government has been the expansion of the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system. By integrating bank accounts, Aadhaar identification, and mobile technology, a mechanism was created that enabled government assistance to reach beneficiaries directly. This not only reduced corruption and leakages but also gave millions of citizens the confidence that the government could genuinely reach their doorstep. The poor, farmers, women, students, senior citizens, and workers all benefited from this transformation. The Jan Dhan financial inclusion initiative played a historic role in em-

powering people who had never before been part of the formal banking system. It was not merely a campaign to open bank accounts; it marked the beginning of a new chapter in economic empowerment. Similarly, the Ujjwala Scheme freed millions of women from smoke-filled kitchens by providing clean cooking fuel, significantly improving their health, dignity, and quality of life.

Another defining feature of the Modi era has been the unprecedented expansion of infrastructure. Roads, expressways, railways, metro systems, airports, ports, and digital networks have developed at a remarkable pace, giving fresh momentum to economic growth. Today, smaller cities are being connected through air travel, villages are linked by roads, and the railway system is undergoing rapid modernization. Modern trains such as the Vande Bharat have become symbols of India's technological capability and growing self-confidence. Through housing initiatives, millions of economically disadvantaged families have received permanent homes. For those who spent years living in fragile huts, a house represents not merely shelter but dignity, security, and hope. Likewise, the Jal Jeevan Mission has brought clean drinking water to millions of households, while the nationwide sanitation campaign transformed cleanliness into a people's movement. These achievements are reflected not only in statistics but also in tangible improvements in living standards. Significant changes have also been witnessed in the agricultural sector. The ethanol blending program has opened new avenues of income for farmers, enabling them to emerge not only as food providers but also as contributors to India's energy future. Efforts in biofuels, natural farming, agricultural infrastructure, and technological innovation have sought to make farming more profitable and sustainable, injecting new vitality into the rural economy. The Digital India initiative has given the country a new identity on the global stage. India's digital payments ecosystem is now studied and admired worldwide. The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has made transactions simpler, faster, and more transparent. Digital technology has evolved beyond convenience to become a powerful instrument of good governance. Its impact is visible across education, healthcare, banking, commerce, and public administration.

India's international stature has also risen significantly. Today, the country is viewed not merely as a developing nation but as a potential global leader. Its successful presidency of the G20, influential presence on international platforms, balanced role during global crises, and efforts to amplify the voice of developing nations reflect its growing strength and confidence. Even at recent G7 summits, despite not being a member, Prime Minister Modi's presence and influence have underscored India's rising diplomatic significance and the confi-

dence of its foreign policy. A distinctive aspect of the Modi era has been its ability to connect nationalism with development. The vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) is not simply an economic program; it is a movement aimed at strengthening national confidence. Advances in defense manufacturing, space exploration, startup culture, innovation, and industrial production are manifestations of this broader vision. India is increasingly positioning itself not merely as a consumer of global products and technologies but as a creator and innovator. "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas" (Together with All, Development for All, Trust of All, and Efforts by All) has evolved beyond a political slogan to become a guiding principle of governance. Its objective is to ensure inclusive development so that no section of society is left behind. Consequently, the focus of development policies has increasingly shifted toward those who once stood on the margins of the system. Like any long tenure in office, the Modi government's policies and decisions have been subject to debate and criticism. Such scrutiny is both natural and necessary in a vibrant democracy. Yet it is equally true that over the past twelve years, India has witnessed a profound transformation in governance, development, and public expectations. Citizens today are no longer satisfied with promises alone; they seek visible and measurable results. This, in itself, is a sign of democratic maturity.

Perhaps Narendra Modi's greatest strength lies in his effort to transform governance into a people's movement. He presents himself not as a ruler but as a "Prime Servant" of the nation. His leadership is characterized by consistency, hard work, dedication to goals, and an unwavering commitment to placing the nation above all else. This explains why he remains one of India's most popular leaders and an influential figure on the global stage. The vision of building a developed India by 2047 is not merely an economic aspiration. It is the dream of an India that is self-reliant, inclusive, technologically advanced, culturally confident, and socially compassionate. The Modi era has laid many of the foundational changes required to achieve this goal, and their impact is likely to become even more evident in the decades ahead.

As India advances through its Amrit Kaal—the transformative period leading to the centenary of independence—it can be said that Narendra Modi's contribution extends far beyond schemes and projects. He has inspired millions of Indians with the belief that change is possible, development is a right for all, and every citizen has a role to play in the nation's progress. The journey from Antyodaya to a developed India is a story of faith, determination, and relentless action—a story that continues to shape the destiny of modern India with renewed energy and direction.

From Auniati Satra to London

Dr Sri Sri Pitambar Deva Goswami emphasises on the effect of Vaishnavism on Assam's multicultural society

Sir, At the very outset, we offer our heartfelt respect to all members of British Parliament.

As a Vaishnavite devotee from the North East of India, Assam, I get much pleasure in introducing myself as a humble priest of Auniati Satra in the river island Majuli. This is a holy place of Vaisnavite religion and culture, place of assimilation of different races and tribes. The geographical location, natural environment, and its biodiversity and heritage denote Majuli a unique identity. It is free from all kinds of pollution even today.

I take my stand in the Parliament to deliver a talk on Assam's Vaishnavite culture and its impact on our multicultural society.

Religion is a way of life and is a part of nature. Nature is diverse, therefore, religion needs to accommodate diversity. Sanatan Dharma believes that the diversity is nothing but the expression of unity. Similarly, the multiplicity is nothing but the manifestation of the One --- the Absolute.

In Assam, Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva (1449-1568), the vaishnavite genius, is revered chiefly as a religious preacher and social reformer for more than five hundred years ago. Sankardeva initiated a comprehensive cultural revolution all by himself with unique creations in every field of art and culture, such as dance, drama, music, sculpture and literature which through its pervasive impact on the life of the people could ensure unprecedented changes towards development of Assamese culture in general.

All in all, Srimanta Sankardeva was an illustrious son of mother India. He was regarded as National Guru of Vaishnavite Culture. He came to us as a blessings from above and brought with him wonderful power and abilities.

Actually Srimanta Sankardeva was the highest blazing talent and a versatile persona. Example: He was an Artist, a sports man, a yoga expert, a river specialist, a weather scientist, a great painter, a weaving artist, a dramatist, a lyricist, a poet, an architect, an actor, a dancer, a sculptor, an instrumentalist, a traveller, a propagator, a reformer, a philosopher and a great scholar.

Srimanta Sankardeva is regarded not only as a spiritual reformer but also as a complete and versatile genius of having "64 Arts (kala)". The 64 Arts (Kala) are a complete set of artistic, intellectual, and practical skills meant for all-round human development.

All the works done by Srimanta Sankardeva were scientific. For example, in Vaishnavite culture of Assam, Srimanta Sankardeva introduced the food items which are offered to God have scientific significance. They are mixture of cereals, ginger, common salt, rice granules, fruits and pieces of sugarcane. Every item has certain nutritive value and are good for health. When food items are distributed, the distributor always uses a piece of white cloth to cover his nose and the mouth. This is used as a mask. Similarly, Scientific significance is found in customs and traditions of Namghar and Satra. The dances of Vaishnavite culture like Sattriya dance with matiakhara have some items related to health exercises. Example: The disciples wear white clothes, it signifies peace. In praying, generally clapping is done which is a good physical exercise. In performing mythological dance and Drama, the body movement is given importance. This movement is a kind of Yogic exercise.

His religious principle was only Ek - Saran - Hari - Nam Dharma, a fruit of deep and penetrating study of the Shrimad Bhagavad and the Gita. He had to uphold the ideology of Bhakti (devotion to God) through his artistic creation.

It is to be noted that the Vaishnavite establishment of Assam, generally called Namghar and Satra, were first started by Srimanta Sankardeva and Sri Sri Damodardeva respectively to propagate the Assamese Vaishnavite culture --- EK Saran Hari Nam Dharma. Sri Sri Damodardeva was a Vaishnavite priest of Assam during the time of Srimanta Sankardeva. Relatively, Sri Sri Damodar Deva was the initiator of the basic Sattra's plan. The other Vaishnavite followers of that time were Sri Sri Madhavdeva, Sri Sri Harideva, Sri Sri Bangshigopaldeva, Sri Sri Anirudhadeva.

The most affectionate disciple of Srimanta Sankardeva, Madhavdeva authored Namghosh through which he could define spirituality in true sense.

Example: Govinda, Govinda, Govinda, Govinda, Govinda Rama Murari

Ananta koti Brahmandar Hari adhikari..

Through this Ghosa (Chanting), Madhavdeva established that God is the supreme authority of the universe and He is omnipresent, which is a universal truth.

Bhattadeva who was disciple of Sri Sri Damodardeva wrote a vivid picture about Sattra institution : Jatraranti sat-dharmā kevala bhagavad priyāh, navadhā bhagavad-bhaktih pratyahang jatra barttate.

tat satram uttamam khetram vaishnava-sura-vanditam, tatrasthā vaishnavāḥ sarve hariṇām parāyaṇāh.

It means: Where true dharma (righteousness) flows, marked by devotion to the Lord, and where the nine forms of bhakti (devotion) are practiced in every aspect—there resides divine presence. That assembly/place is the highest sacred field, revered by Vaisnavas and even the God; and those Vaisnavas residing there, are wholly devoted to Lord Hari. The Namghar is a prayer hall, Namghar is a museum, Namghar is an archive centre, Namghar is an auditorium, Namghar is a Village court. Namghar has always held society together, and the Sattra has always given the society moral, spiritual, social, cultural and value education.

Now, I wish to introduce Bhaona, a mythological drama and Borgeet which is termed as a celestial song and explain how these two aspects of Vaishnavite culture impact on multi cultural society:

Rooted in devotion and spirituality, Bhaona is based on mythological stories, mainly from the Bhagavat Purana, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, and is performed in monasteries known as Sattras as well as in Namghars of the villages.

One of the most important contributions of Bhaona to the Assamese society is, it surpasses barriers of caste, creed, and social status. Bhaona also acts as a medium of moral and ethical education, spreading messages of righteousness, compassion and devotion through dramatic storytelling, music, dance and dialogues. It strengthens community bonds by bringing people together in collective preparation and performance. In a multicultural society like Assam, Bhaona serves as a unifying force that preserves traditions while promoting social cohesion, mutual respect and spiritual growth among its people.

Shakespeare brought theatre to the streets of London, and in time, to the whole world, sowing wisdom and peace on a larger scale.

Similarly, Sankardeva gave Bhaona in Sattras and Namghars to spread Vaishnavite spiritual wisdom and divine peace among all human beings to achieve God.

Now, I am going to speak about Borgeets which are termed as celestial songs:

Borgeets, the devotional songs composed by Srimanta Sankardeva and his disciple Madhavdeva, are a priceless gift for the Assamese Vaishnavite culture.

These songs are deeply rooted in devotion to Lord Krishna.

In the multicultural society of Assam, Borgeets play a vital role in promoting unity and harmony. Sung in Sattras and Namghars, these devotional songs are open to participation by people of all castes and creeds. Borgeets also serve as a medium of spiritual and moral upliftment. Its rich musical structure, combined with profound lyrical content, inspires devotion, peace and a sense of collective belonging.

In Vaishnavite religion, Sankardeva said about human beings as:

Samasta bhutat byapi aso mai hari Sabako maniba Vishnu budhi kari (Kritan by Sankardeva) (Kritan by Sankardeva) Kukura Srigala Gadhavara atma Ram Jania sabako kariba pranam

And Jata Jiva Jangama kita patangama

Aga nag jaga teri kaya (Borgeet song composed by Sankardeva)

It means the same soul as the one in human beings is found in the heart of all animals, birds, insects, and others and one should give the proper respect to them. It implies that one should not treat them or suppress them as animal. No writings of his, speak against any section of the society, even during crucial periods. He always addressed society with a humanitarian outlook.

Example: 1) Hae Sabhasada loka, 2) Hae Samajika Loka, 3) Hae Samajyara loka, 4) Uba Nara Loka

Meaning: Welcome to all people of all societies of the world. That means, Srimanta Sankardeva addressed all the people of the world. In Vaishnavite culture of Assam,

people from different tribes, castes, and communities are welcomed. This helps reduce social divisions and encourages a sense of unity among diverse groups.

According to Sankardeva there is no cast difference for worshipping God. His disciples were from all castes and creeds. Sankardeva unified the society by accepting the people of lower castes as his disciples. Sankardeva's message was that in the eyes of God all are equal, so one should not underestimate the lower caste people.

Assam's Vaishnavite culture defines Vaishnava as:

triṇād api sunicena taror api sahiṣṇunā amāninā mānadena kīrtaniyāh sadā harih

Meaning:

One should be humbler than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, give respect to others without expecting any respect in return—only then can one constantly chant the name of Hari.

Now, I wish to conclude with a few lines from the Rig Veda : sarve bhabantu sukhināḥ sarve santu nīrāmayāḥ sarve bhadrāṇi paśyantu mā kścid dukkha bhāgbhavat om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

The meaning is: May all beings be happy, may all be free from illness, may all witness auspiciousness, may no one suffer from sorrow, peace, peace, peace. This is the core concept for Vaishnavite culture.

In such way, Sri Sri Madhavdeva, the ardent disciple of Sankardeva wrote:

Namo Namo Narayana Prassana Huyok Hari

Kariyok Maayaka Nirzyan.

Aponor Mahajaka Apuni Bekat kari

Jivak Kariyo Paritran. It means, let us pray to the supreme Almighty Narayan to save all the human beings from the sorrow and grief with HIS glory and greatness.

Now, I wish to conclude my speech, with a poem composed by myself, on the basis of my last experience of London visit in February 2024:

ENAMELLED UK Gems inlaid with the hues of beauty,

In the mirror of your mind. The sharp and intelligent thoughts

In the fertile field of your brain, The smooth pieces of feelings In the Inner chamber of your heart.

You made the perpetual abode of, Kings and king of kings.

Constituency of thirty-one colleges, Affiliated to the University of Cambridge, With your soft touch, from the thoughts of a Suddenly fallen apple, Newton discovered,

And told the whole world About the Solar System in balance.

Under its shade, Ramanujan invented

The vastness of the mathematical formulae.

Many great minds gave in the touch of Cambridge the new theories of the Universe.

Positioned against The eight-hundred-year-old Cambridge, Oxford, for nine hundred years, Gave the Laws of Proportion.

In your thoughts is your mother tongue, It is in everyone's tongue to-day.

Your garments are the dress Of the whole world to-day.

With your intelligent thoughts, You encompassed the radius of the universe And the vast circumference Of the whole world.

"Vanijye basati Laxmi" (wealth thrives in commerce) With this Mantra, (a sacred formula taught by a guru for secret muttering) You spread your body Far and wide across the world.

The epitome of architectural sculpture, Our "BRINDAVONI BASTRA" (Textile) Our "ASSAM VILASINI" (Newspaper), You preserved in your chest And kept the ancestral wealth Collected from across the world.

With the collection of two hundred million books, You introduced the world's largest library On the bosom of the Universe.

Based on the ancient ones, on one hand, And the newer ones on the other, You have built your society.

And your streets, and boundary walls.

"If atavism gain you go down, If evolution gain you go on"

Admitting to this truth of the heritage and tradition You have been climbing on the ladder of changes Echoing the sound "go on, go on" On your unstoppable path.

You are really Society's exemplary London Of Great, Greater England "Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya"

With the lighted lamps of Deep-awali ever moving, You are the United Kingdom Of beauty, virtue and ideal -ENAMELLED UNITED KINGDOM.



Mediator Pakistan signs US-Iran peace memorandum PM Sharif says Hormuz to reopen instantly

ISLAMABAD, June 18: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday signed the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding - aimed at restoring peace in West Asia - as the key mediator of the negotiations, his office said.

The document was already signed by US President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Wednesday.

Sharif's signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) - in which Washington and Tehran are the two main parties - comes a day ahead of a planned ceremony in Switzerland, where key negotiators from the US, Iran, Pakistan and Qatar are expected to gather.

Pakistan has officially signed as a guarantor.



immediately lift its naval blockade.

“Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif signed the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding as a guarantor. Signatures of US President Donald Trump and Iran’s President Masoud Pezeshkian are present on the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding,” Sharif’s office said in a post on X.

The Prime Minister’s Office on Thursday also shared photographs and videos of him signing the document.

Earlier in the day, Sharif hailed Trump and Iran’s Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei for restoring peace in West Asia, as he announced that the signing of the document will instantly reopen the Strait of Hormuz and the US will

Trump on Wednesday signed the memorandum of understanding at the Palace of Versailles in France, where he had dinner with French President Emmanuel Macron after the G7 summit. Later, Iranian media posted photos of President Pezeshkian holding a copy of the signed document before a camera.

Sharif on Thursday said that the signing of the agreement at the highest level of the respective governments demonstrates the commitment of both sides to a diplomatic resolution of the conflict, as he thanked West Asian countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Türkiye and Egypt for their contribution.

The peace process was negotiated through mediators that included Pakistan and Qatar, who initially got a two-week ceasefire

agreement on April 8. The ceasefire was later extended till the completion of the talks.

Pakistan - which eventually emerged as the key mediator - hosted the first round of peace talks in April, which was attended by senior leaders from both sides, but they failed to clinch a deal.

“I am honoured to announce that the historic ‘Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding’ has been electronically signed today between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran,” Sharif said in a post on X earlier on Thursday.

