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Six abducted Nagas found dead after 28 days

Sushmita Dev resigns as Rajya Sabha member, quits TMC

UNC calls shutdown, seeks action against KNF-P ● Killing of Naga civilians 'senseless act of violence': Conrad

IMPHAL/SENAPATI, June 10: Tension gripped Manipur on Wednesday after the mortal remains of six Naga civilians, who had been abducted nearly a month ago, were recovered following an extensive joint search operation by security forces.

In a statement, Manipur Police said the remains were recovered on Wednesday afternoon after nearly 24 hours of sustained search operations involving around 450 personnel of the Manipur Police, CRPF and Assam Rifles, assisted by sniffer dogs and forensic teams.

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



on May 13, 2026," the police said. The police did not disclose the exact location where the bodies were found or their condition, stating that legal formalities were being carried out and investigations were continuing.

The deceased are believed to be among the six Naga civilians who remained missing after a group of

the Kuki National Front (Progressive) [KNF-P], and residents of Leilon Vaiphei village of being responsible for the abduction and killings.

The recovery of the bodies came a day after 14 Kuki detainees, who had been held by Naga organisations as a pressure tactic to secure the release of the abducted Nagas, were released in Senapati district.

Following the recovery, large crowds gathered at the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences (JNIMS) in Imphal East, where the bodies were expected to be brought.

Conrad condemns killing of 6 Naga civilians: Meanwhile, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Wednesday condemned the killing of six Naga civilians, terming it a "brutal" and "senseless act of violence".

"This senseless act of violence is deeply (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)



NEW DELHI, June 10: Trinamool Congress MP Sushmita Dev on Wednesday resigned from the party and the Rajya Sabha, dealing a fresh blow to the Mamata Banerjee-led party which is facing an internal storm after its defeat in the West Bengal assembly polls.

Dev's resignation as MP has been accepted by Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan.

"Sushmita Dev, an elected member of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha), representing the state of West Bengal, resigned her seat in the Rajya Sabha and her resignation has been accepted by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, with effect from June 10, 2026," a notification from the Rajya Sabha Secretariat said.

Sources said Dev, who earlier quit the Congress 2021 to join the TMC, is likely to join the BJP as she met Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma after tendering her resignation.

While she declined to comment on TMC chief Mamata Banerjee or her future political plans, Dev said, "It's my individual decision, what kind of politics I want to do and who should be my leader. I have my reasons and that's why I have made my decision".

On reports of her joining the BJP, she said, "When I take a deci-

Modi shaped Assam's development journey: Himanta



GUWAHATI, June 10: Congratulating Narendra Modi on becoming India's longest-serving Prime Minister on Wednesday, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said his leadership has driven reform, expanded opportunity and shaped the country's and Assam's development journey in the last 12 years.

Modi, who completed 12 years in service as PM on May 26, on Wednesday surpassed Jawaharlal Nehru's record of holding the longest continuous tenure by an elected Prime Minister.

The chief minister, in a five-page letter to the Prime Minister, conveyed the gratitude, affection and respect of the people of Assam.

"As you stand on the threshold of becoming the longest-serving Prime Minister in India's history, it is with heartfelt congratulations and deep gratitude that I convey the sentiments of almost three and a half crore people of Assam whose relationship with Delhi has been transformed under your leadership," he said.

Sarma claimed that for decades, generations in Assam lived with a quiet sense of distance and the North East was often seen only through the prism of remoteness, insurgency, floods and limitations, with many having resigned themselves to this reality.

"Under your leadership, that re-

ality changed. Assam was brought from the periphery to the centre. The North East became integral to India's national imagination and a region long seen as distant found the confidence to believe it stood at the heart of the country's future," he added.

Sarma pointed out that when the PM described the eight states of the region as 'Ashta Lakshmi' (eight forms of the goddess of wealth), he transformed the vocabulary through which an entire region was viewed, defining the region (not by challenges but by strengths. "When you declared that the North East (NE) would be the New Engine (NE) of growth for India, those words became a source of confidence for millions and a generation that had grown up hearing that development was a distant dream suddenly found itself believing that the future belonged to them," he said.

When Assam became the first state to ratify the GST, the PM's spontaneous response, "A for Assam", was only three words, yet it touched countless hearts, Sarma said.

He said that Modi has visited the state 36 times during his 12 years as the PM, and each visit carried a message that "Assam matters, its people matter, its future matters." (PTI)

Modi beats Nehru, completes 12 years as PM

Central government booklet highlights tax reforms, investor confidence

NEW DELHI, June 10: From tax reforms to digital push, and ease of doing business to moving towards becoming the fastest-growing economy, the government on Wednesday highlighted the achievements during the 12 years of Narendra Modi as India's longest-serving elected prime minister.

Modi surpassed Jawaharlal Nehru's record of 4,398 days as an elected Prime Minister.

A booklet released by the Centre on the occasion said the reduction in income tax burden over the past 12 years reflects the government's vision of 'Ramrajya', adding reforms like GST, faceless tax, and Digital India have helped build trust in the public system that will support India in becoming a USD 5-trillion economy.

Increased taxpayer confidence has enabled greater investment in roads, hospitals, infrastructure, and other initiatives aimed at strengthening India's future.

India's growth story has transitioned from 'Fragile Five' to 'Fastest Growing Economy'. In 2013, India was ranked among the world's five most vulnerable



economies; however, decisive reforms completely turned the tide, it said.

"Today, India stands proudly as the world's fastest-growing major economy. Behind this monumental transformation lies a series of decisive reforms."

The government successfully brought inflation under control, implemented GST, thus unifying the entire nation into a single

Tuliram congratulates PM on becoming longest-serving elected PM

DIPHU, June 10: Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang on Wednesday extended his congratulations to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on becoming the longest-serving elected Prime Minister in India's history.

In a statement, Ronghang described the achievement as a historic milestone in the country's democratic journey. Prime Minister Modi crossed the landmark of 4,399 days in office on Wednesday, becoming the longest-serving elected Prime Minister of India.

Praising the Prime Minister's leadership, Ronghang said Modi's unwavering dedication, tireless service and visionary governance have transformed India across multiple sectors and strengthened the country's position globally.

"Under the Prime Minister's visionary leadership, India has witnessed remarkable progress in every sphere. The nation is moving forward with confidence towards the goal of a Viksit Bharat," he said.

The KAAC chief also conveyed his best wishes for the Prime Minister's continued good health and success, expressing confidence that under Modi's guidance, the country, including regions such as Karbi Anglong, would continue on the path of peace, development and prosperity. Ronghang said the Prime Minister's leadership has played a significant role in accelerating infrastructure development, improving governance and promoting inclusive growth across the country.

TTD takes possession of land in state for temple construction



TIRUPATI, June 10: TTD has officially taken possession of over 10 acres of land in Assam for the construction of a Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Guwahati.

TTD chairman BR Naidu said the Assam government has allotted 10.33 acres of land, located in Sonapur Circle of Kamrup district, for the temple.

"TTD has officially taken possession of 10.33 acres of land allotted by the Assam Government for the construction of a Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in

Guwahati," said an official press release from the temple body on Tuesday.

The land allotment is in line with TTD's initiative to establish Srivari temples in state capitals across the country.

BR Naidu and senior officials had held discussions with the Assam government representatives regarding the project.

The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, N Chandrababu Naidu, and the TTD Trust Board also extended their support through official communications.

On Tuesday, the Assam Metropolitan Deputy Commissioner handed over the land possession certificate to TTD.

BR Naidu said Bhoomi Puja for the temple construction will be performed shortly. (PTI)

Union Minister reviews devp projects in Lower Siang

Pabitra Margherita stresses project monitoring, quality education and improved connectivity during Likabali visit

LIKABALI, June 10: Union Minister of State for External Affairs and Textiles Pabitra Margherita reviewed the implementation of various Central and State government schemes in Lower Siang district during a meeting at Likabali, while stressing the importance of project monitoring, quality education and infrastructure development.

The Minister was accorded a warm welcome by district officials, panchayat representatives and members of the public on his arrival in the district.

During the review meeting, Margherita said developmental projects are key to shaping the future of the State and emphasised the need for regular assessment and evaluation to ensure effective implementation and sustained growth.

Expressing concern over school dropouts, he said every child leaving the education system is a matter of concern and stressed the importance of ensuring quality education and retaining students in schools.

The Minister reviewed the progress of various flagship programmes and discussed achievements, chal-

lenges and suggestions presented by different departments.

Detailed deliberations were held on measures to improve implementation and address existing bottlenecks.

Deputy Speaker of the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly Kardo Nyigyor highlighted persistent road connectivity issues in the district, particularly the Akajan-Likabali-Bame road, and sought urgent intervention from the Central Government.

He requested the Minister to take up the matter to address recurring disruptions caused by monsoon-induced road blockages.

Nyigyor also pointed out that poor soil stability in the region has contributed to the deterioration of PMGSY roads and suggested the adoption of engineering designs suited to local terrain and geological conditions.

MLAs Nari Koyu and Tojir Kadu urged the Centre to enhance financial allocations under rural housing schemes, stating that existing unit costs are inadequate considering the difficult (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Post Malone concert generated ₹ 43 crore economic impact; state plans more marquee events

₹ 700 crore economic opportunity for Assam in next 5 yrs in 'concert tourism': Report

GUWAHATI, June 10: A structured pipeline of marquee live events could generate over ₹ 700 crore in cumulative economic impact within Assam over the next five years, a report released here on Wednesday claimed.

It was based on a survey conducted by BookMyShow, an online entertainment ticketing platform, in collaboration with Assam Tourism Development Corporation Ltd (ATDC) and EY-Parthenon, a global strategy consulting arm of Ernst and Young (EY).

The report, "The Assam Blueprint: Turning Live Music Economy into a Tourism Multiplier", examined the economic, tourism, workforce and cultural impact of live entertainment in Assam following a concert by American singer-rapper Post Malone in December last year.

It comes days after the an-

nouncement of another concert by the legendary rock band Guns N' Roses in the city in November, as part of the state government's 'concert tourism' policy.

Unveiling the report at a press conference here, ATDC managing director Kumar Padmapani Bora said the report was compiled after extensive talks with various stakeholders.

As per the report, a structured pipeline of marquee live entertainment events could generate over ₹ 700 crore in cumulative economic impact within the state over the next five years.

The Post Malone concert generated an estimated ₹ 43 crore in total economic impact, including ₹ 32 crore injected directly into Assam's economy through attended spending and another ₹ 5 crore in GST revenue.

The concert attracted approxi-



mately 20,000 attendees, with 53 per cent coming from outside Guwahati, with people from over 200 cities and towns across the country attending it.

The report further revealed that for every ₹ 100 spent on a concert

ticket, attendees spent an additional ₹ 899 on accommodation, travel, dining, shopping and local services.

Hotels in the city reported a nearly 30 per cent increase in occupancy during the concert week-

end, local transport operators experienced more than 50 per cent growth in ride demand, restaurants and cafés recorded over 33 per cent growth in walk-ins, while retail businesses witnessed more than 30 per cent higher footfalls during the event.

Bora said the live events are part of the state's concert tourism policy, adopted last year.

"For Assam, the concert economy is not just about entertainment; it is about tourism, culture, youth engagement and economic growth working together. Our objective is to build a facilitative ecosystem where large events become repeatable opportunities that bring visitors into the state, create local employment and showcase Assam to national and global audiences," he said.

As per the policy, at least three marquee live events, featuring na-

tional or international performers, will be organised, Bora said.

"A concert arena will also be developed in Guwahati in the next two to three years," he added.

Naman Pugalia, chief business officer, Live Events, BookMyShow, also present at the press meet, said the deep-rooted connection of North East region with music serves as a catalyst for hosting concerts here.

"The Post Malone concert demonstrated how globally benchmarked live experiences can generate value far beyond the venue, creating impact across tourism, hospitality, local enterprise and employment," he said.

The successful hosting of the event was also a demonstration of the synchronisation of government, industry and local stakeholders, Pugalia added.

Raghav Anand, partner and

leader, Media and Entertainment, EY-Parthenon, speaking virtually at the press conference, said, "What makes Assam particularly exemplifying is not just the headline economic impact, but the ecosystem behind it - clear policy direction, institutional coordination, infrastructure investment and a commitment to measuring outcomes."

"When live entertainment is treated as economic infrastructure rather than a one-off spectacle, it becomes a repeatable engine for tourism, employment and regional growth," he added.

The Assam government had approved a policy in May last year for promoting 'concert tourism', and also joined hands with Bigtree Entertainment, which operates BookMyShow, to organise various national and international musical concerts in the state. (PTI)

Sensex, Nifty close flat amid fresh tensions in West Asia

Metal, oil & gas shares major drag

MUMBAI, June 10: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty pared gains to settle flat on Wednesday, dragged by last-hour selling in oil and gas, metal and telecom shares as renewed hostilities between the US and Iran unsettled investor sentiment.

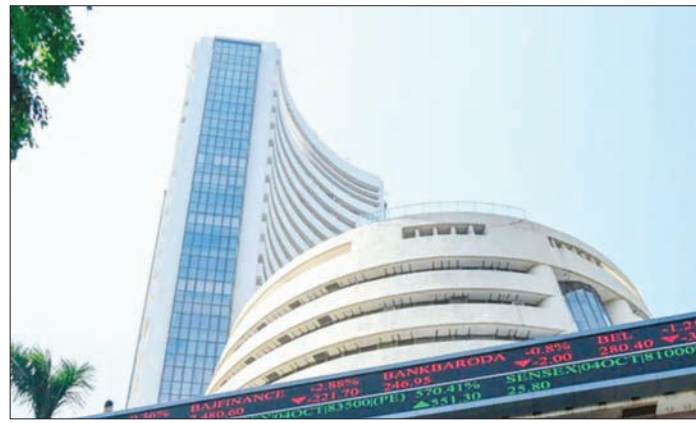
The 30-share BSE Sensex closed higher by 64.42 points, or 0.09 per cent, at 73,983.18. The index opened higher and jumped 694.25 points, or 0.93 per cent, before hitting a high of 74,613.01 in the first half. However, profit booking in metal, oil & gas and telecom shares in the second half of the session trimmed most of its intraday gains.

Retreating from its early highs, the 50-share NSE Nifty closed lower by 27.15 points, or 0.12 per cent, at 23,214.95. The benchmark index hit a high of 23,425.35 and a low of 23,184.60 in intraday trade.

Weak trends in global markets and relentless foreign fund outflows made investors cautious, according to analysts.

Among the Sensex constituents, Hindustan Unilever, Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, ICICI Bank, ITC and HDFC Bank were the biggest winners.

Eternal Ltd, Tata Steel, Bajaj



Finserv and Titan were among the laggards.

Investor sentiment remained fragile amid rising geopolitical tensions in the Middle East following fresh developments involving the US and Iran, which initially pushed Brent crude prices higher. However, resilience in select heavy-weight counters, particularly banking majors, helped limit the downside." Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Broader markets closed lower as the BSE SmallCap Select index declined 1.37 per cent and MidCap Select index dropped 1.35 per cent.

Sectorally, The MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt tanked 2.20 per cent, followed by Telecommunication (1.98 per cent), Metal (1.87 per cent), Oil & Gas (1.77 per cent), Realty (1.76 per cent), Energy (1.71 per cent), Power (1.64 per cent) and Utilities (1.55 per cent).

FMCG, Private Banks Index and Top 10 Banks were the winners.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended lower. The Kospi tanked 4.52 per cent and the Nikkei 225 declined 1.89 per cent.

Markets in Europe were trading in negative territory. US markets ended mostly lower on Tuesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,566.03 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

"Indian equity markets ended modestly lower as renewed hostilities between the United States and Iran unsettled investor sentiment and revived concerns over the durability of the fragile ceasefire. The Nifty traded positively through much of the first half before surrendering gains later in the session, as geopolitical uncertainty continued to limit risk appetite and cap any meaningful recovery," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Global markets remained under pressure after fresh military exchanges between the US and Iran heightened concerns over a renewed escalation in the Middle East, he added. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, dipped 0.20 per cent to USD 91.27 per barrel.