He further said: “Islamabad MoU shall enter into force with immediate effect and as a first step, the Islamic Republic of Iran will instantly reopen the Strait of Hormuz and the United States of America will immediately lift the

naval blockade.”

The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow waterway through which roughly one-fifth of the world’s total energy supplies pass in normal times. Shipping movements through the strait has been severely disrupted since February 28, when the US and Israel launched joint attacks on Iran, triggering retaliatory strikes. It led to energy crisis in several countries.

commitment to constructive engagement were instrumental in bringing this agreement to fruition”. Sharif also highlighted the contributions of Pakistan’s Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir, saying his “tireless efforts, selfless dedication and instrumental role were critical in facilitating this breakthrough and advancing the cause of peace and regional stability”.

“May this Memorandum of Understanding serve as an enduring foundation for greater understanding, mutual respect and shared prosperity for the complete region,” the prime minister added.

Meanwhile, Pakistan’s Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar held telephonic conversations with senior leaders from several countries including Canada, Bahrain and Türkiye, discussing the signing of the MoU with Pakistan as a witness.

“FM Anita Anand commended Pakistan’s constructive role in supporting diplomatic engagement and mediation efforts between the United States and Iran, which helped facilitate the understanding reached between the two parties,” Pakistan’s Foreign Office said in a post, elaborating on Dar’s telephonic conversation with Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand.

“They also discussed the forthcoming engagement between the parties in Burgenstock, Switzerland on Friday,” it said. (PTI)

Taiwan needs US weapons for self-defense as threat from China grows, diplomat tells AP



WASHINGTON, June 18: Taiwan needs to purchase American weapons to ensure its self-defense in the face of a growing threat from Beijing, the island’s top diplomat in the US said, adding that he has seen no change in Washington’s policy toward the self-governing island that China claims as its own.

A USD 14-billion arms sale package to Taiwan is still in limbo after President Donald Trump returned from Beijing in May and said he had discussed the proposal “in great detail” with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, heightening anxieties in Taiwan and raising concerns among lawmakers on the Capitol Hill.

“We need those arms for defensive purposes,” Alexander Yui Tahr, who heads the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the US, told The Associated Press in an interview Wednesday in Washington. “We’re trying to increase our defense expenditure. We try to increase our ability to defend ourselves better and survive times of crisis.”

The United States, like most countries, does not officially recognize Taiwan as a country. China prohibits any state it has diplomatic relations with from having formal ties with Taipei. But the US is the island’s strongest informal backer and arms provider.

Yui, while not formally an ambassador to the US, acts as Taiwan’s top envoy in Washington.

The Trump administration has not moved forward with the USD 14 billion weapons sale proposal approved by senior lawmakers earlier this year. Trump has described the sale as a “very good negotiating chip” with China.

Washington is obligated by domestic law to provide Taiwan with sufficient hardware to deter aggression from China, which claims sovereignty over the island and vows to seize it, by force if necessary, to achieve what it considers to be unification. Beijing has always opposed US arms sales to Taiwan, which has never been under China’s communist rule.

Taiwan diplomat sees no change in the US position toward the island

Yui stressed that there had been no changes to the US position on Taiwan and that the Taiwanese government will respect the Trump administration’s “tempo” in making announcements. The arms sale has broad support in Congress, with lawmakers raising concerns to Secretary of State Marco Rubio at a hearing this month. Rubio affirmed that US policy on Taiwan has not changed and that Washington does not “consult with the Chinese on these arms deals.”

“We’re aware of their position. They talk about it all the time,” Rubio said of Beijing. “They are not negotiated, and they are not consulted.” Rubio said the proposal was not held up but under review and that the administration had other factors to weigh.

“It includes the availability of the stocks in the short term,” Rubio said of US weapons stockpiles, which have been drawn down during the Iran war. (AP)

Pentagon chief lashes out at NATO allies, announces review of US forces in Europe

BRUSSELS, June 18: US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth lashed out at NATO allies on Thursday, announcing a six-month Pentagon review of American forces in Europe whose outcome will depend on how fast the Europeans take responsibility for their own security.

“This will be a real review. It will be designed to ensure that NATO is moving fast and irreversibly toward Europe leading, stepping up to take primary responsibility for the defence of Europe,” he told his NATO counterparts in Brussels.

Hegseth lambasted European allies for failing to provide US forces access to bases in Europe to launch attacks on Iran, calling it “shameful.”

“These allies, they put America’s sons and daughters, our sons and daughters, at risk by denying them the predictable access, basing and overflight that never should have been in question at all,” he said.

Taking the microphone at the top of the meeting, Hegseth also railed against migration and gender equality policies in Europe, in remarks reminiscent of those of Vice President JD Vance in February last year that angered many Europeans.

“Instead of tanks and fighters and air defences, the focus has been on gender equity and climate change and defence austerity. Europe’s borders flew wide open, welfare states expanded, and defence budgets cratered. Along with Europe’s belief in itself and its civilisation,” Hegseth said.

Hegseth’s comments largely mischaracterised European policies today. On defence, European allies and Canada have launched an unprecedented effort to boost defence spending and expand their armed forces. NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte noted on Thursday that they spent USD 90 billion more on defence last year, a 20 per cent increase over 2024. And while Europe accepted large numbers of migrants and asylum seekers more

than a decade ago, most countries have tightened their borders since.

The Trump administration now wants a reboot of the 32-nation organisation to turn it into a “NATO 3.0” capable of deterring any threat, Hegseth said.

Hegseth’s remarks came a few weeks after the United States told its allies that it would no longer supply certain warships and aircraft if one of them came under attack. European allies and Canada are trying to work out how to plug the gaps.

NATO’s supreme allied commander, an American, is working on backup plans to defend Europe after the US signalled on June 3 that it would no longer supply an aircraft carrier and support ships, aerial refuelling planes and dozens of fighter jets, among other military assets, in a crisis.

The Trump administration insists that it needs to be able to plan for two simultaneous conflicts and wants more military resources at hand should a conflict break out with China in the Indo-Pacific region. Under NATO’s collective security guarantee - Article 5 of its founding treaty - the 32 allies pledge that an attack on one of them will be considered an attack on all. It does not oblige them to provide military support, although many likely would.

In essence, the United States is scaling back how it might help should an ally trigger Article 5. The US has by far NATO’s biggest armed forces. It does not intend to withdraw its nuclear weapons in Europe, which are key to NATO’s deterrence. To underscore that point, NATO’s Nuclear Planning Group issued its first statement in 19 years after it had assembled at Thursday’s meeting.

In the statement, it “recalled that the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance remain the supreme guarantee of Allied security and underpin NATO’s extended deterrence architecture.” (AP)

EU quietly sought to reopen communication with Russia

BRUSSELS, June 18: The European Union has reached out to Moscow in a tentative bid to open a line of communication so the continent is not sidelined in any potential talks to end Russia’s grinding war in Ukraine, officials said Thursday.

The news emerged as Ukraine launched one of its biggest drone attacks since Russia’s all-out invasion of its neighbour more than four years ago, Russian officials said Thursday. A major Moscow oil refinery was hit for a second time in a week and commercial flights at Moscow airports were disrupted.

Against the backdrop of conflict, the EU has been quietly seeking to reopen communications with Moscow even as it doubles down on its support for Kyiv. Russian President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, has tried to cut out Europe and Kyiv and negotiate Ukraine’s future with Washington.

“In the past few weeks, brief contacts were made at diplomatic level to open communication channels but nothing was discussed on substance,” an EU official with knowledge of the approach said on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive move. A second official, also speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media on the matter, confirmed the Russia outreach is taking place but declined to comment further.

“In any future scenario, the EU has specific interests that will need to be defended, therefore it is important to have established diplomatic channels with Russia. The EU is not a mediator. It supports Ukraine in its efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace,” the first official added.

The Kremlin did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Putin has repeatedly said Europe cannot play any kind of mediation role in settling the conflict but has not ruled out speaking to the EU.

“We have never refused contacts with representatives of the European Union in any format,” he said earlier this month. “We are not rejecting contacts. If they want to talk, they know how to reach us. They can pick up the phone and call. If they want to come, they are welcome to do so. It is not Russia that is refusing engagement.”

According to the officials, European Council President Antonio Costa “has been coordinating closely with European leaders on possible engagement with Russia and the issues to be discussed when the right moment comes.” News of the moves came as EU leaders were heading to Brussels for their summer summit, where Ukraine will be high on the agenda. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is expected to address the 27 leaders, who are seeking closer ties with Kyiv. (AP)

Chinese FM Wang Yi to attend BRICS NSAs meeting in Delhi

BEIJING, June 18: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will attend a meeting of the National Security Advisors of BRICS countries to be held in New Delhi on June 22-23, Beijing announced on Thursday.

The BRICS National Security Advisors Meeting is a high-level platform that brings together the National Security Advisors (NSAs) of the 11 BRICS member-states to exchange views on key security challenges.

Wang will attend the meeting upon invitation, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing in Beijing on Thursday. Wang will exchange views with other BRICS member states on the current international security situation and major international and regional issues, Lin said.

The Chinese foreign minister is also a member of the Political Bureau of the ruling Communist Party of China and Director of the Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission. The meeting will also discuss joint responses to traditional and non-traditional security challenges and make preparations for the BRICS Summit to be held in India in September. Lin said.

“Amid a transforming and volatile world with many security challenges on the rise, BRICS countries standing at the forefront of the global south are committed to safeguarding world peace, promoting common development, practising multilateralism and enabling more equitable global governance,” Lin said.

China looks forward to enhancing communication and coordination with BRICS members to further enrich political and security cooperation and contribute to world peace and stability, he added.

The meeting comes at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions in several regions.

Wang, who is also Beijing’s Special Representative on the India-China border issue, is expected to meet NSA Ajit Doval during his New Delhi visit to discuss bilateral issues, according to official sources.

India holds the rotating presidency of the BRICS bloc this year. Its members include Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates. (PTI)

For India AI means ‘All Inclusive’: Modi

PARIS, June 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asserted that technology can lead to progress only if it is democratised and said AI means “All Inclusive” for India. His remarks at a global technology summit come against the backdrop of the US restricting the use of Anthropic’s latest Artificial Intelligence (AI) models for foreign nationals. Highlighting India’s growing prowess in the technology space, Modi said half of the global digital transactions are happening in the country. “Technology can lead to progress only when it is democratised,” the Prime Minister said at Vivatex 2026. In the last decade, he said, India has been going through a rapid transformation powered by technology. “From creating the world’s largest digital identity system to the world’s largest digital payments platforms, we are using technology at a massive scale for financial inclusion, education, telemedicine...” he added. (PTI)

Modi-Trump meeting signals pathway to progress: USISPF chief

WASHINGTON, June 18: The meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump signalled a pathway to progress with both sides channelling their best efforts to give final touches to a long-pending trade deal, according to a leading India-US business advocate.

Modi and Trump met on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Evian-les-Bains on Wednesday, amid efforts to repair the bilateral relationship that had undergone significant strain over the past year.

Mukesh Aghi, president of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), said the overall tone of the meeting was positive and reflected efforts by both countries to advance key areas of cooperation.

The overarching tone remains positive that both Washington and New Delhi are channelling their best efforts to negotiate the “final touches” of the trade deal, he said. The proposed trade pact has undergone multiple rounds of negotiations at the ministerial and bureaucratic levels over the past year.

Aghi said Trump has also agreed to visit India in the near future, which was a positive sign after the Quad meeting in New Delhi was restricted to the Foreign Minister’s level. (AP)

“The meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump signalled a pathway to progress with both sides channelling their best efforts to give final touches to a long-pending trade deal, according to a leading India-US business advocate.

Modi and Trump met on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Evian-les-Bains on Wednesday, amid efforts to repair the bilateral relationship that had undergone significant strain over the past year.

Mukesh Aghi, president of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), said the overall tone of the meeting was positive and reflected efforts by both countries to advance key areas of cooperation.

The overarching tone remains positive that both Washington and New Delhi are channelling their best efforts to negotiate the “final touches” of the trade deal, he said. The proposed trade pact has undergone multiple rounds of negotiations at the ministerial and bureaucratic levels over the past year.

Aghi said Trump has also agreed to visit India in the near future, which was a positive sign after the Quad meeting in New Delhi was restricted to the Foreign Minister’s level. (AP)

Chinese FM Wang Yi to attend BRICS NSAs meeting in Delhi

BEIJING, June 18: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will attend a meeting of the National Security Advisors of BRICS countries to be held in New Delhi on June 22-23, Beijing announced on Thursday.

The BRICS National Security Advisors Meeting is a high-level platform that brings together the National Security Advisors (NSAs) of the 11 BRICS member-states to exchange views on key security challenges.

Wang will attend the meeting upon invitation, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing in Beijing on Thursday. Wang will exchange views with other BRICS member states on the current international security situation and major international and regional issues, Lin said.

The Chinese foreign minister is also a member of the Political Bureau of the ruling Communist Party of China and Director of the Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission. The meeting will also discuss joint responses to traditional and non-traditional security challenges and make preparations for the BRICS Summit to be held in India in September. Lin said.

“Amid a transforming and volatile world with many security challenges on the rise, BRICS countries standing at the forefront of the global south are committed to safeguarding world peace, promoting common development, practising multilateralism and enabling more equitable global governance,” Lin said.

China looks forward to enhancing communication and coordination with BRICS members to further enrich political and security cooperation and contribute to world peace and stability, he added.

The meeting comes at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions in several regions.

Wang, who is also Beijing’s Special Representative on the India-China border issue, is expected to meet NSA Ajit Doval during his New Delhi visit to discuss bilateral issues, according to official sources.

India holds the rotating presidency of the BRICS bloc this year. Its members include Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates. (PTI)

Chinese FM Wang Yi to attend BRICS NSAs meeting in Delhi

BEIJING, June 18: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will attend a meeting of the National Security Advisors of BRICS countries to be held in New Delhi on June 22-23, Beijing announced on Thursday.

The BRICS National Security Advisors Meeting is a high-level platform that brings together the National Security Advisors (NSAs) of the 11 BRICS member-states to exchange views on key security challenges.

Wang will attend the meeting upon invitation, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing in Beijing on Thursday. Wang will exchange views with other BRICS member states on the current international security situation and major international and regional issues, Lin said.

The Chinese foreign minister is also a member of the Political Bureau of the ruling Communist Party of China and Director of the Office of the Central Foreign Affairs Commission. The meeting will also discuss joint responses to traditional and non-traditional security challenges and make preparations for the BRICS Summit to be held in India in September. Lin said.

“Amid a transforming and volatile world with many security challenges on the rise, BRICS countries standing at the forefront of the global south are committed to safeguarding world peace, promoting common development, practising multilateralism and enabling more equitable global governance,” Lin said.

China looks forward to enhancing communication and coordination with BRICS members to further enrich political and security cooperation and contribute to world peace and stability, he added.

The meeting comes at a time of heightened geopolitical tensions in several regions.

Wang, who is also Beijing’s Special Representative on the India-China border issue, is expected to meet NSA Ajit Doval during his New Delhi visit to discuss bilateral issues, according to official sources.

India holds the rotating presidency of the BRICS bloc this year. Its members include Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates. (PTI)

Pak’s Deputy PM Ishaq Dar ‘expresses concern’ over projects on Indus river

ISLAMABAD, June 18: Pakistan’s Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday expressed concern over Indian projects on the Indus river, warning that such measures could pose serious risks to regional stability and water security.

Dar, also the foreign minister, made the comments while addressing a seminar via a video link organised by the Embassy of Pakistan in Brussels and the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) in Brussels.

Dar “expressed concern over recent Indian reservoir expansion and water diversion projects on the Indus river system, warning that such measures could alter natural river flows, foster hydro-hegemony, and pose serious risks to regional stability and water security,” according to the Foreign Office.

He also reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to dialogue, diplomacy, and international law, while calling for greater international cooperation on water security.

Dar emphasised that peaceful coexistence among nations rests on respect for international law, treaty obligations, and multilateral frameworks.

His remarks came after media reports that claimed India was planning projects on the three rivers allotted to Pakistan under the Indus Water Treaty of 1960.

A day after the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22 last year, India took a series of punitive measures against Pakistan that included putting the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 in abeyance.

The treaty, brokered by the World Bank, has governed the distribution and use of the Indus River and its tributaries between India and Pakistan since 1960.

“The treaty (IWT) envisages the peaceful resolution of disputes within its own framework,” Dar said.

“Pakistan remains committed to resolving all issues through dialogue, diplomacy and the mechanism provided under international law,” he said. (PTI)

UN food agencies warn acute hunger will worsen in 13 hot spots as famine risks

ROME, June 18: The United Nations’ food agencies warned Wednesday that acute hunger is set to worsen across 13 global hot spots in the coming months, with conflict, funding shortages and climate shocks pushing millions closer to famine.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) said in a new joint report that conditions are expected to deteriorate between June and November 2026, with around 266 million people already facing high levels of acute food insecurity, and called for urgent action.

“The warnings in this report cannot be ignored,” said WFP Acting Executive Director Carl Skau. “Without action now, millions more are expected to face worsening levels of hunger in the months ahead, pushing some closer to famine.”

Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen and the Gaza Strip remain the hot spots of greatest concern, the report said, while Nigeria and Somalia have been newly added to that category as conditions worsen and famine risks rise.

Seven other countries are also on



the hotspot list - Afghanistan, Congo, Myanmar, Haiti, Mali and new additions Lebanon and Madagascar.

The agencies said conflict and violence are the main drivers of hunger in nearly all the hotspots, compounded by economic shocks, deep cuts to humanitarian funding and the expected impact of an El Niño weather pattern, which could bring droughts and floods to vulnerable regions.