On Tuesday, the Sensex climbed 394.50 points, or 0.54 per cent, to settle at 73,918.76. The Nifty ended 119.10 points, or 0.52 per cent, higher at 23,242.10. (PTI)

Airtel deploys over 2,900 new 5G sites in upper north region to boost network coverage



JAMMU/CHANDIGARH, June 10: Telecom service operator Bharti Airtel on Wednesday said it has deployed more than 2,900 new 5G network sites across the upper north region over the past 12 months to ensure faster speed and better experience for its users.

Spanning 77 districts, the roll-out provides reliable high-speed connectivity to over 28.6 million customers across bustling cities and fast-growing towns to remote rural villages of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir, the company said in a statement.

With more than eight new sites activated daily, users enjoy seamless streaming, rapid downloads, uninterrupted remote working and learning, and dependable digital payments, regardless of their location, the statement said.

"Data demand across Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir is surging, and we are staying ahead by relentlessly strengthening our network. These 2,900-plus new 5G sites mean faster speeds, wider coverage, and a more reliable experience for over 28.6 million customers.

"Our continued investments underscore Airtel's commitment to bridging connectivity gaps and powering the region's digital transformation with a future-ready network," said Anupam Arora, Chief Executive Officer, Upper North, Bharti Airtel. (PTI)

Adequate supply of fertiliser in Punjab for kharif season: Centre

NEW DELHI, June 10: The Centre on Wednesday said there is adequate supply of fertilisers in Punjab for the ongoing kharif season.

The Union Fertiliser Ministry said that surplus and healthy supply-chain pipeline has been maintained for Punjab. The ministry has ensured an availability of 10.71 lakh tonnes against the total requirement of 14.50 lakh tonnes for the Kharif 2024 season and a calculated pro-rata requirement of 9.0 lakh tonnes up to June 9.

Out of this supplied volume, actual sales of urea in the state stood at 6.25 lakh tonne, leaving a substantial closing stock of 4.46 lakh tonne immediately available on the ground, the ministry said in a statement.

Furthermore, an additional quantity of 0.39 lakh tonne of urea is currently in transit to Punjab.

Ground-level verification from state government records indicates that paddy transplantation is yet to fully commence in the state, making the current stocks sufficient to comfortably meet emerging field requirements.

In Amritsar district specifically, the total availability so far has been at 64,720 tonne. As on date, a robust stock of 32,956 tonne of urea remains available in the district



alone.

The current strong stock position is a direct result of aggressive pre-positioning strategies executed by the ministry ahead of the Kharif season.

During January-March, the Centre has supplied 6.08 lakh tonne of urea against a combined urea requirement of 3.50 lakh tonne -- representing an additional 2.58 lakh tonne to meet peak month requirements.

Between March and June 9, urea sales in the state recorded a massive increase, standing at 7.86 lakh tonne compared to 7.10 lakh tonne in the year-ago period.

This follows the Rabi 2023-24 season, where Punjab's total urea requirement was 15 lakh tonne against which the ministry ensured availability of 19.43 lakh tonne.

"While these heavy off-takes may have impacted the state government's available buffer, the Central Government has successfully stabilised the pipeline through continuous replenishment," the ministry added.

Despite prevailing external headwinds, the fertiliser ministry has insulated Indian agriculture from international shocks through proactive domestic policy interventions. (PTI)

FRAI raises concerns over illicit trade, unfair market practices

GUAHATI, June 10: The Assam State Chapter of the Federation of Retailers Association of India (FRAI) on Wednesday organised a seminar on "Confronting Illicit Trade in Modern Markets", bringing together retailers, trader bodies, policymakers and industry representatives to discuss the growing challenges posed by counterfeit products, illegal trade networks and unfair market practices.

Participants expressed concern over the increasing circulation of counterfeit and non-compliant products, as well as the impact of predatory pricing, deep discounting and aggressive expansion by certain quick-commerce and e-commerce platforms on small retailers and traditional businesses.

The seminar was attended by Transport and Welfare of Bodoland Minister Charan Boro as chief guest. Among the guests of honour were Guwahati MP Bijuli Kalita Medhi, Guwahati Central MLA Vijay Gupta, Hajo-Sualkuchi MLA Prakash Das, Special DGP (CID) Munna Prasad Gupta, RPF Assistant Security Commissioner Bimal Chandra Das, Assistant Commissioner of State Taxes Momshad Dinory, Assistant Commissioner of CGST Anirban Chowdhury and industry expert CA Himanshu Agarwal.

Speakers highlighted that while digital commerce and quick-commerce platforms have transformed consumer access to products, they have also created new avenues for the spread of counterfeit and illicit goods.

Participants noted that aggressive discounting, flash sales and ultra-fast delivery models often make it difficult for consumers to distinguish between genuine and counterfeit products.

Participants pointed out that products ranging from groceries and personal care items to electronics and premium mobile phones are now delivered within minutes, creating opportunities for unscrupulous sellers to exploit digital platforms and push illegal or non-compliant goods into the market.

They further stated that such practices not only harm consumers but also affect genuine retailers who invest in maintaining product quality, authenticity and customer trust.

The participants observed that unfair competition and uneven market conditions are making it increasingly difficult for traditional retailers to sustain their businesses.

Speaking at the seminar, FRAI Assam State Chapter president Birendra Ch Baishya said small retailers and kirana stores form the backbone of India's local economy and community life.

He warned that predatory pricing, deep discounting and the growing circulation of counterfeit products were distorting fair competition and threatening the livelihoods of lakhs of traders.

The participants stressed that while technology and innovation are important for the retail sector, growth must be fair, transparent and inclusive.

They called for stronger regulatory oversight, effective enforcement against illicit trade and policies that ensure a level playing field for small retailers.

Representatives of various trader associations also urged policymakers to take steps to eliminate counterfeit and illegal products from online retail platforms and safeguard the interests of traditional businesses.

First built-to-suit Meta facility in India to come up at Jamnagar

HT Bureau
GUAHATI, June 10: Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and Meta Platforms, Inc. have announced a partnership to develop an AI-enabled data centre at Jamnagar in Gujarat, marking a major milestone in India's emergence as a global hub for artificial intelligence infrastructure.

Under the agreement, RIL will develop a 168 MW data centre, which is expected to be completed within two years, with provisions for future expansion. The facility will be Meta's first built-to-suit data centre capacity in India and will support the technology giant's global infrastructure, core business operations and AI computing requirements.

Meta will lease capacity from the facility, further strengthening its long-standing partnership with Reliance across connectivity, commerce and digital innovation.

RIL will provide end-to-end services for the project, including design, construction, utility management, renewable power supply, network connectivity and managed operational services, positioning itself as a single-window solutions provider for hyperscale AI infrastructure.

The Jamnagar location offers several strategic advantages, including access to renewable energy, water availability, proximity to submarine cable landing stations on India's western coast and connectivity through Jio's extensive fibre network. The data centre will be powered by renewable energy and utilise desalinated seawater for cooling, reflecting the sustainability commitments of both companies.

Reliance Industries Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh D. Ambani described the partnership as a transformative moment for India's

digital infrastructure.

"Building India's first built-to-suit data centre for a global technology leader of Meta's scale demonstrates India's readiness to be at the forefront of the global AI revolution. Jamnagar will become a landmark destination for hyperscale AI computing," Ambani said.

Meta Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg said the company was proud to work with Reliance on its first AI-enabled data centre in India.

"This world-class facility in Jamnagar will help us scale our AI infrastructure globally while deepening our long-term investment in India's economy," Zuckerberg said.

The project is aligned with the Government of India's policy priorities that recognise data centres as strategic national infrastructure and seek to attract global investment in AI and digital infrastructure.

PMSMA completes 10 years; 5,042 pregnant women screened in Golaghat

HT Correspondent
GOLAGHAT, June 10: The District Health Society, Golaghat, recently celebrated the successful completion of 10 years of the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA), a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare aimed at providing assured, comprehensive and quality antenatal care services free of cost to pregnant women.