They warned that additional pressures, including spillover effects from the Middle East conflict and an Ebola outbreak in eastern Congo, are worsening the outlook by disrupting markets, livelihoods and aid access.

Funding for food assistance and related programs has dropped sharply - by about 59% since 2022 - even as needs have surged, the report said.

There was a piece of good news on funding Tuesday: The United

States pledged USD 800 million to WFP which the agency said will help more than 38 million people in at least 37 countries at “a moment of unprecedented global need driving hunger to record levels.”

But WFP’s more than USD 10 billion appeal for 2026 still remains severely underfunded.

For years, the US Agency for International Development had been the backbone of humanitarian aid around the globe. But last year, the Trump administration abolished the agency, cutting USD 60 billion in overall assistance.

Under a reset in December, the US has restored funding to WFP and just announced USD 218 million in assistance to the UN children’s agency, UNICEF.

WFP’s Skau called the new US donation “a lifeline to reach people on the brink of famine, provide nutritional support to mothers and children and position food to prevent millions from slipping further into extreme hunger.”

Assessing the global hotspots, the report said that conditions in the Gaza Strip have improved since an

October 2025 ceasefire but remain fragile.

About 1.6 million people - roughly 77% of the population analysed - were acutely food insecure earlier this year and in need of urgent assistance, including more than half a million in emergency levels and a smaller number facing catastrophic conditions.

Yemen remains “one of the world’s worst food security crises,” hosting the largest population facing emergency or catastrophic levels of food insecurity, it said.

And the threat of famine between now and November looms over people in Nigeria’s Borno state and Somalia’s Burhakaba district as well as in South Sudan’s Jonglei and Upper Nile states, and in Sudan’s North Darfur, South Darfur and South Kordofan regions.

The FAO and the WFP called for swift, coordinated international action to scale up aid, protect livelihoods and prevent further deterioration, warning that without swift intervention, millions more could face catastrophic hunger in the months ahead. (AP)

Pak’s Deputy PM Ishaq Dar ‘expresses concern’ over projects on Indus river

ISLAMABAD, June 18: Pakistan’s Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday expressed concern over Indian projects on the Indus river, warning that such measures could pose serious risks to regional stability and water security.

Dar, also the foreign minister, made the comments while addressing a seminar via a video link organised by the Embassy of Pakistan in Brussels and the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) in Brussels.

Dar “expressed concern over recent Indian reservoir expansion and water diversion projects on the Indus river system, warning that such measures could alter natural river flows, foster hydro-hegemony, and pose serious risks to regional stability and water security,” according to the Foreign Office.

He also reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to dialogue, diplomacy, and international law, while calling for greater international cooperation on water security.

Dar emphasised that peaceful coexistence among nations rests on respect for international law, treaty obligations, and multilateral frameworks.

His remarks came after media reports that claimed India was planning projects on the three rivers allotted to Pakistan under the Indus Water Treaty of 1960.

A day after the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22 last year, India took a series of punitive measures against Pakistan that included putting the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 in abeyance.

The treaty, brokered by the World Bank, has governed the distribution and use of the Indus River and its tributaries between India and Pakistan since 1960.

“The treaty (IWT) envisages the peaceful resolution of disputes within its own framework,” Dar said.

“Pakistan remains committed to resolving all issues through dialogue, diplomacy and the mechanism provided under international law,” he said. (PTI)

Security forces conduct search operations in Manipur's Kangpokpi; arms seized, bunkers destroyed

IMPHAL, June 18: Security forces have launched extensive search operations in at least four villages, where incidents of violence were reported recently, in Manipur's Kangpokpi district and recovered a cache of arms and ammunition, police said on Thursday.

At least thirty illegal bunkers were also destroyed during the operations on Wednesday at Leilon Vaiphei, Leilon Khunou, L Munlui and Konsakhul villages within the jurisdiction of the Leimakhong Police Station, a police statement said.

Leilon Vaiphei is a Kuki-Zo village, where six Naga men were abducted on May 13, and their bodies were recovered near the village on June 10, an official said.

Reports of firing were also reported from Leilon Munlui and Konsakhul in the last few months, he said.

"During the operations, eleven 12-bore SBBLs (single-barreled



breech-loading), 294 live rounds of ammunition for a 12-bore gun, two packages of gun powder, 34 empty cases of 12-bore ammunition, and six bulletproof vests were recovered," the statement said.

Thirty bunkers, outposts and strategic camp sites found in the vicinity of these villages were also dismantled during the operations, while four people were also detained for verification, it said.

Security forces also destroyed an unauthorised check post and a bunker at S Nabil and Loilamkoi villages under the Churachandpur Police Station limits in Churachandpur district on Wednesday.

The police had earlier said that the DGP was "personally overseeing operations in areas where there has been a spurt of killings and armed activities between communities in recent weeks".

Former chief minister N Biren Singh, in a post on X, welcomed the proactive security measures launched by newly appointed Manipur DGP Mukesh Singh.

The former CM said, "It is particularly encouraging to see that, after a long gap, the DGP himself is personally supervising the combing operations against anti-social elements today. I truly appreciate his hands-on approach and commitment."

He also expressed confidence that with "the determined efforts of Mukesh Singh and the security forces, peace and normalcy will be restored in Manipur at the earliest".

He urged all sections of society to stand united and extend full support to the security forces.

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

Sikkim MP meets Rajnath Singh, raises border connectivity, ST inclusion issues

GANGTOK, June 18: Sikkim's lone Lok Sabha MP Indra Hang Subba on Thursday met Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in New Delhi and sought improved border connectivity in the northern parts of the state. He also pressed for the resolution of long-pending demands related to Scheduled Tribe (ST) status and political representation in the state.

According to a statement issued by the MP's office, Subba called on Singh at Kartavya Bhawan and highlighted recurring connectivity challenges in north Sikkim, particularly along routes leading to strategically important border areas.

He pointed out the difficulties in maintaining road infrastructure due to rugged terrain, adverse weather conditions and frequent disruptions, and stressed the need for reliable all-weather connectivity for both national security and regional development. Considering the strategic importance of north Sikkim, there is an urgent need to strengthen all-weather connectivity and modernise infrastructure in border areas, Subba said during the



meeting, according to the statement.

The MP also underscored the importance of better infrastructure to facilitate the movement of security forces, improve access to remote habitations and promote economic development in the region. Subba further urged the Centre to expedite the inclusion of Sikkim's 12 left-out communities in the Scheduled Tribe list, describing it as a long-pending demand linked to social justice and equitable opportunities.

He also raised the issue of reservation of seats for the Limbu and Tamang Scheduled Tribes in the Sikkim Legislative Assembly, which has remained unresolved de-

spite both communities having been granted ST status.

The MP sought the defence minister's support for an early resolution of the issues, which have remained key concerns in the state for years, the statement said.

Singh assured him that the matters raised during the meeting would receive due consideration.

After the meeting, Subba expressed confidence that the Centre, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, would address the developmental aspirations and constitutional concerns of the people of Sikkim while strengthening the state's strategic infrastructure. (PTI)

Govt committed to resolve forest, land management issues: Mein

ITANAGAR, June 18: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Thursday said the state government is committed to resolving long-pending forest area and land management issues through collaborative decision-making and improved inter-departmental coordination.

Mein made the remarks after chairing a high-power committee (HPC) meeting, which deliberated on measures for addressing forest-related concerns and associated land management issues.

The meeting was attended by Environment and Forest Minister Wangki Lowang, Urban Development & Land Management Minister Balo Raja, and Chief Secretary Manish Kumar Gupta. The meeting focused on identifying practical solutions to long-standing challenges, strengthening coordination among departments, and ensuring that developmental needs are addressed without compromising environmental priorities, officials said.

Mein said the deliberations centred on identifying practical solutions, strengthening inter-departmental coordination and ensuring a balanced approach towards conservation and developmental needs. (PTI)

NSF, CNTC oppose Yoga Day observance in Nagaland schools on Sunday

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, June 18: The Naga Students Federation (NSF) and the Central Nagaland Tribes Council (CNTC) on Thursday opposed observance of International Yoga Day in schools across Nagaland on 21, which falls on Sunday.

In a statement, the NSF voiced its strong opposition to the circular issued by the directorate of school education department, directing educational institutions across the state to observe the 12th International Day of Yoga on Sunday.

The federation viewed the directive for observance of the day on Sunday as a blatant disregard for the

religious sentiments and spiritual convictions of the Naga people.

Calling the directive "unwarranted", the federation urged the department and the Nagaland government to immediately withdraw the notification and desist from imposing such programmes upon educational institutions and the Naga people.

It cautioned the department against any attempt to enforce or coerce compliance with the directive under the guise of official instructions.

It also warned that the imposition will be viewed with utmost seriousness and the concerned

authorities will be held solely responsible for any untoward consequences arising therefrom.

In an open letter to the principal director of the school education department, the CNTC expressed deep concern over the circular and said the matter has raised concern among the public.

Appreciating the initiatives aimed at promoting physical health and well-being, the council questioned the wisdom and sensitivity of scheduling such a programme on a Sunday in a predominantly Christian state, where the day is held sacred and devoted to worship and religious observance.

It said the issue is not about observance of a programme but about a public authority organising and encouraging participation in an activity on a day that holds profound religious significance for the overwhelming majority of the people of Nagaland.

The CNTC urged the department to immediately revoke the circular and consider rescheduling of the programme.

It said failure to review the matter may give rise to widespread public dissatisfaction and avoidable tensions, the consequences of which will be neither in the interest of the department nor the people.

NSCN-IM imposes 'Presidential Rule' in Wung Tangkhul Region

DIMAPUR, June 18: The NSCN-IM has announced the imposition of what it termed "Presidential Rule" in the Wung Tangkhul Region (WTR) with immediate effect, citing a breakdown of stability and administrative functioning in the region.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the organisation said the order was issued by its Yaruwo (Chairman/President) under powers vested by Article 3, Serial No. (viii) of the Yehzabo (Constitution of Nagalim).

The directive was issued through Presidential Order Reference No. 13/GPRN/ORD-50/YO/26 dated June 16, 2026.

According to the NSCN-IM, the decision followed a review conducted by its National Security Council, which concluded that prevailing conditions in the Wung Tangkhul Region had rendered normal regional administration unworkable.

To oversee governance during the period, the organisation has constituted a team of provisional authorities to discharge the responsibilities of the regional administration.

The NSCN-IM stated that Maj. Gen. (Retd.) Ramkathang Varah, MM, MC, a member of its Collective Leadership, has been appointed convener of the provisional authority.

The statement further said that all administrative responsibilities previously entrusted to the Kilo Ministry through an earlier order issued on April 8, 2026, have been transferred to the newly constituted provisional administration with immediate effect.

The NSCN-IM said the arrangement would remain in force until normalcy is restored in the Wung Tangkhul Region.

The organisation also appealed to regional officials, civil society organisations and residents to cooperate with the provisional authority in maintaining peace, stability and administrative functioning in the region. (NNN)

Voting concludes for election to lone RS seat in Mizoram

AIZAWL, June 18: Voting for the election to the lone Rajya Sabha seat in Mizoram concluded on Thursday, and the counting will commence at 5 pm to decide the electoral fate of two candidates, an official said.

The ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) has fielded party spokesperson K Lalduangkima, while the main opposition, Mizo National Front, nominated advocate and writer Zothansangi Hmar for the polls.

The BJP and the Congress abstained from voting.

Twenty-six of 27 ZPM MLAs and 10 legislators of the MNF exercised their franchise, an official said.

ZPM legislator from Tuichang constituency, W Chhuanawma, could not participate in the voting due to health issues, the official said.

Lalthangmawia, the additional secretary in the assembly secretariat, said voting began at 9 am and was scheduled to end at 4 pm, but the process concluded around 11 am.

The counting will begin at 5 pm, he said.

"All logistical and security arrangements were in place for the voting. Counting of votes will be held at the assembly building," he said.

Chief Minister Lalduhoma cast his vote at 9.43 am and dismissed the opposition's allegation that there was a rift within the ruling ZPM, which could trigger cross-voting during the ongoing polling for the



lone Rajya Sabha seat in the state.

"The allegation that there is an internal squabble within the ZPM and potential cross-vote in the Rajya Sabha poll is a ploy of the opposition to distract public attention. They have been doing this from the beginning. There will be no cross-vote as our legislators remain united during the voting," the CM said.

Lalduhoma was the first legislator to participate in the voting, followed by Horticulture Minister C. Lalsawingua.

In the 40-member Mizoram assembly, the ZPM has 27 legislators, the MNF 10, the BJP two and the Congress one legislator.

MNF legislator and leader of opposition Lalthandama Ralte alleged that there was a rift within the ZPM.

He expressed hope that the MNF might get votes from the ruling party.

Ralte also claimed that ZPM legislators exercised their franchise from 10:30 am onwards and remained united during the voting.

Congress MLA C Ngunlianchunga said that he did not cast his vote as suggested by the party high command.

BJP media convener Johnny Lalthanpuia also said its two legislators did not participate in voting for the Rajya Sabha poll. (PTI)

SIR to begin in Meghalaya on June 20: CEO

SHILLONG, June 18: Meghalaya will undertake a state-wide Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls from June 20, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) BDR Tiwari said on Thursday.

The CEO said booth-level officers (BLOs) will carry out door-to-door verification and the final rolls will be published on October 7.

Tiwari said the exercise will commence with a preparatory phase from June 20 to June 29, followed by house-to-house verification from June 30 to July 29.

"The starting phase will be from June 20 to June 29. Thereafter, from June 30 to July 29, BLOs will conduct house visits," he said.

The draft electoral roll will be published on August 5, after which electors will have the opportunity to file claims and objections until September 4.

"Draft publication will be on August 5,

and from August 5 to September 4 the period will be for claims and objections," Tiwari said.

"The final publication of the electoral roll will be on October 7, and the qualifying date for the SIR will be October 1," he said.

The CEO asserted that the revision would be carried out strictly in accordance with the Election Commission's mandate to ensure that every eligible citizen is enrolled while preventing ineligible entries.

"We are undertaking this SIR exercise as per schedule. Our methods and machinery will ensure that no eligible voter is left out and no ineligible voter is included," he said. The SIR is aimed at updating the electoral rolls by enrolling newly eligible voters, removing the names of deceased or shifted electors, and correcting entries through field verification across the state. (PTI)

IIIDEM marks 15th Foundation Day with national conference on electoral capacity building



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 18: The India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) celebrated its 15th Foundation Day with a two-day conference on Capacity Building and Strategic Roadmap held in New Delhi on June 16 and 17.

The conference brought together more than 450 participants, including national and state-level master trainers, academic partners, Election Commission officials, IIIDEM personnel and Booth Level Officer (BLO) supervisors from Delhi, to review achievements, discuss emerging priorities and outline the future direction of electoral training and management.

Addressing the plenary session, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar congratulated the institute on completing 15 years of service in electoral training and management.

He noted that during Lok Sabha elec-

tions, the institute plays a critical role in training nearly 1.8 crore election officials to ensure adherence to constitutional provisions, electoral laws and the guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India.

Election Commissioner Dr Vivek Joshi highlighted the institute's growing international profile and said IIIDEM has the potential to continue serving as a globally recognised training institution for election management beyond India's chairmanship of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

Director General of IIIDEM Rakesh Verma, in his opening remarks, described the institute as a unique platform that brings together election practitioners, academicians and researchers for knowledge sharing and capacity building in election management.

The conference focused on four strate-

gic pillars: strengthening national training programmes, expanding international engagement, promoting research and knowledge development, and advancing sustainable democracy and election management practices.

The first day featured discussions on the draft National Training Policy, training standards at the state, district and assembly levels, and new programmes for Election Management Bodies. Participants also reviewed scripts for training videos and awareness materials intended for grassroots election functionaries and voter education campaigns.

The second day included Training of Trainers sessions for State and National Level Master Trainers, reviews of thematic group initiatives by academic experts and a Foundation Day function held in association with the Election Commission of India.

Since its establishment in 2011, IIIDEM has conducted 1,885 training programmes involving more than 1.2 lakh participants through both online and offline platforms.

The institute's international outreach now extends to 142 countries.

Officials said IIIDEM continues to contribute to strengthening democratic governance and election management worldwide through training, research, knowledge development and international collaboration.

Sitharaman to inaugurate NE's largest organic spice processing facility

SHILLONG, June 18: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will begin a two-day visit to Meghalaya on June 19, during which she will inaugurate the Northeast's largest organic spice processing facility and unveil development projects worth ₹ 1,200 crore, officials said on Thursday.

The finance minister will participate in a series of events across Ri Bhoi, East Khasi Hills and West Jaintia Hills districts. (PTI)

State-level workshop on UMANG, MyScheme and DigiLocker held in Naharlagun

HT Correspondent
NAHARLAGUN, June 18: A state-level workshop on "Enhancing Digital Governance through UMANG, MyScheme and DigiLocker" was organised at the Banquet Hall, Itanagar, by the Department of Information Technology and Communication in collaboration with the National e-Governance Division (NeGD) and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

The workshop aimed to promote digital governance and create awareness about key citizen-centric digital platforms developed by the Government of India.

Addressing the gathering, Chairman of IT and e-Governance Nyamar Karbak and Dr Yijum Tato highlighted the significance of digital governance initiatives and the benefits of leveraging technology to improve public service delivery.

The programme featured presentations by resource persons from NeGD, who explained the functionalities and advantages of various digital platforms.

Prabhnour Singh of NeGD elaborated on the features of DigiLocker, highlighting how the platform enables citizens to securely access, store and manage important documents in digital format, thereby reducing dependence on physical records.

Another resource person, Sarwes Kumer, delivered presentations on the Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG) and the MyScheme portal.

He explained how the platforms help citizens access a wide range of government services and information on welfare schemes through a single digital interface.

Officials said the workshop formed part of ongoing efforts to strengthen digital governance, improve awareness about e-governance initiatives and encourage greater adoption of digital public services among citizens and government departments.

The event witnessed participation from government officials and stakeholders associated with digital governance and public service delivery.

NO.MMB/Parking/Vendor Tender-1/2026-27/155

Dated Muzhalpur, the 2nd June, 2026

TENDER NOTICE

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

NAME OF TENDER	SCHEDULE RATE 2026-27	EARNEST MONEY TO BE DEPOSITED
PARKING, E-RICKSHAW, GOODS LOADING & UNLOADING AND VENDORS	Rs. 1,70,000.00 (Rupees One lakh Seventy thousand only.)	2% FOR GENERAL CATEGORY AND 1% FOR SC/ST CATEGORY OF SCHEDULE RATE

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

Willing bidders may submit their tenders in the tender box between 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 p.m. on 25-06-2026 at office of the Muzhalpur Municipal Board, Muzhalpur. No tenders will be received after 1:30 p.m. on that day under any circumstances. Tenders will be opened at 2:00 p.m. on 25-06-2026 in presence of the tenderers or their representative/authorized agents.

The detailed information in this regard may be collected from office of the Muzhalpur Municipal Board during office hours between 02-06-2026 to 25-06-2027.

Sd/-
Chairman,
Muzhalpur Municipal Board, Muzhalpur

Sd/-
Executive Officer,
Muzhalpur Municipal Board, Muzhalpur

Guv delivers address sans disruptions

Vijay-led TVK regime sticks to policy of Dravidian parties on key issues

CHENNAI, June 18: In a departure of sorts, Tamil Nadu Governor RV Arlekar's maiden address to the Tamil Nadu Assembly on Thursday was free of controversies and disruptions, and he detailed the TVK regime's blueprint for Tamil Nadu's growth and its policies. He stressed steps will be taken to ensure fair devolution of funds from the Centre.

The governor himself acknowledged the disruption-free proceedings on Thursday and expressed "immense satisfaction" about it.

The C Joseph Vijay-led government will take the fight to the Supreme Court to get a fair deal on devolution of funds, Arlekar said.

Also, in a decisive push towards institutional reform, the state government has announced an unwavering commitment to rooting out rampant corruption within the administrative system, pledging a new era of honest, clean, and transparent governance for the public.

In his nearly 37-minute address to the maiden session of the 17th Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, which went smoothly without any disruptions unlike in the last three years of the previous DMK regime, the governor said a key focus of the reforms will be to ensure all departmental procurements and public tenders are conducted with absolute transparency and placed under stringent monitoring mechanisms.

"Interference of middlemen and

illegal gratification practices that prevailed hitherto will be completely eliminated," the governor said.

He announced a crackdown on the state's mining sector following revelations of widespread revenue leakage driven by corruption. "In a bid to reform the industry, the administration has pledged to enforce strict regulatory measures to curb illicit mining and tax evasion, aiming to double its total revenue from mineral resources," he said.

The session commenced at 10 am for the customary address by the governor with the rendition of "Tamil Thaa Vazhthu" (state anthem) followed by the National Anthem - a break from the House convention where the National Anthem is usually rendered at the conclusion of the governor's address. This time, the National Anthem was played at the beginning and also at the end of the governor's speech.

Later, in a social media post, Arlekar expressed immense satisfaction that his address to the Assembly was read without any disruption for the first time in three years. Also, he noted that the National Anthem was rendered both at the commencement and at the conclusion of his speech to the maiden session of the 17th Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, which began today. "It brings immense satisfaction that, after a hiatus of three years, the governor's address was



read in its entirety within the House without any disruption today. Furthermore, for the very first time, the National Anthem was rendered both at the commencement of the session and at the conclusion of the governor's address," he said on 'X'.

The governor was apparently referring to the alleged confrontation between the previous DMK regime and his predecessor, R N Ravi, who in 2024 declined to read out the full text prepared by the then DMK government, skipped portions he reportedly disagreed with and walked out of the Assembly House.

Ravi refused to read the prepared address in 2025, citing an insult to the National Anthem because the session began with the "Tamil Thaa Vazhthu" instead. And then again in 2026, Ravi walked out of the Assembly within minutes,

claiming the official text contained misleading statements on state investments and that his microphone was turned off.

The then Chief Minister M K Stalin criticised Ravi and demanded his recall and removal. On Thursday, the Governor's address made it clear that the Vijay-led regime opted to continue the policy followed by previous DMK and AIADMK regimes on key issues such as the 2-language policy and state rights.

He also announced that the state government will conduct a "Social Justice Survey."

Governor Arlekar began his address by invoking the legacy of icons including C N Annadurai and "Periyar" EV Ramasamy and he stuck to the text, including strong references against Centre like al-

leged discrimination over fund allocation, prepared by the TVK regime. Throughout the address, MLAs of the main opposition DMK wore black badges asking the CM to respond and act over a spate of alleged crimes.

Arlekar said Tamil Nadu witnessed a transformation it had never seen before as CM Vijay, "the historical leader of our times," formed the government within just two years of founding his party, the TVK. Vijay single-handedly overcame many barriers, vanquishing money power and upholding democracy. A coalition government, the TVK regime has demonstrated "a share in governance and a share in power" something unseen in the 74-year political history of Tamil Nadu, he added.

Arlekar recalled Vijay's first meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi after taking over as the chief minister. The CM had submitted a memorandum of several long-standing demands. It includes the establishment of the Centre for Air Borne Systems (CABS) near Hosur and halting Karnataka's attempt to build the Mekedatu dam on river Cauvery. Prevention of the arrest of Tamil Nadu fishermen by Sri Lanka and immediate release of fishermen and their boats from the neighbouring country were among the other demands.

The CM has also made various requests to the Centre including

funds for highways, and administrative sanction for Metro Rail projects for Hosur, Coimbatore and Madurai formed part of other requests. In the 11th Governing Council meeting of NITI Aayog, Vijay reiterated such demands. "It is sincerely hoped that the union government will consider these demands favourably and extend the necessary assistance to Tamil Nadu."

A resolution will be passed in the Assembly demanding Tamil Nadu's due share of financial devolution from the taxes contributed to the Union Government.

"Besides passing the resolution, a Special Legal Committee will be constituted to legally pursue the issue up to the Supreme Court, in order to secure fair financial devolution," Arlekar added.

Every rupee due to Tamil Nadu will be properly documented and a report detailing the Union Government's "discriminatory approach" towards the financial devolution for the state will be published.

Further, it will be ensured that Tamil Nadu receives its rightful share of financial devolution from the Union Government. "This government will work diligently to continuously press the Union Government to safeguard the welfare of Tamil Nadu, to fight for state rights, to implement required schemes for the state and to create new infrastructure," he said. (PTI)

Forensic reports show person in 'objectionable' video not CM Mann: AAP

CHANDIGARH, June 18: Days after the Akal Takht declared Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann 'Guru Dokhi' (anti-Guru) over an alleged objectionable video, the Punjab AAP on Thursday said forensic tests by two labs showed that the man in the video is not Mann.

The ruling party in Punjab also accused the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) of hatching a conspiracy to defame Mann.

Addressing the media here, Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema accused the SAD of trying to defame Mann and asserted that those responsible for creating and circulating the "fabricated" video would be identified, thoroughly investigated and brought to justice.

A delegation of AAP also met Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav, seeking a probe to expose those behind the entire "conspiracy". The Akal Takht on Monday declared Mann 'Guru Dokhi' (anti-Guru) and 'Khalsa Panth virodhi' (anti-Khalsa Panth) over the video.

The edict came after Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaj claimed that the video circulating on social media - purportedly showing a man resembling Mann - was found to be "authentic" by the two forensic laboratories. The video was neither tinkered with nor AI-generated, he said.

Mann has already rejected the video, saying it was "false propaganda" aimed at defaming him. Cheema targeted SAD, saying it is an "expert at hatching conspiracies".

"For several days, Akali Dal leaders had been attempting to inflame public emotions by circulating a fake video and falsely linking it to CM Mann. The entire episode was part of a larger political conspiracy aimed at defaming a popular chief minister who has consistently worked for the people of Punjab," the minister said.

Cheema presented reports of two forensic labs claiming that the person in the video was not Mann and said the forensic analysis examined a total of 1,191 frames from the video. (PTI)

TMC's Aroop seeks freeze on party bank accounts amid leadership battle

KOLKATA, June 18: The internecine war within the TMC took a new turn on Thursday with "party treasurer" Aroop Biswas writing to a bank seeking restrictions on the operation of the party's accounts, citing uncertainty over its legitimate leadership amid rebellions by MLAs and MPs.

The move is being seen as a fresh setback for the camp led by former chief minister Mamata Banerjee, coming days after dissident MLAs and MPs challenged the authority of the Trinamool Congress's central leadership following the party's defeat in the assembly polls, and staked claim to being the "real" TMC. A two-page letter, addressed to the manager of a private bank's Central Plaza branch in Kolkata, made rounds on social media, though PTI could not independently verify its authenticity.

The bank did not respond to queries, while calls and text messages to Biswas, a former minister and once considered a loyalist of Banerjee, remained unanswered.

According to the letter dated June 12, Biswas sought maintenance of status quo on the accounts and requested that no debit transactions or changes in operational mandates be permitted until the dispute over the party's control is resolved. The development assumes significance as Biswas was removed as treasurer during a reorganisation announced by the Mamata Banerjee camp on June 5, with former MP Subhasish Chakraborty being named to the post. In the communication to the bank, however, Biswas described himself as the treasurer of the party, raising questions about competing claims over organisational authority. Sources in the rebel camp said the letter reflected growing concerns over who exercises control over the party's assets and finances amid the ongoing leadership struggle.

According to the communication, rival factions were claiming to be the legitimate representatives and office-bearers of the TMC, creating uncertainty regarding who was authorised to operate accounts maintained in the party's name.

Biswas also expressed apprehension that party funds could be utilised or appropriated by persons not duly authorised to do so and warned about the possibility of signed cheques being misused or presented for encashment amid the dispute. In one passage, he reportedly stated that he had, in the past, signed blank or pre-approved cheques for organisational convenience and feared they could now be misused in view of the ongoing conflict within the party. The account in question is understood to be one of the principal accounts of the TMC. According to the party's audited submissions before the Election Commission, deposits in the account are estimated to be around ₹ 675 crore, making control over the fund a matter of considerable political and organisational significance.

The controversy comes against the backdrop of the biggest crisis in the TMC's 28-year history following its defeat in the 2026 assembly elections. The first rupture emerged in the state assembly, where 58 dissident TMC MLAs led by Ritabrata Banerjee broke ranks with the party leadership, secured recognition from the Speaker as the dominant legislature group and elected him as the Leader of the Opposition. The twin revolts have triggered parallel legal and political battles over anti-defection provisions, legislative recognition, ownership of the party's political legacy and, increasingly, control over organisational resources. TMC MLA Kanaail Agarwal, aligned with the dissident camp, defended Biswas's move. (PTI)

BJP minister Mahajan, Sanjay Raut exchange sharp words over Shiv Sena (UBT) crisis

MUMBAI, June 18: As the Shiv Sena (UBT) stares at an imminent split after six of its Lok Sabha MPs skipped a crucial meet, the party's Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut and Maharashtra BJP minister Girish Mahajan traded barbs over the crisis on Thursday.

Mahajan claimed Shiv Sena (UBT) corporators from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) will also leave the party soon and blamed Raut for the splits and exits from the Uddhav Thackeray-led opposition outfit.

Mahajan launched a sharp attack on Raut over his remarks on possible defections by the Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Lok Sabha members, while Raut hit back, alleging the BJP minister himself would be the first to switch sides if central probe agencies were under his control.

Their war of words came after six of the nine Lok Sabha MPs of the Shiv Sena (UBT) on Thursday skipped a crucial parliamentary party meeting in New Delhi, indicating a formal crossover to the Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, a BJP ally. Mahajan and Raut accused each other of damaging political parties and encouraging defections.

Responding to Raut's warning of dire consequences for the MPs who leave the party, Mahajan said there was nobody left in the Shiv Sena (UBT) to create a disturbance.

"There is no one left in the Sena (UBT) to create a ruckus in the party. Who is left now? Those days are gone. At that time (united) Shiv Sena was with us (BJP). Now you want to make

(Congress MP) Rahul Gandhi Prime Minister," Mahajan said.

The Congress is an ally of the Shiv Sena (UBT) in the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA).

Targeting the Sena (UBT) leadership, the BJP leader claimed party workers and elected representatives were frustrated.

"You (Raut) just start your daily dose from Mumbai, but are you truly on the ground? People are not only tired of you, but your own Lok Sabha members are also frustrated with you. Soon, the Sena (UBT) corporators from the BMC will also leave their own party," he said.

Mahajan alleged the Sena (UBT) leadership was inaccessible and acted hastily against leaders suspected of leaving the party. (PTI)

BJP undermining democratic values, will face people's verdict in 2027: Akhilesh Yadav

LUCKNOW, June 18: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday alleged that the BJP was weakening democratic values and manipulating democratic processes, asserting that people in Uttar Pradesh were vigilant ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections.

Addressing party leaders and workers from various districts at the Samajwadi Party headquarters in Lucknow, Yadav, according to a party statement, that in a democracy, the people are the ultimate source of power. He claimed that the BJP's "deception, misuse of power and political tactics" would not succeed in the next Assembly polls.

"BJP is weakening democratic values and manipulating democratic processes. People of the state are vigilant ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections. The public had understood the BJP's politics of falsehood and loot and would give an appropriate response in the elections," he said.

The former chief minister also targeted the state government over law and order, claiming that crime was rising and that women and girls were not safe in Uttar Pradesh.

Referring to incidents in districts including Kannauj, Kaushambi, Pratapgarh, Ghazipur, Hathras and Kanpur, Yadav alleged that several minor girls had been brutally killed and that victims had not received justice.

He further alleged that the BJP government was protecting the guilty while innocent people were being subjected to harassment. (PTI)

Cong instigated other opposition parties to oppose women's reservation bill: Rijju

NEW DELHI, June 18: Union minister Kiren Rijju on Thursday described as very upsetting the women's reservation bill getting defeated in Parliament and asserted that as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeatedly said, justice will be delivered to the country's women who are 50 per cent of the population.

Rijju, the Minister of Parliamentary and Minority Affairs, said the amendment to the women reservation bill is extremely critical and accused the principal opposition party Congress of "instigating" other parties to oppose the legislation. He hoped that those who opposed the constitution amendment bill would come to their "senses" and support it. He said to pass the amendment bill, it is a constitutional requirement to have two-thirds majority and it is the government's sincere appeal to all opposition parties to support all bills of the government.

The minister said it is the duty of the government to seek support from all parties for passing the bills but how to



pass it, when to pass it are the matters to be discussed later.

Asked about the government's future course of action on the women reservation bill, Rijju said, "I had said when the women's reservation bill was defeated, we were very upset. We were upset that the bill could not pass through because of the constitutional requirement of two-thirds majority was not there. But the Prime Minister has said several times that we will ensure that the justice is delivered to the women of India because it deals with the 50 per cent population of the country. So it is my duty to appeal to all the political parties

to support all the bills as all the bills are important for us," he said. Asked whether there was any back-channel communication with other political parties for bringing the women reservation bill again, the minister said there was no such back-channel requirement because the government has appealed them from the front.

"When we met them, all of them. The Congress is the only party which instigated the opposition parties not to attend the consultation meeting conducted by the government. We had a meeting with all the important parties, including the Samajwadi Party, and they in

fact had quite a very appreciative agreement on the proposal we gave to them. We informed them. "But may be they came under Congress pressure that they would not support the bill. But in the future, I hope that everyone will come into senses to support the women's reservation bill," he said.

On April 17, the Modi government had faced a setback as a Constitution Amendment Bill to implement 33 per cent reservation for women in legislatures in 2029 and increase the number of Lok Sabha seats to 816 was defeated.

While 298 members voted in support of the Bill in Lok Sabha, 230 MPs voted against it. Out of 528 members who voted, the Bill required 352 votes for a two-thirds majority.

According to the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, Lok Sabha seats were to be increased to 816 from the current 543 to "operationalise" the women's reservation law before the 2029 parliamentary polls, following a delimitation exercise based on the 2011 Census. (PTI)

AFFIDAVIT

I Shri Amrit Lakra, S/o Shri Kalerius Lakra and father of Arnel Lakra, aged about 41 years, a permanent resident of Singbeel, PO & PS Mahadevpur, district Namsai, State Arunachal Pradesh and presently residing at Manpangleng, PO/PS Mahadevpur, dist-Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh, do hereby solemnly affirm before the Notary Public, Namsai, on 27th April, 2026 that my son's actual name is Master Arnel Lakra, but inadvertently my son's title/surname has been wrongly mentioned in his Birth Certificate Reg. No. 0206 dated 24-03-2021 issued by the Registrar Births & Deaths Leksang Centre, Mahadevpur, Namsai, A.P as Arnel Urang instead of Arnel Lakra. Arnel Lakra alias Arnel Urang is the same and identical person. Through this affidavit my son's name shall be known as Arnel Lakra.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, P.W.D. (R&B), DIPHU CIRCLE-I, DIPHU
No. DPU/KAAC(AAP)/02/2025-26/529 Dated: 18.06.2026
PRESS NOTICE INVITING BID

The Superintending Engineer, PWD (R&B), Diphu Circle-1, Diphu on behalf of Governor of Assam invites Bids from approved & eligible contractors registered with PWD, Assam for 2 (two) no. of works for Improvement of road under AAP for the year 2025-26 in Karbi Anglong district amounting to Rs. 3,99,05,000.00 (Approx). Details may be seen at website www.asamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours from 22.06.2026 to 13.07.2026. The last Date / Time for receipt of bids is upto 2.00 PM on 13.07.2026.