As part of the observance, special programmes were organised across health institutions in the district, including Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, Primary Health Centres, Community Health Centres, Sub-Divisional Civil Hospitals and the district hospital.

A total of 5,042 pregnant women were screened across 20 PMSMA sites in Golaghat district.

The beneficiaries, particularly those in the second and third trimesters of pregnancy, received a range of services including counselling, blood and urine tests, ultrasonography and other diagnostic examinations.

The district-level programme was held at the Mother and Child Wing of Swahid Kusal Konwar Civil Hospital. Addressing the gathering, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (Health) highlighted the significant role played by PMSMA in strengthening maternal healthcare by ensuring quality antenatal



services, facilitating safe deliveries and enabling timely referral of high-risk pregnancy cases.

The programme was attended by the Joint Director of Health Services, the Superintendent of the hospital, officials of the District Maternal and Child Health Programme Unit (DMPU), medical staff and beneficiaries.

Health officials noted that PMSMA has made a substantial contribution to improving maternal health indicators over the past decade by promoting early detection and management of pregnancy-related complications and ensuring access to specialist care for expectant mothers.

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Six abducted Nagas

disturbing and wholly unacceptable," Sangma said in a statement.

The Chief Minister said the incident was more painful as it came despite efforts by the United Naga Council (UNC) to foster dialogue and reconciliation.

Sangma extended condolences to the victims' families and stressed that violence had no justification. Calling for peaceful resolution of differences, he added, "Lasting peace can only be built through mutual respect, dialogue, and a commitment to resolving differences through peaceful means rather than violence. May the departed souls rest in peace, and may their families find strength and comfort in this hour of grief."

Reacting strongly to the development, the United Naga Council (UNC) announced that it would not receive the mortal remains until its charter of demands was addressed and justice delivered to the victims' families by both the Manipur government and the Government of India.

The UNC also called a 24-hour total shutdown across Naga-inhabited areas from 6 am on June 11 to 6 am on June 12 as a mark of protest and to demand justice.

In a strongly worded statement, the council alleged that the six hostages had been murdered and their bodies recovered in a mutilated and dismembered condition. Describing the incident as a "gross violation of human rights" and a "sacrilegious and satanic act", the organisation condemned the killings in the strongest terms.

The UNC demanded immediate abrogation of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with all Kuki militant groups and sought the arrest and prosecution of all KNF-P personnel allegedly involved in the abduction of 18 Naga civilians, including two pastors, from Leilon Vaiphei village on May 13.

It also demanded action against Lalboi Vaiphei, chief of Leilon Vaiphei village, and others allegedly involved in the incident.

The council further demanded that KNF-P be declared a terrorist organisation and called for the removal of Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen from office, alleging that her continuation would undermine public confidence in the government's ability to address security concerns.

Expressing solidarity with the bereaved families, the UNC said the tragedy had caused immense pain to the Naga community and raised serious concerns about the safety and security of civilians.

"This tragedy has shaken the faith of citizens in the government's ability to ensure the safety and security of innocent civilians. We consider this a direct challenge to the collective identity and security of the Naga people," the council stated.

Security has been tightened across sensitive areas as authorities monitor the situation amid heightened tensions and growing demands for justice. (NNN)

Sushmita Dev resigns

Dev, she had earlier served as Lok Sabha MP from Silchar in Assam. She was also the former president of the All India Mahila Congress.

Earlier in the day, Dev met the Rajya Sabha chairman and handed over her resignation letter to him.

"I convey my sincere gratitude to your excellency, honorable deputy chairman and all functionaries of the Rajya Sabha secretariat extending all help and cooperation during my tenure as a member of the Rajya Sabha," Dev said in the letter to the Chairman.

Dev is the second Trinamool Congress MP from the Rajya Sabha to resign this week. Another TMC leader Sukhendu Sekhar Ray resigned from the party and his membership from the Council of States.

Sources said several party MPs are also deciding to form a separate group and align with the ruling NDA like the seven AAP MPs who had resigned from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and later joined the BJP.

A majority of Trinamool's 80 MLAs have already formed a separate group led by Ritabrata Banerjee as the leader of opposition in the state Assembly. (PTI)

Modi beats Nehru

economy. This is not just a figure, it is the flight of every Indian's dream," the booklet said.

Highlighting the achievements of the government's digital push, an official document released on Wednesday said the cost of 1 GB of data plunged by 97 per cent to around Rs 8-10 from Rs 269 in 2014, which led to an increase in internet usage in rural areas and opened a new world of opportunities for the people.

In the last 12 years, the country has seen about a fourfold surge in internet users to 103 crore up to December 2025 from around 25 crore subscribers in 2014. Meanwhile, broadband connections have jumped about 17 times to nearly 100 crore from 6 crore during the same period.

A booklet titled 'Public Service is the Resolve' highlighted the initiatives taken by the government in the last 12 years for farmers' welfare.

The Modi government has increased the annual budget for the agriculture ministry by fivefold in the last 12 years to Rs 1.4 lakh crore for the current fiscal as part of its efforts to boost the farm sector and enhance farmers' income.

The Centre has distributed a whopping Rs 4.3 lakh crore to farmers under PM-KISAN. Under the scheme, launched in February 2019, the government provides Rs 6,000 to eligible farmers annually in three equal instalments.

Industry leaders lauded the government's reforms and policies, and said the nation has emerged as an influential global voice under Modi's transformative leadership.

They highlighted the government's emphasis on improving ease of doing business, saying that it has benefited from the enabling environment marked by increased investor confidence and that India Inc stands firmly with the prime minister in realising the Vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047. (PTI)

Union Minister reviews

terrain and high transportation expenses in the State.

Deputy Commissioner Gobi Nyicyor, ADC Ainstein Koyu and ADC Mekar Riba apprised the Minister of the district's achievements, challenges and developmental requirements. Heads of various departments also made detailed presentations on projects and welfare initiatives being implemented in their respective sectors.

Earlier, Margherita, accompanied by the district's MLAs, visited the historic Malinthin Temple and offered prayers for the well-being of the people of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

The visit formed part of the Union Minister's review of developmental activities and infrastructure projects in the district.

ENGINEERING WORKS AT LUMDING DIVISION
E-Tender Notice No. SCL-Engg-42-2026. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN. 1. Brief Description of Item:** Special repairs to leaky roof and other miscellaneous works in the Railway quarters under ADEM/Badarpur Ghat. **Tender Value:** ₹ 20,37,299.00/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 6,40,800.00/- E-tenders will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 02-07-2026 and opened at 15:00 hrs. on 03-07-2026. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 02-07-2026 in website <http://www.treps.gov.in>

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AUGMENTATION OF CAPACITY OF RUNNING ROOM AT TINSUKIA DIVISION
Tender Notice No.: TSK/Engg/25 of 2026. Dated: 05-06-2026. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Item No. 1:** Brief Description of Item: Tinsukia Division - Augmentation of Capacity of Running Room/Rest Rooms at Mariani Jn. & Jorhat Town. **Tender Value:** ₹ 3,93,50,446/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 7,87,000/- Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. and opening of tender at 16:00 hrs. on 29-06-2026. For complete information along with the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. on 29-06-2026 in website <http://www.treps.gov.in>

DRM (Works), Tinsukia
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

APPOINTMENT OF HALT CONTRACTOR
Tender Notice No. C/Halt/Tender/TSK/02/2026; Dated: 05-06-2026 Applications are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Name of work with locations:** Appointment of Halt Contractor at 08 (Eight) locations over Tinsukia division for Balimara (BTZ), Mohkhuti (MHKT), Mouband (MOBD), Badulipar (BLPR), Rangaliting (RNGG), Khumtai (KUTI), Chaikiting (CDFG), Lonpotia (LPTA) halt stations. **Application forms available** at office of the Divisional Commercial Manager (I/C), DRM Building, N.F. Railway, Tinsukia from 10.00 hrs. of 09-06-2026 (Tuesday) on any working days i.e. Monday to Friday (10.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.) **Last date for dropping of application** in the office of Divisional Commercial Manager (I/C), Tinsukia Up to 15.00 hrs. of 09-07-2026 (Thursday) on any working days i.e. Monday to Friday (10.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.) **Application box will be opened** at 11.00 hrs. of 10-07-2026 (Friday) in the office of Divisional Commercial Manager (I/C), Tinsukia. Notification had already been uploaded on the Railway website at www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in

Divisional Commercial Manager (I/C), Tinsukia
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Alleges politics of defections, attacks BJP over governance, media control and corruption claims BJP systematically weakened democratic institutions: Assam Cong chief Gaurav Gogoi

GUWAHATI, June 10: Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Gaurav Gogoi on Wednesday alleged that the BJP has systematically weakened democratic institutions by indulging in the politics of engineering defections solely to consolidate power.