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer, P.W.D (R&B)
Diphu Circle-I, Diphu
IPRD/ KA/ 2026-27/53

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL,
OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER: KARBI ANGLONG EAST DIVISION, DIPHU
No. B/KA/E/Tender Notice/Sand Gravel/2026-27/ 1771(A) Dated 15/06/2026

TENDER NOTICE FOR THE SALE OF UNCLAIMED SEIZED SAND GRAVEL

- (a) Under the Provision made in the Assam Sale of Forest produce coupes and mahals by tender system Rule 1977 (Amended upto date) sealed tenders in the prescribed form affixing Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Money receipt worth of Rs. 10/- (Rupees Ten) only, are inviting for the unclaimed seized Sand Gravel as shown enclosed statement.
- (b) The tender will be received by the undersigned upto 3.00 P.M (IST) on 24/06/2026 to 30/06/2026. The tender box will be opened on 01/07/2026 after the above given time limit unless for any special reasons the undersigned notified on the notice board. If the office does not function, the date of receiving tenders for any reason, the next working day will be considered as the last date of receiving tenders. No tender delivered by post or hand after this will be considered under any circumstances.
- (c) The successful tenders will have to deposit the bid value alongwith GST 5%, MMDDRF 10%, DMFT 10% as shown in the statement order against each lot within 15 (fifteen) days from the date of issue of settlement order by the undersigned. If the settlement holder fails to deposit the tender value etc. within the time limit the settlement is liable to be cancelled and earnest money which deposited shall be forfeited. If the highest bidder fails to deposit the tendered value. The Sand Gravel will be settled with the 2nd highest tender or re-sale the Sand Gravel subject to fulfillment of terms and conditions of the notice.

- (a) The tenderer must be accompanied by earnest money as call deposit pledged to DFO, Karbi Anglong East Division, Diphu of Rs. 1000/- for General Class and Rs. 500/- for S.T. no money order will be accepted as earnest money under any circumstances. (b) The GST, Caste Certificate, P.Tax and in case of Non-Tribals, Trading License & I.Tax must be enclosed alongwith the tender without which no tender will be considered. (c) The intending tenderer shall inspect the lots on place shown in the attached schedule before submitting tender and no claim shall be considered under any circumstances afterwards.

The intending tenders are requested to contact the office of the undersigned in the office hours at any working days for further details particulars of the sale notice and collect the sale notice and tender form etc. on payment of Rs.100/- (Rupees One hundred) only per copy.

Statement of unclaimed seized Sand Gravel under Karbi Anglong East Division, Diphu for the year 2026-27

Item	Quantity	Royalty	Monopoly Fee 200%	Total Royalty	Stacking	Name of Range
Sand Gravel	3,000 M ³	6,00,000/-	12,00,000/-	18,00,000/-	Hirhiri to Thengal Gaon, area Koliani River	North-Eastern Range, Silonijan

Sd/-
Divisional Forest Officer
Karbi Anglong East Division, Diphu
IPRD/ KA/ 2026-27/50

'Tribal communities offer reverence even when they cause any harm to the earth'

Indigenous people's way of life holds key to peace in a war-torn world: President Murmu

BETUL (MP), June 18: President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday said that the indigenous people's way of life, which is tied to nature and reverence for it, holds the key to peace and harmony in a world currently plagued by tension, strife and war.

She also said that foreign chemical pesticides were turning fertile land barren, and made a pitch for organic farming.

President Murmu was addressing a programme, titled "Empowerment of tribal society by spiritual awakening", organised by the spiritual organisation Brahma Kumaris in Madhya Pradesh's Betul district.

She said the lives and traditions of forest dwellers embody peace and harmony, noting that tribal communities worship the earth, the sun, water and trees.

Their way of life holds the key to peace and harmony in a world currently plagued by tension, strife, and war, she said.

"Today, the need for such values in a world afflicted by tension and war is greater than at any other period in history. The importance of such conferences and efforts, therefore, increases even more," she said.

Murmu said tribal communities offer reverence even when they cause any harm to the earth.

Highlighting indigenous peo-



ple's deep respect for nature, she said they use trees for firewood only after they have dried up and even offer prayers before cutting them. The President said the tribal community lives with self-respect and patience and does not speak about its problems.

"They never ask for anything and live with nature and with the hope that they will get things with time. They prefer to live in peace," she said. She said the lifestyle of tribal communities is inherently close to the fundamental inspirations of spirituality.

"We call tribal communities adivasis. Some people call them vanasis. They are adivasis," Murmu said. She said indigenous commu-

nities have lived on this earth since the beginning of creation and their way of life is rooted in spirituality.

"They know how to live with happiness, peace, joy and love. They stay away from violence. They were the same in ancient times and remain the same even today. Like wet clay, they can be moulded into any form. They worship nature and not just nature, but the five elements," the President said. "They worship the earth, sky, air, water, the sun and the moon. They do not build temples or separate places of worship," she added.

In an era of rampant materialism, the lives of indigenous people demonstrate simplicity, love and

harmony. They shun violence, she said. The President said that the tribal society comes forward in every aspect of life. According to the Indian philosophy of life, real empowerment happens when society is empowered in other spheres along with economic development, she said.

In today's fast-paced world, driven by a culture of consumption, spiritual awareness in every segment of society becomes crucial, she said.

This forms the basis for developing long-term, sustainable behaviour patterns and a lifestyle sensitive to natural resources, she said, adding that in the current tense and war-torn world, the need for this is greater than at any time in the past.

President Murmu also addressed modern agricultural challenges, saying that foreign chemical pesticides are turning fertile land barren. She said traditional communities have long practised organic farming. "Now, we are returning to organic farming," she said.

Murmu also lauded the Brahma Kumaris for their support for indigenous communities.

Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel and Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Durga Das Uikhey were present on the occasion. (PTI)

₹ 18,907 crore earmarked to build 26,474 kilometres of rural roads: Govt

NEW DELHI, June 18: The Central government has earmarked ₹18,907 crore for the construction of 26,474 kilometres of rural roads under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and other rural connectivity initiatives in the financial year 2026-27, the Rural Development Ministry said on Thursday.

This was highlighted during a comprehensive high-level review meeting chaired by Secretary of the Department of Rural Development, Rohit Kansal, to assess state-wise physical and financial progress under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) and the Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas.

According to a statement issued by the ministry, Kansal reviewed state-wise targets and implementation status for 2026-27, with special emphasis on achieving saturation of rural connectivity in left-out areas. A major focus of the review was the quality and long-term sustainability of rural roads. Kansal said strict adherence to quality standards and effective maintenance are essential to ensure reliable rural connectivity.

Recognising the strategic importance of road infrastructure in Left Wing Extremism-affected districts, the secretary directed the states to closely coordinate with the implementing agencies and ensure the timely completion of works.

States were directed to expedite the completion of works in all remaining unconnected habitations under PMGSY-I and Pradhan



Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan, with particular attention to the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group habitations.

Emphasising the need for universal all-weather roads, the secretary urged states to fast-track the preparation of Detailed Project Reports, resolve execution bottlenecks and ensure the timely completion of pending connectivity projects.

States were urged to strengthen field-level inspections, enhance quality monitoring systems and ensure robust oversight throughout project execution.

At the meeting, emphasis was also laid on universal deployment of the e-MARG (Electronic Maintenance of Rural Roads under PMGSY) platform, enabling real-time monitoring of maintenance activities, performance assessment and payment tracking. Wider adoption of the platform is ex-

pected to improve transparency, accountability and efficiency in rural road maintenance.

Concluding the review, the secretary issued state-specific directions to address implementation bottlenecks, fast-tracking land acquisition and forest clearance proposals, ensuring timely compliance with project milestones and strengthening coordination among state governments, the National Rural Infrastructure Development Agency, and the Ministry of Rural Development. Senior officials, including additional chief secretaries, principal secretaries and chief executive officers of State Rural Roads Development Agencies from Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Rajasthan and Telangana, participated in the review. (PTI)

Inter-state child trafficking racket busted in Delhi; 13 held, five infants rescued

NEW DELHI, June 18: The Delhi Police has busted an inter-state child trafficking syndicate operating across multiple states, arresting 13 people -- including alleged traffickers, mediators, buyers and a hospital owner -- while rescuing five infants, an official said on Thursday.

The racket was unearthed following a decoy operation near RK Ashram Metro Station in Paharganj on June 5, he said. Police caught three accused: Jyoti alias Kamlesh (37), Shalu (43) and Lalit while they were allegedly attempting to sell a newborn baby boy, aged about four to five days, to decoy customers.

The official said after the infant was rescued and ₹ 20,000 paid as token money by the decoy buyers was recovered, police registered a case at Paharganj police station under relevant provisions of the BNS and the Juvenile Justice Act. Investigation revealed that the accused were part of a child trafficking network that procured infants from different states and sold them to childless couples for lakhs of rupees, police said.

According to investigators, Jyoti was a key coordinator of the syndicate and sourced newborns through intermediaries, including an accused, Sayabhai

Ghamar alias Kalia, who allegedly supplied infants from Rajasthan and Gujarat.

Based on disclosures made by the arrested accused, police later apprehended Pratibha, a freelance lab technician associated with a private hospital, and Vipin, a driver who allegedly facilitated the transportation of infants and syndicate members. Police recovered ₹ 2.92 lakh cash from them, allegedly intended for purchasing a newborn child.

Police said another accused, Omwati, a domestic worker from Gurugram, allegedly acted as a mediator and arranged infants for the trafficking network. Investigators found the alleged involvement of Dr Viveki, owner of Heera Multi Speciality Hospital in Begampur, who facilitated illegal adoptions by sheltering trafficked infants at the facility, identifying prospective buyers among childless couples seeking fertility treatment and arranging fabricated medical and birth-related documents to establish false parentage. The probe found that the syndicate operated through a network of suppliers, transporters, facilitators and buyers spread across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. (PTI)

Will continue to support leveraging trade pact provisions, says UK India Business Council

NEW DELHI, June 18: As India and the UK gear up to implement the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, the UKIBC has said that it will continue to support members in understanding and leveraging the provisions in the pact with a particular focus on sectors like digital trade, services, manufacturing, education and innovation-led collaboration.

The UK India Business Council (UKIBC) is a policy advocacy and strategic consulting not-for-profit, with a mission to grow the UK-India trade and investment. The India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) will enter into force on July 15, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his British counterpart Keir Starmer announced on Wednesday, nearly a year after the landmark deal was sealed.

The announcement on the coming into force of the trade pact came a day after the two prime ministers held talks on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Evian-Les-Bains in France. The UKIBC, in a statement, said it welcomes the announcement. The India-UK CETA is a landmark deal that promises to unlock unprecedented trade

and investment opportunities between two of the world's largest and most dynamic economies, it said. The leadership of the UK and India have repeatedly underscored the importance of building a forward-looking partnership anchored in advanced defence technology, innovation and trade collaboration, the UKIBC said.

This strategic intent has gained momentum through a series of high-level bilateral engagements in recent years, and "all echo the same sentiment", the Council said.

Kishore Jayaraman, Group CEO, UK-India Business Council, said, "The UK-India CETA marks a historic milestone in the bilateral relationship. Businesses across both countries have long called for an agreement that reduces barriers, enhances market access, and creates a clear framework for long-term, sustainable growth. We congratulate both governments for their commitment and ambition in bringing this complex structure to fruition." Success in the CETA will support further economic growth for the world's fourth and sixth-largest economies. It will "catalyse collaboration" into other areas too, he added. (PTI)

Two held in Jammu for Chandigarh pharmacy cashier's killing

CHANDIGARH, June 18: Two persons arrested from Jammu in connection with the killing of a pharmacy's cashier allegedly made an unsuccessful attempt to escape from police custody when they were being brought here on transit remand on Thursday, police said. The two Jammu residents allegedly fled to Delhi after the crime here on Saturday, and then returned to Jammu, they said.

Police located them using technical surveillance and made the arrests in Jammu.

The police team was returning to Chandigarh with the suspects when their vehicle met with a minor accident, and both the accused tried to escape, leading to an exchange of fire in which the accused received bullet injuries, Inspector General (IG) Pushpendra Kumar said at a press conference here.

The two accused -- Sunny Mehra (22) who shot dead the pharmacy cashier, and Aryan Sharma (21) who was waiting outside on a motorcycle -- are residents of Jammu, he said. (PTI)

Voting underway for election to two RS seats in Jharkhand



RANCHI, June 18: Voting is underway for the election to two Rajya Sabha seats in Jharkhand on Thursday, amid adequate security arrangements on the assembly premises, an official said.

Three candidates - BJP-backed Independent nominee Parimal Nathwani, JMM's Baidyanath Ram and Pranav Jha of the Congress - are in the fray for the two seats.

The voting started at 9 am at a polling station set up in the assembly complex amid fear of cross-voting, and will continue till 4 pm.

All NDA legislators arrived in the assembly in a bus directly from the hotel where they camped, while Congress MLAs reached the premises in a bus.

Chief Minister Hemant Soren also reached the assembly to cast his vote.

BJP chief whip Naveen Jaiswal, who was the first to exercise his franchise, said, "Twenty-one party legislators and one each from AJSU party, JD(U) and LJP (RV) cast their votes. All votes went to NDA-supported candidate Parimal Nathwani."

Nathwani exuded confidence about his victory.

"I have support from all parties, and I am assured of my victory. Everything will be clear by the evening," he said.

JD(U) leader Saryu Rai said his vote will go to the NDA-backed nominee. Asked if he is sure of Nathwani's win, Rai said, "This is not my subject. I know about my vote, which will go to him."

RJD legislator Suresh Paswan claimed that there is no doubt that the INDIA bloc candidates will secure victory.

Congress minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey said they have adequate numbers and are confident of winning both the Rajya Sabha seats.

After the NDA, the INDIA bloc legislators started exercising their franchise.

"All arrangements, including adequate security, are in place to hold the polling peacefully," an Assembly official said, adding that the counting of votes is likely to commence at 5 pm.

The BJP-led NDA has 24 MLAs, four short of the minimum of 28 first-preference votes required in the 81-member assembly to secure a berth in the Upper House of Parliament.

The ruling INDIA bloc, including the JMM and the Congress, has 56 members in the House.

JMM's Baidyanath Ram is expected to win easily, as the party has 34 members in the state assembly. Among the other INDIA bloc constituents, the Congress has 16 MLAs, the RJD has 4 legislators, and the CPI(ML) Liberation has two.

All eyes are on the second seat, in which a tough fight between Congress' Jha and NDA-backed Nathwani is likely.

The NDA's 24 MLAs include 21 from the BJP and one each from the LJP (Ram Vilas), AJSU Party and the JD(U). The Jharkhand Loktantrik Krantikari Morcha has one MLA. (PTI)

Doctor arrested for bludgeoning, stabbing domestic help to death in south Delhi's Mount Kailash

NEW DELHI, June 18: The body of a 45-year-old woman was found on Thursday in a pool of blood on the terrace of a building in south Delhi's upscale Mount Kailash area, allegedly bludgeoned with a bat and knifed to death by a doctor whose house she worked in as a domestic help, an official said.

The doctor, identified as Manish Gupta, was found at the crime scene and has been arrested, police said. During preliminary questioning, he admitted to attacking the woman, identified as Meena, with the bat and subsequently stabbing her, a police official said.

The brutal killing has sent shockwaves through the neighbourhood, especially since it occurred just two months after the daughter of an Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer was allegedly raped and murdered by a former domestic help in the area.

Police received a PCR call at around 11.30 am reporting that a woman had been murdered on the terrace of a neighbouring building and was lying blood-soaked at the spot.

"A police team rushed to the spot and found the victim dead. A man in his 50s was also present near the body when they arrived," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) Hemant Tiwari said. The accused was immediately apprehended, and police are questioning him to determine the motive behind the murder.

DCP Tiwari noted that the accused is a dermatologist and that the victim had been employed as domestic help at his residence for several years.

"The main motive behind the murder is not clear, and an investigation is underway to ascertain the motive," he said. The officer also dismissed speculation linking the murder to black magic or occult practices, saying no such angle had emerged during the investigation so far.

Investigators suspect that the crime may have stemmed from a personal dispute, although all possible angles are being explored. Police are also trying to reconstruct the events leading up to the murder.

A crime team was called to the scene to collect forensic evidence. CCTV footage from nearby buildings was reviewed, and residents were questioned to gather additional information about the incident.

The body was sent for a postmortem examination, and a case has been registered, with multiple teams interviewing the accused. The bat and knife allegedly used in the crime have been seized from the site.