Instead of creating self-made milestones, Prime Minister Narendra Modi should explain to the people why economic hardships continue to persist, Gogoi told reporters here.

The economic condition of ordinary citizens has deteriorated significantly and public sentiment is far from positive, but the "BJP is more focused on creating distractions and confusion among the public rather than addressing their real concerns," he said in response to questions on the Prime Minister completing 12 consecutive years in office.

"The BJP has weakened democracy and reduced politics to a game of breaking and poaching parties," he said.

Regarding the recent developments in the Trinamool Congress after the West Bengal assembly elections, Gogoi alleged that despite already being in power, the BJP continues to engage in anti-democratic practices to acquire even more power by drawing leaders from other parties into its fold.

He alleged that the same had happened in



Assam before the elections.

The Deputy Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said the Congress would continue to oppose such actions with greater determination in the days ahead.

There is a specific reason why Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has retained the Information and Public Relations Department, he asserted.

"The BJP wants to control the media. There are growing concerns about how long

media freedom will survive under such circumstances," the Congress leader claimed. He further alleged that the BJP rewards individuals accused of corruption rather than holding them accountable.

Criticising the recent expansion of the Assam Cabinet, Gogoi alleged, without taking names, that the BJP and the chief minister have sent a message that those involved in scandals and "syndicate activities" are more likely to be rewarded with influential ministerial portfolios.

"The message from the new Cabinet appears that honesty and integrity are no longer the qualities that lead to important ministerial responsibilities," he said.

"People associated with the Gir cow scam in the state, the cattle syndicate, and corruption in the Assam Legislative Assembly have been rewarded with ministerial positions," he claimed.

The scam refers to a controversy that erupted last year regarding the alleged misappropriation, diversion of funds and illegal sale of high-yield Gir cows imported for a state-run farm project.

Commenting on the rejection of the Congress candidate Meenakshi Natarjan's nomination for the Rajya Sabha election in Madhya Pradesh, Gogoi alleged that the BJP is willing to go to any extent in its pursuit of power.

"The Election Commission appears ready to act on allegations made by the BJP, even when they are based on incorrect information. However, genuine and evidence-backed complaints made by the Congress are often ignored," he said.

He cited instances in Assam where Congress submitted documentary evidence regarding a candidate in Karbi Anglong who allegedly concealed information about criminal cases and another candidate in Dhekiajuli who allegedly failed to disclose complete details of assets.

"Despite clear evidence, no action was taken, and such an approach threatens the very foundation of democracy," Gogoi said.

Regarding the NEET question paper leak controversy, Gogoi criticised the Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for not accepting moral responsibility or resigning from his post.

"The BJP is always eager to take credit but reluctant to accept responsibility," he added. Gogoi said that the Congress has begun a series of review meetings aimed at strengthening the party at the grassroots level among Assam's various communities and ethnic groups.

He said that he was confident that the Congress would re-emerge in a stronger and renewed form in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Assam. (PTI)

Door-to-Door Leprosy screening conducted in KA tea gardens

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 10: As part of the Intensified Active Case Finding (IACF) campaign under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP), extensive door-to-door screening activities were carried out in Lengri Tea Garden under Bokajan BPHC and Bogijan Tea Garden under Chowkijhola BPHC in Karbi Anglong district.

The campaign was organised by the District NLEP Cell, Karbi Anglong with the objective of identifying hidden cases of leprosy and ensuring timely diagnosis and treatment. Health teams visited households across the tea garden areas, conducting screenings and raising awareness about the signs, symptoms and treatment of leprosy.

The drive was supervised and monitored by Amarjit Tisso, District Programme Manager, NHM Karbi Anglong, who emphasised the importance of active case detection in achieving the goal of a leprosy-free society. The campaign seeks to ensure that no affected individual is left undiagnosed or untreated, particularly in vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities.

Health officials highlighted that early detection and prompt treatment with Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT) can completely cure leprosy and prevent disabilities associated with the disease. They also appealed to the public to overcome stigma and seek medical attention without hesitation if symptoms are noticed.

The district health authorities expressed their gratitude to the residents and workers of the tea garden communities for their wholehearted cooperation and participation during the campaign, which contributed significantly to its successful implementation.

The IACF campaign forms part of the ongoing efforts of the Health Department and NHM Assam to strengthen leprosy surveillance, promote early diagnosis and move closer towards the vision of a leprosy-free India.

Tiger scare returns to Kaliabor

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 10: Panic spread among residents of Silghat area under Kaliabor sub-division in Nagaon district on Wednesday after two Royal Bengal tigers were sighted inside Kamakhya Reserved Forest, under Salna Range Office.

The fresh presence of the big cats, nearly six months after similar attacks in the area, has created panic among locals.

To ensure public safety and prevent possible tiger attacks, Kaliabor Sub-Divisional administration has imposed prohibitory orders under Section 163(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. The order was issued by Raj Boruah, Additional District Commissioner & Sub-Divisional Officer, Kaliabor.

As per the order, entry and movement of all persons have been banned on the Kamakhya Temple to Kamakhya/Sonari Gaon PWD new road. In tea plantation areas including Kaliabor Tea Estate No. 2 tea estate and Naga Pathar, movement is prohibited from 2 pm to 9 am daily. The road from Silghat near Assam Co-operative Jute Mill to Trishul dhari Temple is also closed from 2 pm to 9 am. Entry to Trishul dhari Temple Point inside the reserved forest is banned round the clock.

The order stated that legal action will be taken against violators.

Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev University Marks 13th Foundation Day

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 10: Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev University, Nagaon observed its 13th Foundation Day with a day-long programme at the university auditorium on Tuesday.

The celebrations began with flag hoisting in the morning by Bhabendra Nath Deka, Chancellor of the university and Padadhikar of Srimanta Sankardev Sangha.

The open session commenced with lamp lighting and the university anthem. Welcoming the gathering, Vice Chancellor Prof Ashok Kumar Bora presented the university's progress report and thanked Chief Minister



Himanta Biswa Sarma for the state government's support.

Chancellor Bhabendra Nath Deka spoke on the background of the university's establishment and stressed the need to present Srimanta Sankardev to society through a scientific perspective. He also unveiled the university's annual magazine 'Saraswat' and the Assamese Department's annual journal 'Dapun'.

Local MLA Rupak Sarma attended the event as Guest of Honour. Dr Pankaj Bora, Assistant Professor at Tezpur University, attended the programme as chief guest. Highlighting the relevance of Srimanta Sankardev's philosophy in modern education, he said that data and information together generate knowledge and when knowledge is processed it moves towards technology. He added that while artificial intelligence can provide technology, it cannot possess wisdom, which is essential for human progress. He also observed that Sankardev had introduced educational methods in the 15th-16th century that align closely with modern concepts of participatory and interactive learning.

Noted litterateur, journalist and Professor of Practice Anuradha Sarma Pujari recalled childhood memories and said moral consciousness in society could be strengthened only if Sankardev's ideals are firmly instilled in the younger generation.

Professor of Practice and architect Nuruddin Ahmed reaffirmed his commitment to supporting the university's development and briefed the gathering on his involvement with the Bordowa project.

Coordinator Kushal Thakuria said society can progress only with a service-oriented mindset and appreciated the efforts of all stakeholders associated with the university.

Registrar Dr Sarat Hazarika delivered the vote of thanks. The programme was conducted by Dr Triveni Saikia, Head of the Education Department and Dr Ajit Devnath, Head of the Economics Department.

Kishor Goswami selected for Deba Kumar Bora Memorial Media Fellowship 2026

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 10: Kishor Goswami, a senior journalist has been selected for the Deba Kumar Bora Memorial Media Fellowship, 2026.

The fellowship was instituted by the All Assam Journalists' Union (AAJU), Jorhat District Committee and the Journalists' Welfare Fund.

A press note issued by AAJU Jorhat District president Jogesh Ojha and Journalists' Welfare Fund secretary Navajyoti Boruah stated

that Goswami, who was selected from among several applicants will undertake a study on the topic, "Emergency Digital Archive of Endangered Oral Literature of the Bani Language of Assam: A Participatory Pilot Project."

The note stated that Goswami will be provided ₹ 20,000 to conduct the study and will have to submit his report to the journalists' body within the next six months.

He will be formally awarded the fellowship at the annual meeting of the journalists' body and the Jour-

nalists' Welfare Fund, scheduled to be held in December this year.

Goswami hails from Sualkuchi in Kamrup district.

Over the past three years, three journalists from the state have been awarded the fellowship.

Late Deba Kumar Bora was a prominent AASU leader during the Assam Agitation. He later served as a minister in the first AGP government and subsequently became journalist. He also served as press adviser to former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi.

Lt Balendra Nath Sarma Memorial Educational Award presented at Nagaon School

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 10: The Late Balendra Nath Sarma Memorial Educational Award, instituted in memory of National Award-winning teacher Lt Balendra Nath Sarma was presented on Tuesday at a day-long function held at Kironbala Goswami Girls' School, one of Nagaon's leading educational institutions.

Local MLA Rupak Sarma attended the event and presented the award. Nagaon District Commissioner Devashish Sarma attended the event as the chief guest.

Presiding over the meeting, the school's headmistress Devajani Bhuyan welcomed the guests. In an inspiring speech, DC Devashish Sarma highlighted the importance of educational standards, the sacred teacher-student relationship and key aspects of the overall education system. As part of the programme, awards for the Best Sportsperson and Best Singer of the school week were formally presented to encourage stu-

dents' talents.

A major highlight of the event was the unveiling of 'Jonaki Baat', a hand-written magazine created by Class VIII students of the school. The magazine was released by Mridul Kumar Nath, Inspector of Schools, Nagaon.

The colorful programme was attended by the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the school managing committee, head teachers from various schools in the area, CRC teachers, students and guardians.

The rolling award is given every year to a student who shows excellence in academics as well as other fields. This year, the award was conferred on Rajmin Sultana, a Class X student of the school. Presenting the award, MLA Rupak Sarma wished her a bright future.

Notably, the Lt Balendra Nath Sarma was the father of MLA Rupak Sarma.

Residents protest delay in Suparighat-Parbatjhora road construction

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 10: Local residents of Parbatjhora subdivision in Kokrajhar district on Wednesday staged a protest alleging irregularities and prolonged delay in the construction of the Suparighat-Parbatjhora Road via Kazigaon. According to reports, the Assam government had sanctioned ₹ 11.34 crore under the Chief Minister's Paki Path Scheme for the development of the road connecting National Highway-17 at Suparighat to the Parbatjhora Sub-Divisional Office via Kazigaon.

Protesters alleged that although construction of the nearly 10-kilometre-long road began in 2023, the project remains incomplete even after three years. As a result, thousands of residents in the region continue to face severe hardship while commuting. The poor condition of the road has reportedly made transportation increasingly difficult, particularly during the monsoon season, affecting daily commuters, students, patients and traders. Local residents from the greater Kazigaon area further claimed that the matter had been brought to the attention of the concerned department and contractors on several occasions, but no effective steps have been taken to expedite the work.

Minister Charan Boro reviews key development schemes in Baksa

Guardian Minister assesses flagship welfare programmes, flood preparedness

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 10: Cabinet Minister for Transport and Welfare of Bodoland Department and Guardian Minister of Baksa, Charan Boro, reviewed the progress of key government schemes and ongoing development initiatives in the district at a review meeting held at the District Commissioner's Conference Hall in Mushalpur on Wednesday.

The meeting was attended by MLA Thaneswar Basumatary, MLA Maneswar Brahma, BTC Executive Members Begum Aktara and Augustus Tigga, BTC MCLAs Diganta Goyary and Rekha Rani Das Boro and Baksa Deputy Commissioner Kinnei Changan, IAS, along with Additional Deputy Commissioners, Circle Officers, Heads of Departments and other concerned officials.

The meeting began with the Guardian Minister holding an introductory interaction with district officials. Boro reviewed major developmental and welfare schemes in the



district.

He also took stock of the implementation of flagship government schemes, including Orunodoi and the Chief Minister's Atmanirbhar Asom Abhijan (CMAAA).

Development initiatives under programmes such as Asom Darshan and the Vibrant Village Programme were also

reviewed during the meeting.

During the review of the district's flood preparedness, the Guardian Minister assessed the readiness of vulnerable and flood-prone areas, availability of relief measures, preparedness for ex-gratia assistance and arrangements for emergency response.

He also enquired about the availability of

DDRF conducts disaster preparedness awareness programmes



HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 10: The District Disaster Response Force (DDRF) volunteers under the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Karbi Anglong, conducted awareness programmes at Jaljuri-Jaluguti villages and Diphu Girls' College on Wednesday as

part of ongoing efforts to strengthen disaster preparedness and community resilience.

At Jaljuri Village, participants from both Jaljuri and Jaluguti villages attended a joint awareness session where DDRF volunteers demonstrated safety measures to be followed during disasters and

emergencies, including the proper use of bandages for first aid.

A separate awareness programme was also organised at Diphu Girls' College, Diphu, where students and faculty members were sensitised on disaster preparedness, emergency response, safety measures during disasters and the correct use of fire extinguishers.

During both programmes, the DDRF team explained the Cell Broadcast System (CBS), an emergency alert mechanism used for disseminating critical warnings and information. Participants were advised not to panic upon receiving CBS emergency alerts and were encouraged to carefully follow the instructions issued by the concerned authorities during emergencies.

The programmes witnessed active participation from villagers, students and faculty members, reflecting growing public interest in disaster risk reduction and preparedness initiatives.

Awareness-cum-plantation program conducted at Adarsha Vidyalaya

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 10: An Awareness-cum-Plantation drive program was organised by the Haltugaon Division of the Forest & Wildlife Department, Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) at Adarsha Vidyalaya in Kokrajhar on Wednesday. The programme was attended by Kokrajhar East MLA Sewli Mohilary, Dhaneswar Goyary MCLA Baokhungri, DFO Pradip Kumar Bhuyan Haltugaon division, forest officials, teachers, students and local residents.

The event focused on raising awareness about environmental conservation and encouraging people to take an active role in protecting nature. Participants planted saplings on the school campus and pledged to care for them in the coming years.

Speaking on the occasion, the leaders highlighted the growing challenges posed by climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss and rising temperatures. They stressed that planting a tree is not only an act of environmental responsibility but also a commitment to future generations.

They noted that the monsoon season provides the best opportunity for plantation activities and urged people to make tree planting a regular practice. It was emphasised that every individual, educational institu-

tion and community should contribute towards increasing green cover and preserving natural resources.

The speakers said that a single sapling planted can provide shade, oxygen and environmental benefits for decades. They also called for continuous efforts to restore forests, protect wildlife, conserve water resources and create a healthier and more sustainable environment.

Students and teachers actively participated in the programme and expressed their commitment to supporting environmental protection initiatives. The event concluded with a call for collective action to build a greener future and strengthen awareness about the importance of preserving nature for coming generations.

The programme, organised by the Haltugaon Forest Division was attended by Kokrajhar MLA Sewli Mohilary, BTC Councillor of Baokhungri Constituency Dhaneswar Goyary, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Pradip Kumar Bhuyan, along with forest department officials, staff members and students.

During the programme, various medicinal and eco-friendly saplings, including Bakul, Deodar, Mango, Indian Gooseberry (Amla) and Olive were planted within the school campus.

highlands for animals and the preparedness of the Veterinary Department to safeguard livestock during flood situations.