Struggling to come to terms with the gruesome incident, the victim's family still cannot understand how the incident unfolded. "I don't know what exactly happened. She was fine when she left. Someone called me and said she had died," said Robin, the victim's son. He also accused the police of not letting him see her body. "She worked as a domestic help at their house for the past 15 years. My friend called and informed me that she had died and that I should come. My mother left as usual around 7 am and arrived there by 9 am," he said. (PTI)

3 held for hurling petrol bombs at RSS office in Ranchi

RANCHI/JAMSHEDPUR, June 18: Three people with suspected Pakistan-terror links were arrested for allegedly hurling "petrol bombs" at the RSS office in Ranchi, and one of them suffered bullet injuries in a gunfight while trying to escape from police custody on Thursday afternoon, an officer said.

The two accused were apprehended from Lohardaga district late on Wednesday, and a car used by them was seized, while one more accused was held on June 18, the officer said. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on Wednesday alleged that petrol bombs were hurled at its office in the Nivarnapur area here in the early hours of Wednesday, prompting the police to constitute a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the matter.

"Three accused have been arrested so far. One of the accused escaped from police custody during interrogation at Ranchi's Kotwali police station. The accused was arrested later from Ranchi's

Chanho area after a brief gunfight with security forces. He received bullet injuries in one of his legs, and he was admitted to a hospital in the city," Ranchi City DSP K V Raman told PTI.

The injured accused was identified as Saif Ansari alias Rohit, he said. Providing details about how Saif escaped and captured again, Ranchi SP Paras Rana said, "While being interrogated at the Kotwali police station, he made an excuse to go to the washroom and then ran away after breaking a window. We checked the CCTV footage and found that he had boarded a bus. We then alerted several police stations and circulated his photograph. After a chase, the police caught him near a toll plaza."

When police teams were bringing him back, the accused snatched a police weapon and fired 2 to 3 rounds, he said. "In response, the police also fired at him, resulting in a gunshot wound to one of his legs. The brief encounter happened in Chano area" the SP said. (PTI)

'How can rights of 150 million users be curtailed': Delhi HC questions Centre's Telegram ban; reserves verdict

NEW DELHI, June 18: The Delhi High Court on Thursday questioned the Centre's decision to temporarily restrict access to Telegram ahead of the June 21 NEET-UG 2026 re-examination, saying how the rights of 150 million users of the messaging app can be curtailed just because a few of them are taking up the test.

The observations were made by a vacation bench of Justice Tejas Karia before reserving the verdict on the plea of Telegram against the temporary ban on the ground that the app may be misused ahead of the NEET-UG retest. On May 12, the National Testing Agency (NTA) had cancelled the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate), or NEET-UG, held on May 3 for medical admissions amid allegations of paper leak. The matter is currently under investiga-

tion by the CBI. In a bid to ensure smooth conduct of the controversy-ridden exam, the government imposed the temporary ban on the messaging app till June 22. On Thursday, the Centre vehemently argued before the high court that Telegram has all the potential of getting misused by miscreants.

Justice Karia reserved the verdict after hearing extensive arguments from senior advocate Dhruv Mehta, appearing for the app, and Attorney General R Venkataramani and Solicitor General Tuskar Mehta who represented the Centre.

The solicitor general referred to the technical aspects of the messaging app and said that a single Telegram account can create up to 40 bots. "I will just give an example. In Telegram, one account user can create 40 bots. While in case of WhatsApp, it's one bot per user.



They have multiplicity encouraging architecture and then the bots can further multiply," he said. "Bots are machines; they can further multiply. As per the report, Telegram can offer bot infrastructure which can disseminate information in bulk. This feature is unique as it permits

creation of sophisticated networks with minimal human oversight," the law officer said.

Justifying the decision, he said the government does not have this problem with other intermediaries.

"This platform operates through the cloud. Even if they block it and

someone does mischief, law enforcement agencies cannot reach the actual user," he said. Mehta also mentioned that the report indicated that Telegram is frequently used for terrorist activities and that law enforcement agencies face challenges due to this architectural design in various jurisdictions. "The scale at which it can multiply is only available on Telegram. Also, suppose if they remove one bot, other bots can be created under different names and identifiers and therefore, measures against bots only have a temporary relief.

"We do not have this problem with other intermediaries like Facebook or WhatsApp. This platform operates through the cloud, even if we block something and someone does mischief, the law enforcement agency can't reach the person," he said. (PTI)

ALWAYS FELT VIJAY WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE JUST A HERO ON SCREEN: SAMANTHA RUTH PRABHU



Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu has lauded Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay for his transition from cinema to politics, saying his energy, presence and connect with people always indicated that he was destined for a larger role.

Samantha, who featured alongside Vijay in hits such as "Theri", "Mersal" and "Kaththi", shared a photo from her meeting with the Tamil Nadu CM on Wednesday. The 39-year-old actor said she felt an "immense sense of happiness" on arriving in the city as she was going to meet the chief minister.

"I've always felt that Vijay sir was never meant to be just a hero on screen. His energy, his presence, and the way people respond to him always felt like he was meant for something big-

ger," the actor wrote.

Samantha said what inspires her most is Vijay's courage to step into a completely new arena after having already achieved success in another field.

"To leave behind what you have already mastered and take on a challenge where the stakes are so much higher. Not because it is easy, but because you believe you can make a difference," she said.

The actor said people are often called upon to do more in life and contribute to society, but only a few answer that call.

"I have a feeling Vijay sir will surprise even the people who already believe in him. Not because of the position he holds, but because of the intent with which he approaches it," she added.

Samantha wished Vijay

strength, wisdom and courage, and said his journey should serve as an inspiration for young people.

"And for every young person watching, may this be a reminder that life can be so much bigger than the dream you started with," she wrote.

Vijay, one of Tamil cinema's biggest stars, entered politics by launching his party Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) in 2024.

In the recently-held Tamil Nadu assembly elections, the TVK emerged as the single largest party with 108 seats.

Vijay was sworn-in as the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister on May 10.

Samantha is currently promoting her new film "Maa Inti Bangaram", an action drama that is set to be released in theatres on Friday. (PTI)

MEGHNA GULZAR'S 'DAAYRA' TO RELEASE IN THEATRES IN SEPTEMBER



Filmmaker Meghna Gulzar's next directorial venture "Daayra", starring Kareena Kapoor Khan and Prithviraj Sukumaran, is set to hit theatres on September 18, the makers announced on Thursday.

Inspired by true events, "Daayra" is billed as a thriller exploring themes of crime, justice and punishment, the makers said in a statement.

The screenplay has been written by Yash Keswani, Sima Agarwal and Gulzar.

The film also marks the first on-screen collaboration between Kareena Kapoor Khan and Malayalam star Prithviraj Sukumaran. The two actors play police officers in the movie.

According to the makers, "Daayra" will delve into the complexities of law and justice, with Gulzar bringing her signature style of storytelling rooted in real-world issues.

They said the film aims to provoke audiences into questioning their beliefs as the lines between law and justice begin to blur.

Backed by Junglee Pictures and Pen Studios, the film marks the third collaboration between Gulzar and Junglee Pictures after the critically acclaimed "Talvar" (2015) and "Raazi" (2018). (PTI)

'Avengers: Domsday Won't Be A Let-Down After Endgame'

Actor Robert Downey Jr says he is confident that the upcoming Marvel film "Avengers: Domsday" will meet fan expectations and stresses the movie has been carefully crafted to avoid the pitfalls of following blockbusters such as "Avengers: Infinity War" and "Avengers: Endgame".

Downey, who played Tony Stark aka Iron Man in multiple Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) films, returns to the franchise as the villain Doctor Doom in "Domsday", which will come out in theatres worldwide in December.

In an interview with entertainment outlet CBR alongside the

film's co-director Joe Russo, the "Oppenheimer" star said the film has "landed in a place" that would satisfy audiences.

"And it's not even about how I executed it. It's about the way it's been structured, and the other characters," he said.

"There's something going on in 'Domsday' and forward that is literally the only antidote to: How do you not have these films be let down after an 'Infinity War' and an 'Endgame'? And boy, have we labored long and hard to bring that down," he added.

Marvel Studios has seen mixed fortunes since the last "Avengers" film "Endgame" released in 2019.

While films such as "Spider-Man: No Way Home", "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3" and "Deadpool & Wolverine" emerged as major successes, titles like "Eternals", "Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania", "Black Widow", "Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness", "Thor: Love and Thunder", "Captain America: Brave New World" and "The Marvels" failed to match expectations.

Russo, directed "Infinity War" and "Endgame" with brother Anthony, said the film would feature several surprises.

He called "Domsday" as the most emotionally layered entry in the franchise.

"I think ('Domsday') is the most emotionally complex of all of them. And in a lot of ways, the most mature of all of them," the filmmaker said.

Downey also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to re-



turn to the Marvel universe.

"There's an incredible amount of gratitude we have going into these two. One epic

at a time. 'Domsday'... just the gratitude to be able to do it," he said.

Avengers: Domsday, produced by Marvel Studios and distributed by Disney, will also feature Chris Evans, Chris

Wagner Moura in talks to join 'Ocean's' prequel film

Oscar-nominated actor Wagner Moura is in negotiations to join the cast of the upcoming prequel movie in the blockbuster "Ocean's" franchise.

If the deal goes through, the "Narcos" star will feature alongside Hollywood stars Margot Robbie and Bradley Cooper in the Warner Bros film, which will come out in theatres in June 2025.

According to Variety, Cooper is directing and also producing the project alongside LuckyChap, the company led by Tom Ackerley, Josey McNamara, Milan Popelka and Robbie.

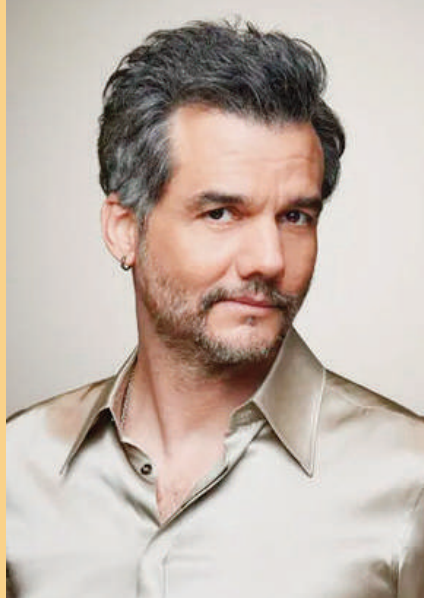
Cooper wrote the screenplay, plot details of which are currently under wraps.

At CinemaCon event earlier this year, "Barbie" star Robbie had revealed that the prequel will take place at the 1962 Monaco Grand Prix and will follow the crafty parents of con-man Danny Ocean, who was famously played by George Clooney in a trilogy of films that were released between 2001 to 2007.

"Before Danny Ocean ever stepped foot in Vegas, two masterminds taught him everything he knows - his parents," Robbie had teased during a sizzle reel of Warner Bros. 2027 slate.

"You'll see them in their prime, and in our new movie, pulling off an epic heist at the 1962 Monaco Grand Prix," she added.

The original "Ocean's 11" premiered in 1960, starring Rat Pack members Frank Sinatra, Sammy



Davis Jr, Joey Bishop, Peter Lawford and Dean Martin.

Steven Soderbergh rebooted the movie with his own take in 2001 that featured a star-studded cast of George Clooney, Matt Damon, Brad Pitt and Julia Roberts.

It was followed by two sequels -- 2004's "Ocean's Twelve" and 2007's "Ocean's Thirteen".

In 2018, "Ocean's Eight", a reboot with Sandra Bullock, Cate Blanchett, Anne Hathaway and Rihanna, was released.

The untitled prequel will be executive produced by Josey McNamara, Bronte Payne, Bobby Wilhelm, Jay Roach, Michelle Graham, Lee Isaac Chung, Ashley Jay Sandberg, Gary Ross and Olivia Milch.

Brazil-born Moura is best known for playing the dreaded drug lord Pablo Escobar in the Netflix series "Narcos". His film credits include critically-acclaimed and blockbuster titles such as "Elysium", "Sergio", "The Gray Man" and "Civil War".

Earlier this year, Moura made history as the first Brazilian to be nominated for the best actor Oscar and the first to win the Golden Globe award for best actor in a drama, both prizes in recognition of his starring role in Kleber Mendonca Filho's "The Secret Agent".

He will star alongside Greta Lee in the Netflix sci-fiction thriller "The Last House" as well as Rachel Rose's directorial debut "The Last Day" with Alicia Vikander. (PTI)

LIL NAS X SHARES UPDATE AFTER GETTING MENTAL HEALTH CARE: 'THERE'S LESS FEAR IN MY HEART'

The musician Lil Nas X posted a moving video update to his Instagram on Wednesday morning. In the nearly three-minute clip, the artist - born Montero Lamar Hill - shared that he "has been in rehab for a few months" and since then, has returned home to Atlanta, where he is from and his family lives, and Los Angeles, where he resides.

The update comes in response to an event last summer in which the musician was charged with attacking Los Angeles police officers.

In April, a judge allowed the 27-year-old to enter a mental health diversion program intended to lead to the charges being dismissed. The musician was eligible for the program because the court found that the encounter involving police was the result of his since-diagnosed bipolar disorder and appeared to be an aberration compared with his usual behavior.

In Wednesday's video, Lil Nas X publicly discussed his mental health diagnosis. "I have a therapist now and a psychiatrist, which has been really helpful. When I got my bipolar disorder diagnosis, I feel like I had known for the past few years, but I didn't want to admit to it 'cause I didn't want to have to take medication and, I don't know, have people think different of me."

"I'm doing much better," he continued after joking that he's "living life on extreme hard mode".

"I'm feeling better. I'm creating freely. And there's less fear in my heart," he said.

Bipolar disorder is a mental illness that causes dramatic shifts in mood, energy, activity levels and concentration. These range from periods of extremely elated, irritable or energized behavior - known as manic episodes - to very sad, indifferent or hopeless periods, known as depressive episodes.

"I've been doing music for seven years now," Lil Nas X said in switching gears near the end of the clip. "I wanted to let you guys know there is new music on the way."

Then he addressed his fans directly. "I love you and all I want to do is continue to try to make you proud and make myself proud."



Lil Nas X was arrested and briefly taken to a hospital for a suspected overdose in August after Los Angeles police say he charged at officers responding to a report of a naked man walking on a busy boulevard.

Authorities allege the musician was walking nude down a street in LA's San Fernando valley and charged at police officers who were responding to calls about him. A criminal complaint says three officers were hurt. Photos and video apparently shot before the police confrontation showed Lil Nas X walking in the street in only white briefs and white boots.

After spending three days in jail, he was released on \$75,000 bail on the condition that he attend drug treatment. He pleaded not guilty in a court appearance to three counts of battery with injury on a police officer and one count of resisting an executive officer.

In his first public comments shortly thereafter, the artist posted a video to Instagram saying: "These last four days have been terrifying." But he added with a laugh, speaking of himself, that "your girl is going to be OK. She's going to be all right."

Then two months ago, Judge Alan Schneider allowed Lil Nas X to enter the mental health diversion program. If he sticks to his treatment program and obeys all laws for two years, the four felony counts against him will be dismissed.

The Atlanta-raised artist is best known for 2018's country and hip-hop merging Old Town Road, which spent a record 19 weeks at No 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 and won him two Grammys. It is one of the most popular singles of all time, and in 2019 broke the Billboard record set by Mariah Carey's One Sweet Day for most weeks at No 1.

Known for his genre-bending, innovating sounds and style, Lil Nas X's first full studio album, 2021's Montero, went to No 2 on the Billboard album chart and received a Grammy nomination for album of the year. Other hits have included Industry Baby and Montero (Call Me by Your Name). (Agencies)

MEGHNA GULZAR'S 'DAAYRA' TO RELEASE IN THEATRES IN SEPTEMBER



Filmmaker Meghna Gulzar's next directorial venture Daayra, starring Kareena Kapoor Khan and Prithviraj Sukumaran, is set to hit theatres on September 18, the makers announced on Thursday.

Inspired by true events, Daayra is billed as a thriller exploring themes of crime, justice and punishment, the makers said in a statement.

The screenplay has been written by Yash Keswani, Sima Agarwal and Gulzar.

The film also marks the first on-screen collaboration between Kareena Kapoor Khan and Malayalam star Prithviraj Sukumaran. The two actors play police officers in the movie.

According to the makers, Daayra will delve into the complexities of law and justice, with Gulzar bringing her signature style of storytelling rooted in real-world issues.

They said the film aims to provoke audiences into questioning their beliefs as the lines between law and justice begin to blur.

Backed by Junglee Pictures and Pen Studios, the film marks the third collaboration between Gulzar and Junglee Pictures after the critically acclaimed Talvar (2015) and Raazi (2018). (PTI)

Neeraj to clash with rising Sri Lankan star Rumesh Pathirage in his return to action

DOHA, June 18: Indian javelin throw superstar Neeraj Chopra would hope that his lengthy injury-forced absence from competition does not affect his rhythm when he returns to action against an in-form line-up of heavyweight rivals in the familiar environs of the Doha Diamond League here on Friday.

The top-class field here would include rising Sri Lankan star Rumesh Tharanga Pathirage, who surpassed the 90m mark a few days ago.

The 28-year-old Chopra, on the other hand, has been recuperating from a back injury which has prevented him from competing since the World Championships in September last year. He had finished eighth in that event with a below-par throw of 84.03m, but he will be hoping to hit his stride straightaway at the Qatar Sports Club.

Doha has been his happy hunting ground. It was here that the two-time Olympic medallist breached the coveted 90m mark in May last year. He had recorded 90.23m to finish second behind Julian Weber (91.06m) of Germany.

It was to be originally held on May 8 as the season-opening event but was postponed due to the West Asia conflict.