The meeting further reviewed issues relating to human-elephant conflict and discussed mitigation measures, including solar electric fencing, bio-fencing and plantation activities. The status of roads, building infrastructure, transport services and healthcare delivery in the district was also examined.

Addressing the officials, Minister Boro said that he would conduct regular review meetings to monitor the progress of developmental activities and government schemes in the district. He also informed that he would undertake field visits across the district in the coming days to assess the ground-level implementation of various schemes and development works.

The Deputy Commissioner and departmental officials apprised the Guardian Minister of the progress of ongoing projects, key challenges and the measures being undertaken to address district-specific issues.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If we desire respect for the law, we must first make the law respectable.- Louis D. Brandeis

Politicians' defection game

Indian democracy is often described as the world's largest political experiment. Increasingly, however, it resembles the world's largest wildlife sanctuary for migratory politicians. Every election season, millions of voters queue up under a scorching sun, clutching voter slips and democratic hopes. They cast their ballots believing they are electing representatives who will uphold a particular ideology, manifesto, or at the very least, the promises shouted from campaign stages. The latest tremors have emerged from West Bengal, where the Trinamool Congress finds itself battling questions about unity and morale following a difficult electoral setback. While party leaders point to voter-roll controversies, administrative decisions, and electoral processes as factors behind the outcome, another story is unfolding simultaneously—one as old as Indian politics itself. The story of elected representatives discovering new political convictions immediately after election results are announced. Remarkably, these new convictions almost always coincide with proximity to power. The phenomenon is not unique to Bengal. It has become India's most reliable political tradition. Governments change. Parties rise and fall. Manifestos are forgotten. But the turncoat survives. Like the common crow, it thrives in every climate.

At the same time, opposition parties gathered under the INDIA alliance banner to discuss issues likely to dominate the run-up to the 2029 general election. Delimitation. The census. Citizenship. Federalism. The Uniform Civil Code. Electoral processes. Economic distress. Inflation. Fuel prices. Employment. The subjects are serious. The stakes are enormous. The challenge, however, is that voters often struggle to distinguish ideological commitment from political convenience. A leader may spend five years describing another party as a threat to democracy. Then spend the next five years sitting beside the very same leaders in government. The Anti-Defection Law was supposed to restrain this species. Instead, the species evolved. The law prevented individual defections. Politicians responded by defecting in groups. The law discouraged direct crossings. Politicians discovered mergers. The law closed one door. Political ingenuity opened three windows.

Meanwhile, the broader political landscape continues to shift. Economic concerns are increasingly dominating public conversations. Fuel costs influence transportation. Transportation influences food prices. Food prices influence household budgets. Household budgets influence political moods. And political moods increasingly find expression through social media. The modern meme has become the cartoonist's pen, the pamphleteer's leaflet, and the street-corner satirist's microphone rolled into one. Politicians once feared newspaper editorials. Today they fear memes. A speech may last an hour. A meme lasts ten seconds. Yet those ten seconds can travel further than a thousand campaign rallies.

Artificial intelligence and human creativity

The rise of artificial intelligence has reopened one of the oldest questions in human history: what makes human creativity unique? For centuries, creativity was regarded as a distinctly human trait, inseparable from emotion, imagination, memory, experience, and consciousness. The painter standing before a blank canvas, the novelist searching for the right sentence, the composer shaping a melody out of silence—these figures symbolized a capacity that seemed impossible to mechanize. Yet the rapid development of artificial intelligence has unsettled many assumptions. Machines can now generate poems, stories, paintings, musical compositions, architectural designs, advertising campaigns, and even film scripts within seconds. Tasks that once required years of training can apparently be performed by algorithms operating on vast quantities of data. This transformation has sparked excitement, curiosity, and anxiety in equal measure. Some view artificial intelligence as a revolutionary tool capable of expanding creative possibilities beyond previous limits. Others fear that it threatens the value of human originality and could reduce artistic expression to a process of automated production. Beneath these contrasting reactions lies a more complicated reality.

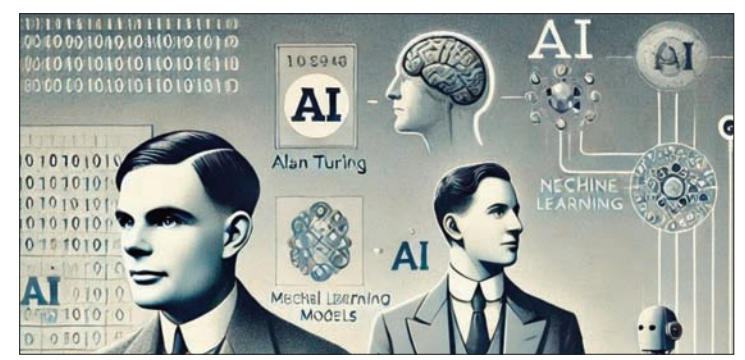


DEGREE OF THOUGHT By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Artificial intelligence does not create in the same manner as a human being. It does not experience joy, grief, love, disappointment, nostalgia, ambition, or regret. It has no childhood memories to revisit, no personal struggles to overcome, and no emotional scars that shape its perspective. What it possesses is the ability to identify patterns, relationships, structures, and styles across enormous datasets. When an AI system produces a poem or painting, it is drawing upon statistical associations learned from countless examples. Human creativity, by contrast, emerges from lived experience. A poem written after personal loss carries a depth rooted in emotion rather than computation. A novel reflecting social injustice often arises from observation, empathy, and moral concern. The distinction is important because creativity has never been merely about producing an output. It has always involved intention, meaning, and interpretation. Nevertheless, dismissing artificial intelligence as a simple imitation would be equally misleading. Throughout history, every major technological innovation has altered creative practice. The invention of photography transformed painting. The printing press reshaped literature. Digital software changed music production, graphic design, and filmmaking. In each case, fears emerged that technology would diminish human artistry. Instead, artists adapted, experimented, and discovered new forms of expression. Artificial intelligence appears to be following a similar path. Rather than replacing creativity altogether, it is becoming a tool that influences how creative work is conceived, developed, and distributed. The real question is not whether machines can be creative in a human sense, but how their growing capabilities will redefine the relationship between technology and imagination. The interaction between artificial intelligence and human creativity is already transforming professional and cultural landscapes across the world. Writers use AI systems to brainstorm ideas, explore alternative storylines, refine drafts, and overcome creative blocks. Designers employ generative tools to visualize concepts rapidly, allowing them to experiment with forms that might otherwise require days of manual effort. Musicians can generate harmonies, rhythms, and arrangements that serve as starting points for further development. Filmmakers use AI-assisted technologies for editing, visual effects, and production planning. In these contexts, artificial intelligence func-

tions less as a replacement for human creativity and more as an amplifier of creative capacity. It accelerates certain processes, reduces technical barriers, and enables individuals to explore a wider range of possibilities. Yet the growing integration of AI into creative industries also raises difficult questions about originality and authorship. If a painting is generated by a machine based on instructions provided by a human user, who should be considered the creator? If a novel incorporates passages suggested by an algorithm, where does authorship truly reside? These questions challenge traditional definitions that have long governed artistic and intellectual work. Equally significant are concerns about cultural homogenization. Artificial intelligence systems learn from existing material, meaning their outputs are inevitably shaped by patterns already present in the data on which they were trained. Creativity, however, often flourishes through disruption, contradiction, and departure from established norms. Some of the most influential artistic movements emerged precisely because individuals rejected prevailing conventions and sought entirely new directions. A machine trained on historical examples may struggle to reproduce the radical unpredictability that characterizes genuine innovation. Furthermore, the widespread use of AI-generated content could create an environment saturated with familiar styles and repetitive aesthetics, making originality more difficult to distinguish. There are also economic implications. Many creative professionals worry that businesses may prioritize speed and cost efficiency over human craftsmanship, leading to reduced opportunities for artists, writers, illustrators, and designers. Such concerns cannot be dismissed lightly. Technological change often produces winners and losers, and creative industries are unlikely to be exempt from this reality. Yet history also suggests that new technologies frequently generate entirely new professions and opportunities. The emergence of photography did not eliminate visual artists; it expanded the visual arts ecosystem. The digi-