Chopra, who has been training in Switzerland since May 25 after a rehabilitation stint in Turkiye, was a late addition to the nine-man field.

"I started throwing one and a half months ago and we took our time. Then I asked Doha (organisers) if it's possible if I let them know (about taking part in Doha DL) in very short period, like one week ago. They said yes and then we decided after my last session, okay let's compete in Doha," Chopra said at the pre-event press conference.

Asked if he is targeting another 90m throw, Chopra said, "I will try my best. I feel really good and fit, let's see tomorrow."



Up against a star-studded field

Chopra will be up against Pathirage, who has been in the form of his life this season. The 24-year-old Sri Lankan is the current season leader with his stunning 92.62m throw at the Rome leg of Diamond League on June 4, becoming only the fourth Asian and 28th overall to breach the coveted 90m mark.

He has had two more 89m-plus throws this season.

He has come into the Doha DL after winning the prestigious Golden Spike meet in Ostrava, Czechia, with a throw of 86.57m. His effort in Rome fell just short of Pak-

istani Arshad Nadeem's Paris Olympics gold-winning throw of 92.97m but went past Chinese Taipei's Chao-Tsun Cheng (91.36m) and Chopra (90.23m).

His throw was the eighth longest distance on the world all-time list. It was also the best throw in the world since the 2024 Olympic final won by Nadeem.

It will be only the third meeting between Chopra and Pathirage and their first on the Diamond League stage.

The head-to-head record has been 1-1.

Chopra won gold in the NC Classic which he hosted in Bengaluru in July 2025, while Pathirage had finished third with 84.34m.

However, in the Tokyo World Championships last year, Chopra ended a disappointing eighth while Pathirage finished seventh 84.38m.

"It's really amazing (achievement). He's really good, he's good friend of mine. I'm happy for him, and for what he did for Sri Lanka," said Chopra.

Pathirage has been a regular in India since 2024. He first competed in the National Inter-State Championships in 2024 in Panchkula, Haryana, where a Sri Lankan team was invited by the Athletics Federation of India.

He last competed in India during the South Asian Athletics Championships in Ranchi in October 2025 and won gold with a throw of 84.29m.

He also won gold in the inaugural Indian Open World Athletics Bronze Level Continental Tour event in Bhubaneswar with a fine effort of 86.50m.

Others in the field in Doha are reigning world champion Keshorn Walcott of Trinidad and Tobago, two-time world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada, World Championships bronze-medallist Curtis Thompson of the USA, Julius Yego of Kenya, Jakub Vadlejch of Czechia, Mohamed Husein Ahmed Sameh of Egypt and Artur Felner.

Pakistan's Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem pulled out after his participation in Doha DL was announced on June 12.

Chopra to seal Glasgow CWG spot

Chopra was on Sunday named in India's 32-member athletics squad for the upcoming Commonwealth Games, subject to achieving the Athletics Federation of India's (AFI) qualifying standard of 82.61m, which is not a tall ask for his standards.

The Commonwealth Games are scheduled to be held Glasgow, Scotland from July 23 to August 2. (PTI)

Canada players say they need 'swagger' and 'arrogance' to snag historic first World Cup win



VANCOUVER (BRITISH COLUMBIA), June 18: Canada is ready to set aside its reputation for politeness, at least during the World Cup.

With a chance to make history at home, after decades of World Cup disappointment, Canada's players are talking less about manners and more about mentality.

"I don't think it's always a bad thing to play with arrogance," midfielder Niko Sigur said. "I think we're at our best when we play with that swagger."

Canada opened Group B play with a draw against Bosnia-Herzegovina, earning the country's first World Cup point. On Thursday at BC Place against Qatar, Canada will be seeking its first victory.

"I think if we're at our best and we're all together, including guys off the bench and the starters," Sigur said, "that we can give them a lot of trouble."

To make toppling Qatar more of a challenge, Canada will have to do it short-handed.

Alphonso Davies, Canada's captain and its lone World Cup goal scorer before Cyle Larin found the net last week, might not be available after missing the opener with a lingering hamstring injury. Forward Promise David is recovering from a hip injury and Marcelo Flores, one of Canada's top performers during qualifying, was ruled out of the tournament in May with a knee injury.

Defender Moïse Bombito has not played since suffering a broken leg in October. Before that, he had started every match during coach Jesse Marsch's two-year tenure.

The injuries have created opportunities for others, including Jayden Nelson, who replaced Flores on the roster after netting a stoppage-time goal against Uzbekistan earlier this month.

"We know we have the weapons," needed to win, midfielder Stephen Eustáquio said.

That confidence has become a recurring theme for Canada. Rather than focusing on the pres-

sure of hosting, players have embraced the moment.

"You could use the word pressure," defender Richie Laryea said. "I think we could use the word ready."

Laryea's perspective reflects the attitude Marsch has tried to establish since taking the job. Canada has become known for its high-intensity pressing system and willingness to challenge opponents physically.

"We're always on the front foot," Laryea said. "I think that coincides pretty well with getting in people's faces."

Yet players understand there is a fine line between playing with an edge and going too far.

Defenders Luc de Fougerolles and Alistair Johnston each carry yellow cards into the Qatar match. If teams finish level on points, goal difference and goals scored — which is where all four teams in Group B currently stand — FIFA's fair-play system acts as a tiebreaker, meaning disciplinary records could influence who advances from the group.

Four years ago, Qatar became the first host country to lose all three group matches. But after watching Qatar's opening 1-1 draw against Switzerland, Sigur said Qatar should be taken seriously, pointing to its focus across 90 minutes.

"It's the World Cup," forward Ali Ahmed said. "You can't play this game on paper."

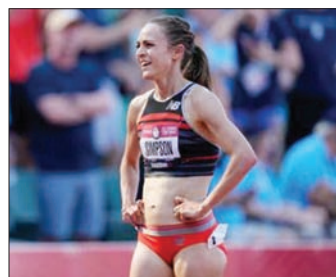
More than 50,000 fans are expected at BC Place for a match that could become one of the most significant in Canadian soccer history, and players have repeatedly referenced the energy they hope Vancouver can provide.

"I think losing my voice will be a good call," said Canada fan Adam Lovell, a member of a supporters' club called The Voyageurs.

"I'll try to set the tone with the fan culture."

Eustáquio is aiming for an aggressive start fueled by a sense of urgency to give the home crowd something to cheer. (AP)

Jenny Simpson collapses after medical episode while pacing mile group



RALEIGH (NORTH CAROLINA), June 18: Olympic bronze medalist and world champion 1,500-meter runner Jenny Simpson collapsed after suffering a medical episode while pacing a mile group at an event in Raleigh on Tuesday night.

Simpson underwent CPR at the track and an automated external defibrillator was also used before taking her to the hospital. Let'sRun.com was the first to report the medical emergency.

The 39-year-old Simpson was taking part in a community track event hosted by Sir Walter Running, with runners of all levels encouraged to attend. The event featured a chance to meet Simpson.

"We are incredibly grateful to the individuals who responded immediately, as well as EMS and the medical professionals who handled the situation with such care, urgency, and professionalism," the "Sir Walter Running Team" wrote on Instagram on Wednesday.

The statement added that "Jenny is receiving excellent medical care, and our thoughts are with her and her family during this time." (AP)

Switzerland says it can handle early pressure in World Cup

INGLEWOOD (CALIFORNIA, USA), June 18: Switzerland is already behind schedule just one game into the World Cup. Coach Murat Yakin says his team still has plenty of time to get where it wants to go.

The Swiss realize they're under pressure when they take on over-achieving Bosnia-Herzegovina on Thursday at SoFi Stadium in both teams' second match of group-stage play.

No. 19 Switzerland is widely favored to advance as the highest-ranked and most accomplished team in its group, but Die Nati shockingly blew its opening match in Northern California last weekend. Qatar salvaged a 1-1 draw by scoring in the fourth minute of second-half extra time.

That means Switzerland must get strong results from its next two matches to avoid an embarrassing finish for a team that still believes it has a chance to win its first knockout-stage World Cup match since 1938.

"I am optimistic," Yakin said Wednesday night through an interpreter. "I trust my players. We have a seasoned team, and they know how to handle stress very well. ... Of course we expected a different start. We have to stay focused, but the way we played was certainly positive. We can't buy anything with that yet, though."

Some of that stress might be in the dressing room: Swiss media outlets reported this week that some players are unhappy with veteran captain Granit Xhaka, who sharply criticized his team — himself included — in private and in public after the opening match.

Xhaka's high-strung approach to his sport is well known from his club career in England and Germany. Swiss midfielder Remo Freuler didn't confirm the reports of dressing room strife, but said intensity shouldn't be a topic of contention at a World Cup.

"Yes, Granit is someone who

expresses himself very freely, and he might be expressing critiques, but it is also very important," Freuler said. "He is very open and he talks freely about those things. If you are too sensitive, then maybe football is not for you, because we have to examine these things and we have to be critical."

Switzerland's only goal against Qatar was from the penalty spot despite having 68% of the possession, putting seven shots on goal and generating chances equaling 3.20 expected goals. The Swiss realize they allowed Qatar to hang around for far too long, and it cost them dearly.

"We saw it's very important to stay focused until the end of the match," Yakin said. "The way we played was good if you look at the statistics, but it doesn't buy you anything because we lost two points."

A strong result against Bosnia is almost certainly necessary to keep

alive Switzerland's dreams of World Cup success, since the Swiss' next match is against Canada in Vancouver, British Columbia. The Bosnian team also expects a healthy fan turnout in Los Angeles.

Die Nati has lost seven straight knockout matches at the World Cup, and even getting to the knockout rounds in North America is no sure thing yet.

Bosnia opened the tournament last weekend by holding co-host Canada to a draw, putting on yet another strong performance after its charmed run to just the second World Cup berth in its history. The Dragons upset Wales and Italy in March to clinch their unlikely qualification.

"We have tremendous respect for Switzerland, but we've shown in the past that we can come out on top against strong opponents," Dragons coach Sergej Barbarez said. "I hope we will confirm our form at the moment." (AP)

Iniyana Pa closes in on title victory in Global Chess Festival

MUMBAI, June 18: GM Iniyana Pa leads the rest of the field by one point and a draw will be enough to clinch a title win in the master's section of the Global Chess Festival, even as he was held for a draw by IM Harsh Suresh here on Thursday.

With seven points, Iniyana has a full one point lead over the second placed Boris Savchenko, Suresh, Aakash Sharadchandra Dalvi, Apoorv Kamble and Ajay Santosh Parvathareddy, who all have 5.5 points each.

Iniyana will take on Parvathareddy in the ninth round. In the Challengers category, sole leader Viresh Sharnarathi was shocked by lower rated Ashirwad

Swain of Orissa and dropped down to third place with six others, who all have 6.5 points each.

Nithin Babu also stunned higher rated FM Arun Kataria, with both jointly leading this category with seven points each.

In the Junior Masters, Madhvendra Pratap Sharma continued his dominance by defeating Vinayak Koleru to retain his one point lead. He has so far tallied 7.5 points and a draw in the last 9th round is all he needs to win the title.

Ankit Das, Balanandan Ayappan and A Amanlal have all scored 6.5 points each and have a mathematical chance, in case they win their games and Madhvendra loses his contest. (PTI)



Most-capped Manpreet credits longevity to fitness, idolises King Kohli

NEW DELHI, June 18: India's most-capped hockey player Manpreet Singh idolises Virat Kohli and credits his longevity to fitness, saying he has drawn inspiration from the star cricketer's fitness regime.

Manpreet on Wednesday surpassed former captain and Hockey India chief Dilip Tirkey (412 international appearances) to achieve the milestone.

At 413 caps, Manpreet is fifth on the all-time list and the only active player among the top five.

"Everyone knows that Virat is a fitness freak," the 33-year-old Manpreet said in an online interaction from Rotterdam in the ongoing European leg of the FIH Pro League.

"Just not for me, for every athlete he is an idol, everyone learns from him how to remain fit. He is 36 but he has maintained his fitness very well."

"I have also learnt a lot of things from him (Kohli). The way he remains aggressive on the ground, focussed, gives his 100 percent. He is a (Cristiano) Ronaldo fan and I am also a Ronaldo fan, that's common between us. It's inspiring for me and all."

"He is a vegan and what he eats and what not, every athlete follows."

Manpreet, who led India to a historic bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics after 41 years, said it is the hunger to don the National colours for long that drove him towards fitness.

"The hunger to represent India drove me towards fitness which is the reason behind my longevity. I want to maintain my fitness and prolong my career. In hockey you need to be fit because if you are not fit you can't survive in world level hockey," he said.

"That's why I give personal attention to my fitness because with age I have to increase my fitness level. If I am not fit I can't make my position for granted. Whenever I am on break or camps, I continue my fitness routine," he added.

In pursuit of Olympics gold, Cup medal

Manpreet already has two Olympic bronze to his credit, but it the dream to win a World Cup medal and gold at the Los Angeles Games that is still driving him.

"My dream is to win gold at Olympics and a World Cup medal. This hunger is the reason behind my longevity. I always knew that if I had to play well for India I need to be fit to compete with the youngsters and that always motivates me."

"And the bigger motivation is my family,



whenever they (especially my two children, wife and mother) see me in TV, they say you played well, but you need to play much better," he said.

"The grit which Manpreet had at the age of 20 is still the same, the craziness is still the same."

With two big ticket events in the World Cup and Asian Games lined up, this year is crucial for Indian hockey and Manpreet very well knows the magnitude of these two tournaments.

"In the next matches we are going to

play England and Pakistan who are there in the group stages with us in the World Cup.

"We are really excited about the World Cup and Asian Games because it's been a long time that we won a medal in the World Cup and it's important that we accomplish that. Asian Games is also very important because it's an Olympic qualifier for us," he said.

From London low to Tokyo high

Manpreet rated bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics under his leadership after 41 years as the highest achievement of his

career so far, but rued about India's disastrous outing at his debut Olympics, the 2012 London Games.

"The highest point is definitely the Tokyo bronze, it was a dream for all the athletes to win a medal at Olympics that too after 41 years. It was my dream to win medal at Olympics."

"And the lowest was London Olympics. I went there as a youngster, we went there with goals and dreams but we couldn't win a single match and finished 12th," he regretted.

Next goals
Manpreet has set his sights on his next targets -- World Cup, Asian Games and if fitness permits 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"Definitely the target is to play till LA but for that I need to keep my fitness and that's definitely going to be a challenge. Personally, I need to take care of that," he said.

"LA is my target but I need to keep my fitness. But if I fail I won't want to take it that long, I don't want to be a unfit player in the team and deny a youngster a place in the side."

"I will assess my fitness after the Asian Games and if I feel I am not up to the mark, I will take a call." (PTI)

Minakshi moves to quarters of Boxing World Cup



GUIYANG (CHINA), June 18: Indian boxer Minakshi advanced to the quarterfinals of World Cup (Stage 2) in the women's 51kg category here on Thursday.

Minakshi, the reigning 48kg world champion and current World No. 1 in that division, is transitioning into the Olympic 51kg weight class in the ongoing event.

She registered a convincing 5-0 unanimous decision victory over Poland's Natalia Kuczewska to move ahead in the competition.

In the other contest on day four, Abhinash Jamwal (65kg) bowed out after suffering a 0-5 defeat to Kyrgyzstan's Mirzokhid Imam-nazarov.

So far in the tournament, five Indian boxers have advanced to the quarterfinals.

Nikhil (55kg), Deepak (70kg), Minakshi (51kg), Prachi (57kg), and Saneh (65kg). Meanwhile, Jyoti (48kg) and Jugnoo (85kg) have already assured medals for the country by progressing into the semi-finals.

Four Indian boxers will take the ring in their quarterfinal bouts.

In the women's section, Minakshi (51kg) will square off against Kazakhstan's Alua Balkibekova, Saneh (65kg) will face Poland's Kinga Krowka, and Prachi (57kg) will take on Chinese Taipei's Shih Yi Wu.

In the men's section, Nikhil (55kg) clashes with Azerbaijan's Amin Mammadzade. (PTI)

BCCI wants Vaibhav's parents on tour to ease him into senior team environment: Saikia



NEW DELHI, June 18: A 15-year-old schoolboy needs to be eased into a senior team set-up, said BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia as he explained the Board's decision to allow Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's parents to accompany him on the white-ball tour of Ireland and England later this month.

The big-hitting Sooryavanshi, who has earned his maiden call-up in the Indian T20 set-up, has been selected for seven games (two vs Ireland and five vs England) on the tour which begins on June 26 in Belfast.

"You see, not all national teams at the senior level have a 14 or 15-year-old in

their squad. After many decades, we have someone like Vaibhav Sooryavanshi," Saikia told PTI in an exclusive interview.

"At one point in time, it was Sachin Tendulkar (16 and half at time of Test debut) who made it to the national team at such a young age. When such a young kid is part of the senior team, there are obviously a lot of issues that can crop up," he added without elaborating.

"Therefore, to make him comfortable and help him get used to an adult environment, where all the other players are above 18 years of age, and the team management members are also adults, we felt it would be helpful," Saikia, a former

Ranji Trophy player for Assam, stated further.

"We are doing this because we believe it will ease a lot of issues as far as Vaibhav is concerned."

Saikia cited the example of how senior teachers accompany students on school excursions.

"Even when a school student goes on an excursion, there is usually a senior person accompanying them. Vaibhav is still a kid. He has only just come out of school, or is perhaps in his final year of school.

"So, we thought it proper to allow his parents to travel with him. I am very happy that his parents are also taking

good care of their kid, who is an asset for Indian cricket not only now but for the next two or three decades," he added.

"BCCI is not match referee"

Saikia was also surprised to see social media speculation that the Indian board will take action against Sooryavanshi for his heated on-field exchange with Sri Lanka A team player Vishen Halambage during a recent A match.

After a provocative comment from the Sri Lankan, there was an argument following which Sooryavanshi pushed Halambage when he came near the Indian.

"A lot of things are going on in the social media that BCCI is contemplating ac-

tion, etc. Do you want BCCI to step into the domain of match referee?" Saikia counter-queried.

"The BCCI is not an authority, we should not intrude into the area where the match referee and the umpires are the main persons who can take any decision regarding any incident that had happened in the playground.

"Whatever had happened, it was a part of the game, and the BCCI have no role to play. The role is of the match referee. If anything is going wrong, he will take a call, the umpires will take a call, and there is a system in place," the eminent lawyer said. (PTI)

Luis Díaz sparks Colombia to a 3-1 win over Uzbekistan in its World Cup opener

MEXICO CITY, June 18: Colombia arrived at the World Cup with dreams of redemption after missing out on Qatar in 2022. Although it was tense at times, the Cafeteros got off to a strong start.

Luis Díaz had a goal and an assist in his debut on soccer's biggest stage, sparking Colombia to a 3-1 win over Uzbekistan on Wednesday night.

"That's what we came here to do. It's very important to win this first game. We controlled the first half, but they played better in the second," said Díaz, who plays for Bayern Munich. "We must improve."

Daniel Muñoz, also playing in his first World Cup, opened the scoring in the 40th minute after a pass from Díaz, who scored the tiebreaking goal in the 65th when his strike from close range deflected off the hands of diving goalkeeper Utkir Yusupov and trickled across the line.

"We knew that it was going to be a tough match," Colombia coach Nestor Lorenzo said.

Fayzullaev Abbasbek scored in the 60th minute for Uzbekistan,



which made its World Cup debut in front of a heavily pro-Colombia crowd of 80,824 at Estadio Azteca.

"It is a wonderful joy, but emotionally, I think it weighed on some of the players who suffered physically," Lorenzo said. "It has to do with the emotional burden generated by the opening match and the setting in which we played — especially since we were expected to take the initiative and were under pressure to win."

With the White Wolves' defeat, three of the four debuting teams at this year's World Cup lost their first match. Cape Verde played Spain to a draw, while Curaçao and Jordan lost.

"For a small team like ours, to lose 3-1 is too much," said Uzbekistan coach Fabio Cannavaro, an Italian who took over the team in October 2025. "We have good quality for an Asian team, but we need to grow. It was a good expe-

rience."

Jaminton Campaz added a goal in second-half stoppage time for the Colombians, who are ranked 13th in the world and were heavy favorites over 50th-ranked Uzbekistan. Colombia's best World Cup finish was a run to the quarterfinals in Brazil in 2014.

"We needed to hit the ground running. Now we can enjoy the rest of the night," midfielder Gustavo Puerta said.

Colombia moved atop Group K, ahead of Portugal and Congo, who played to a surprising 1-1 draw earlier Wednesday.

The Colombians will face Congo next Thursday at Guadalajara, Mexico, while Uzbekistan will take on Cristiano Ronaldo and Portugal at Houston.

"We are going to play against a tough team that played great against one of the best teams in the world. It is going to be hard," Lorenzo said.

Colombia finished third in South American qualifying behind Argentina and Ecuador. Uzbekistan was second in its Asian qualifying group behind Iran. (AP)

rience."

Jaminton Campaz added a goal in second-half stoppage time for the Colombians, who are ranked 13th in the world and were heavy favorites over 50th-ranked Uzbekistan. Colombia's best World Cup finish was a run to the quarterfinals in Brazil in 2014.

"We needed to hit the ground running. Now we can enjoy the rest of the night," midfielder Gustavo Puerta said.

Colombia moved atop Group K, ahead of Portugal and Congo, who played to a surprising 1-1 draw earlier Wednesday.

The Colombians will face Congo next Thursday at Guadalajara, Mexico, while Uzbekistan will take on Cristiano Ronaldo and Portugal at Houston.

"We are going to play against a tough team that played great against one of the best teams in the world. It is going to be hard," Lorenzo said.

Colombia finished third in South American qualifying behind Argentina and Ecuador. Uzbekistan was second in its Asian qualifying group behind Iran. (AP)

Ivory Coast striker Wahi barred from World Cup match in Canada amid match-fixing probe

NEW YORK, June 18: Ivory Coast striker Elye Wahi, who is being investigated into suspected match-fixing, has not been authorized to travel to Canada for his team's next World Cup match against Germany, the Ivorian soccer federation said on Thursday.

Ivory Coast faces Germany on Saturday in Toronto.

The federation said Wahi will not be able to travel with the squad because "the necessary administrative authorizations for his entry into Canadian territory could not be obtained at this stage."

Wahi started in attack for Ivory Coast when it beat Ecuador 1-0 in its opening game in Philadelphia on Monday. He will remain in the United States pending the team's return, the federation said.

The French soccer league said on Wednesday that an "unusual amount of bets" were placed internationally on Wahi receiving a yellow card during a Ligue 1 game with Nice in May.

The French league was alerted by partners monitoring betting markets about suspicious betting activity at international level concerning Nice's home game against



Metz on May 17, which ended 0-0, and in which Wahi was shown a yellow card.

The French league said it passed this information to relevant police and gambling authorities, as well as the French Football Federation.

Asked whether Wahi was questioned by police, the Marseille prosecutor's office told the Associated Press that "a 23-year-old professional football player, competing in France's Ligue 1 championship, was arrested on May 29, 2026, as part of their investigation."

The office added "the investiga-

tion concerns alleged offenses of organized fraud, organized sports corruption, receiving stolen goods, and money laundering." The player was questioned while in police custody and was released without being detained. The office added the investigation was ongoing.

Wahi's representatives did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The Ivory Coast Football Federation (FIF) said it has not been officially notified "of any judicial or administrative proceedings" concerning Wahi. (AP)

Ishan can play in Tests too but there's no slot for him: Former skipper Srikanth

CHENNAI, June 18: Ishan Kishan has all the requisite skills to be a successful Test batter but unfortunately the Indian red ball squad doesn't have any place for him, former skipper and ex-selection committee chairman Krishnamachari Srikanth said on Thursday.

Kishan, who was out of the team for nearly two years made a stupendous comeback into the T20I side prior to the World Cup and now has scored a hundred on his comeback series in 50-over cricket against Afghanistan.

However Srikanth feels that Kishan, who played a couple of Tests back in 2023 is equally capable keeper-batter in whites too.

"I am a great fan of Ishan Kishan. From nowhere he has made a comeback (into the Indian team) and he's just doing brilliantly. I like his game. The sheer quality of his stroke play, timing, power and effortless game. Ishan is an all-format player. Actually, he can play Test cricket too. Unfortunately, he doesn't have a slot," Srikanth told PTI at his residence here on Thursday.

In fact, when Kishan was dropped from the central contracts back in 2024, the reason given was his lack of interest in playing domestic cricket. However the diminutive Patna went back to the drawing board, practised at his own academy ground and then played even Buchi Babu Trophy (Ranji pre-season tourney).

Srikanth said that "BCCI did a wise thing by asking him to go play domestic cricket, which has helped him a lot.

Subsequently, he captained Jharkhand to Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy triumph."

The former chief selector, however, feels that the current selection committee has lacked continuity with regards to giving chances to some of the performers in domestic cricket.

Srikanth said that he is sympathetic towards Yashasvi Jaiswal, who has got on and off chances in white ball cricket due to jam-packed top order.

"For example, Yashasvi Jaiswal is an extraordinary cricketer. I think he is an all format cricketer. But he is only utilized in Test cricket. Even in the last match or series against South Africa, he scored a century in one of the one days.

"And he has centuries in major Test playing countries like England and Australia. I think he is amazing in T20 cricket also. I think it's just his bad luck that he is forgotten for the shorter formats of the game,"



the 1983 World Cup final here said.

The unfortunate part is that only two opening slots are available.

He pointed out that the Indian cricket team is enjoying the problem of plenty.

"That's the problem in the opening slot especially. It goes like a merry-go-round. Sometimes you are there, sometimes you are not there, sometimes somebody else fills in your place. You find it difficult to come back. That's part of cricket. But I think Jaiswal is an all-format player."

Srikanth feels that there is a lot of recency bias since so much cricket is being played these days.

"Unfortunately, what is happening is, some players get a chance and then sometimes they are forgotten also, which should not happen. There should be continuity. But unfortunately, what is happening also, too much of cricket being played. So, we forget what happened in the last series also," Srikanth said.

Save continuity aspect, Srikanth was all praise

"There are some players despite doing so well in domestic cricket, they don't find a place in the Indian side. I think that is one correction the selection committee has to make though Ajit Agarkar has been doing a brilliant job as a chairman.

"But Test cricket is the ultimate format for any cricketer. So, in Test cricket, probably we will have to make some adjustments (change of approach)," Srikanth said.

Childhood coach Majumdar cites how Kishan changed his game

Kishan's childhood coach Uttam Majumdar said that one fundamental change that he brought about in his technique was playing late.

"There was a period when he was not getting runs, then a period when he was getting the starts but not able to convert them into big totals. We sat down together. And he realised and started playing shots half a second late.

"If you see, his stance has more grip, confidence and control from there comes his shots. He is playing shots late, say half a second late. And that has made a difference," Majumdar said. (PTI)

India beat Uruguay 3-2 to top pool in Women's Nations Cup

AUCKLAND, June 18: India bounced back after conceding an early goal to beat Uruguay 3-2 and finish at the top of Pool A in the FIH Women's Nations Cup New Zealand, here on Thursday.

Deepika netted twice while Deepika Soreng found the back of the net once as India recorded a third consecutive victory in the tournament, having earlier defeated USA and Japan.

USA finished second and joined India in the semifinals. India are set to take on the winner of the contest between Chile or Korea on June 20 in the semifinal.

In the 13th minute of the contest, India were put on the backfoot after Chiara Appennino converted a penalty corner to put Uruguay ahead in the contest.

But India did not have to wait long for an equaliser as drag-flicker Deepika successfully converted a penalty corner in the 24th minute to make it 1-1.

Soreng then turned the momentum completely towards India, putting them ahead 2-1, when she produced a fine field goal in the 43rd minute of the contest heading into the final quarter. (PTI)

Anmol, Rakshitha and Shriyanshi advance at Macau Open

MACAU, June 18: Anmol Kharb led the charge in the women's singles with a straight-game win as six Indian shuttlers progressed to the pre-quarterfinals of the Macau Open Super 300 badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

Fresh from a quarterfinal finish at the Denmark Challenge last month, eighth-seeded Anmol looked sharp as she brushed aside Indonesia's Mutiara Ayu Puspitasari 21-13, 21-16 in just 42 minutes to book her place in the last 16 round.

The 19-year-old world No 51 Indian will next face Malaysia's Goh Jin Wei.

Rakshitha Sree Ramraj, world No 53, also enjoyed a fine outing, defeating Malaysia's Kisona Selvadurai 21-16, 24-22 in 46 minutes.

She will meet South Korea's Kim Min Sun in the pre-quarterfinals.

Seventh seed and world No 49 Shriyanshi Valishetty came through an all-Indian contest against Tasnim Mir, prevailing 21-18, 19-21, 21-15 in a hard-fought 56-minute battle.

Shriyanshi will next take on South Korea's Kim Min Ji.

However, it was the end of the road for Shreya Lele, who went down 12-21, 15-21 to fourth seed Han Qian Xi of China in 34 minutes.

Aakarshi Kashyap also bowed out after a spirited fight against South Korea's Kim Min Ji.

After dropping the opening game, Aakarshi levelled the match by taking the second before eventually losing 17-21, 21-18, 17-21 in one hour and nine minutes.

In the men's singles, Rounak Chouhan rallied from

a game down to beat Chinese Taipei's Wu Zhe Ying 18-21, 21-15, 21-19 in a gripping contest that lasted one hour and five minutes.

S Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian, however, failed to build on a strong start and suffered a 21-11, 18-21, 16-21 defeat to Huang Ping-Hsien of Chinese Taipei in one hour and four minutes.

India also had mixed fortunes in mixed doubles.

Ishaan Bhatnagar and Shruti Mishra needed just 16 minutes to outclass Germany's Calvin Devereux and Desiree Toepffer 21-4, 21-6 and move into the pre-quarterfinals, where they will face sixth-seeded Chinese pair Li Hong Yi and Huang Ke Xin.

However, Mohit Jaglan and Lakshita Jaglan lost 9-21, 12-21 to Malaysia's Low Han Chen and Chan Wen Tse.

Eighth-seeded Dhruv Rawat and Maneesha K suffered a 22-24, 18-21 defeat against South

Korea's Song Hyun Cho and Jeong Na Eun, while Sathwik Reddy Kanapuram and Radhika Sharma went down 10-21, 19-21 to Thailand's Supak Jomkoh and Ornricha Jongstaphornpan.

Rohith Mohankumar and Riduvarshini Ramasamy also exited after a 9-21, 11-21 loss to fourth-seeded Chinese pair of Zhu Yi Jun and Li Qian.

Later in the day, Tharun Mannepalli ensured Indian presence in the men's singles pre-quarterfinals, fighting back from a game down to beat compatriot Ritvik Sanjeevi Satish Kumar 15-21, 21-17, 21-14 in a contest lasting one hour and five minutes.

Kiran George, however, suffered a disappointing early exit, going down 18-21, 11-21 to Indonesia's Richie Duta Richardo in just 36 minutes. (PTI)



Domestic cricket, India A stint prepared me for international stage, says Gurnoor Brar

LUCKNOW, June 18: India's newest pace sensation Gurnoor Brar believes his seamless transition to international cricket is the result of years spent honing his skills in domestic cricket and the exposure he gained through the India A set-up before stepping onto the biggest stage.

The Punjab fast bowler has impressed with his pace and control in his debut ODI series against Afghanistan.

"The India A setup is obviously a big thing for me. If we perform in the Ranji Trophy, we get picked for India A, the Duleep Trophy or the Irani Cup. When I got the call-up for India A, I was very happy," Brar said after India's series-clinching 170-run win.

The 26-year-old has been one of India's standout performers in the series, troubling batters with his pace, bounce and ability to execute yorkers under pressure. He has picked six wickets in 15.5 overs across the two ODIs.

"It was the same for me as when I bowled in Ranji, bowling fast, hitting a hard length and swinging the ball. I tried to replicate the exact same thing in India A and hit the same lines."

A towering presence at six feet five, Brar is known to be a "hit the deck" bowler, rattling batters with short deliveries.

"I don't think about that (reputation) much. I believe in myself and whatever I am doing, whether it is hard length or fast-paced bowling. I tried to replicate that here as well."

Despite his encouraging start, Brar feels he



has only scratched the surface of his potential.

"In these two matches, I wanted to do better from my end. I know that I can do better than I bowled today. Hopefully, in the coming matches, I will be better."

Brar, who spent the recent IPL season warming the bench in Gujarat Titans, credited the quality of bowlers around him for accelerating his growth as a fast bowler.

"There is a very good atmosphere in GT. There is (Ashish) Nehra sir, (Kagiso) Rabada, (Mohammed) Siraj bhai, Prasadh (Krishna) bhai and Ishant Sharma, so you get to learn a lot from them. Obviously, every player wants to get a chance to play, and I was also waiting for my chance there."

"But at the same time, I was observing

where they were making mistakes and where they were doing well. For me, it was about how much more I could learn so that when I got my chance, I could do better.

"I am thankful to God that I got my chance to show what I can do with India."

Brar's effectiveness at the death has been among the highlights of his performances, with the youngster placing significant emphasis on mastering yorkers.

"According to me, every fast bowler should work on yorkers. I work on my death bowling to see how consistently I can bowl yorkers because when you have to bowl at the death, yorkers are very useful, especially when good hitters come in."

He said the support from the Indian team management has helped him bowl with greater freedom.

"The management and bowling coach back me a lot, which gives me the chance to bowl more openly. They didn't give me any new tips; they just told me to back my strength."

Brar added that white-ball bowling was as much about planning and variation as outright speed.

"You can't just bowl fast. Many batsmen like pace if there is nothing in the wicket. It becomes about how we plan against a good opposition or a good batsman and how we set our field positions."

The pacer also spoke about the importance of adapting his lengths according to conditions.

"If your outswing is good, every batsman faces problems, so I try to swing it as much as I can. When the swing is less, I push my length back."

He cited the conditions in the second ODI, where the scorching heat reduced any assistance for swing bowlers.

"The ball wasn't swinging much due to the heat and the wicket. So we adjusted the plan. If we don't get swing, we put the ball back. It all works according to the batsman, the wicket, and the match situation."

The series has also given Brar an opportunity to share the field with India captain Shubman Gill, whom he has known since his early days in Punjab cricket.

"Friendship has its own place, and playing for the team has its own place. We used to practise together earlier and played one or two matches together. But playing for Team India and then him (helping in) taking my first wicket was a great feeling."

Brar was also effusive in his praise for Gill's leadership.

"A good captain is one who backs his bowlers, and all the senior players and captains here back the bowlers a lot. That is a very good thing."

For all the attention his early performances have generated, Brar insists he remains focused on the bigger picture.

"I don't get satisfied. I am happy that I did well, but I want to do more for Team India. I want to keep doing better. I just keep doing my work." (PTI)