tal revolution did not destroy music; it transformed how music is created, distributed, and consumed. Artificial intelligence may similarly reshape creative work while creating new roles centered on curation, direction, interpretation, and human oversight. The challenge for society lies in ensuring that technological progress enhances rather than diminishes the cultural richness that human creativity provides. Ultimately, the future of creativity is unlikely to be defined by a competition between humans and machines. Such a framing oversimplifies a far more nuanced relationship. Artificial intelligence excels at processing information, identifying patterns, generating variations, and operating at remarkable speed. Human beings excel at assigning meaning, interpreting experience, exercising judgment, and creating work infused with emotional and cultural significance. These strengths are different rather than identical, and understanding this distinction is essential. A machine may generate thousands of musical compositions, but it cannot attend a funeral, fall in love, endure heartbreak, witness social upheaval, or grapple with existential uncertainty. Human creativity is inseparable from the complexities of life itself. It reflects not only intelligence but also vulnerability, imagination, aspiration, and memory. At the same time, refusing to engage with artificial intelligence would mean ignoring a powerful tool capable of expanding creative horizons. The most productive future may emerge from collaboration rather than resistance. Artists, writers, musicians, architects, and filmmakers who learn



to integrate AI into their creative processes may discover new forms of expression that neither humans nor machines could achieve independently. This collaborative model is already visible in experimental art projects, interactive storytelling platforms, and innovative design practices. What matters is maintaining human agency at the center of the creative process. Technology should remain a means rather than an end. Society must also develop ethical frameworks that address issues of copyright, transparency, attribution, and fair compensation. Without such safeguards, the benefits of artificial intelligence may be accompanied by serious cultural and economic consequences. Education will play a crucial role in this transition. Future generations must learn not only how to use advanced technologies but also how to think critically, imagine boldly, and cultivate the uniquely human qualities that machines cannot replicate. Creativity has always evolved alongside technological change, and artificial intelligence represents the latest chapter in that long story. The arrival of AI does not signal the end of human creativity. Instead, it challenges humanity to reconsider what creativity means, how it is expressed, and why it matters. In the years ahead, the most significant creative achievements may emerge not from human minds or intelligent machines alone, but from the dynamic interaction between the two. The enduring value of creativity will continue to rest on humanity's capacity to transform experience into meaning, and meaning into works that inspire, challenge, and connect people across cultures and generations.

Assam's history and geography in school education: A Welcome step

Assam's progress is not measured solely by its economic indicators or technological advancements. True development lies in how deeply its younger generation connects with its past and its geographical reality. While history anchors a nation to its heritage, geography fosters a deep understanding of its land, resources and environment. For a long time, the school curriculum in Assam sidelined local history and geography, leaving generations of students detached from their state's rich past, diverse culture and unique topography.

AUTHOR By: Satyabrata Borah

In this context, the state government's decision to reintroduce these two subjects as compulsory from the primary level up to Class 8 is timely, visionary and highly commendable. At a complex crossroads where the blind race to become global citizens threatens to weaken our very roots, this policy brings a ray of hope for the collective consciousness of Assam. It is not merely a routine curriculum update, rather, it marks the beginning of a well-planned intellectual movement aimed at safeguarding a community's identity. Aligned with the vision of the Central Government's National Education Policy (NEP 2020), which emphasizes localized education, this step bridges a long-standing gap in our educational framework. In an era of rapid globalization, maintaining one's foundational identity while competing globally is the biggest challenge for the youth. Without a firm grasp of their linguistic, cultural and geographical roots, students cannot grow into confident, aware and holistic citizens. After all, any attempt to understand the world remains hollow if one does not know one's own home first.

Historical consciousness is the ultimate anchor that keeps a society steady during times of change. History is not a dry compilation of dates, royal successions, or battlefield politics, it is a living chronicle of a community's evolution and its survival instincts. Unfortunately, our previous education system lacked a dedicated focus on Assam's history. While students memorized the complex details of the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the Mughal Empire, or European history, their knowledge of their own state's glorious past remained painfully limited. This curricular gap alienated the youth from their soil and people, fostering a subtle cultural and intellectual vacuum.

By making Assam's history mandatory up to the eighth grade, children will be introduced to monumental chapters of their heritage at an impressionable age. They will learn about the

unmatched patriotism and military genius of Lachit Borpuhan, the invincible valor of Mahabir Chilarai, the transformative cultural and spiritual renaissance led by Srimanta Sankardeva and Madhavdeeva and the immense sacrifices of Sati Joymati and Mula Gabharu. Similarly, studying the golden six-hundred-year rule of the Ahom Dynasty, the Moamaria Rebellion, the early resistance against British colonialism and the supreme sacrifices of freedom fighters like Maniram Dewan, Kushal Konwar, Kanaklata Barua and Bhogswari Phukanani will dismantle colonial complexes from young minds. When an Assamese student learns how their ancestors repeatedly repelled and defeated formidable imperial forces like the Mughals, it will naturally instill a profound sense of self-respect and national confidence.

Just like history, studying geography is equally indispensable. Assam is not just a geographical territory, it is an ecologically diverse, biodiversity-rich, and geopolitically sensitive region. Understanding the dynamics of the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys, the state's strategic international importance as the gateway to Southeast Asia, its topography, its rich mineral reserves and its rare wildlife is a fundamental duty of every conscious citizen.

A scientific study of Assam's geography will enable students to comprehend the root causes of the state's perennial challenges, such as devastating floods, riverbank erosion, and high seismic vulnerability. This baseline understanding will empower future generations to innovate sustainable, long-term solutions. Furthermore, it will foster an early awareness that preserving World Heritage Sites like Kaziranga and Manas is vital not just for tourism, but for ecological balance. In this age of climate change and global warming, practical knowledge of local geography will teach students to co-exist with nature and appreciate the true essence of Sustainable Development. Without an accurate understanding of our natural boundaries and resources, safeguarding the economic and social interests of the state in the future will be an uphill task.

Critics might argue: in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence, what is the utility of learning local history and geography? The most logical answer lies in the global maxim—"Think Global, Act Local". To truly become a global citizen, an individual must first stand firmly on the bedrock of their own heritage. A tree that tries to touch the sky without deep

roots is bound to topple in a storm. No one can command respect on the global stage by abandoning their identity.

Beyond emotional and cultural significance, this policy is highly practical for career development. Today, the weightage of state-centric questions in the Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) and other state and central competitive examinations has increased significantly. Due to a weak foundational knowledge at the school level, our educated youth previously faced immense hurdles while competing in these exams. A systematic grounding in Assam's history and geography right from school will give our students a distinct competitive edge.

However, translating an educational policy into reality requires more than governmental notifications and emotional zeal. To ensure this positive step does not remain confined to official paperwork, a few practical aspects must be urgently addressed. First, to prevent these subjects from becoming a rote-learning burden, textbooks must be designed scientifically with attractive illustrations, local maps and lucid language. Integrating digital mediums, animations and audio-visual tools in classrooms will naturally ignite student interest.

Second, teachers must be rigorously trained to deliver this updated curriculum. Instead of focusing on mechanical memorization, they should adopt modern storytelling techniques for history and field-based experiential methods for geography. Co-curricular activities like quizzes, projects, debates and study tours to historical sites should be made integral to the learning process.

Finally, since Assam's schooling system features multiple mediums of instruction—including Assamese, English, Bodo, Bengali and Hindi—ensuring the timely availability of high-quality textbooks across all mediums will be a litmus test for the Education Department. Expert committees must ensure factual accuracy and consistency across all language versions.

The decision to make the history and geography of Assam compulsory up to Class 8 is a progressive step that beautifully blends tradition, heritage, and modernity. This journey toward discovering one's roots will nurture a more empathetic, rational, socially aware and patriotic generation. Today's children are the custodians of tomorrow. Therefore, painting a clear, scientific picture of Assam's geographical landscape and historical legacy upon their minds is a collective responsibility. For this landmark initiative to succeed, the education department, teachers, parents and civil society must work in unison.

Building a knowledge economy in the Northeast

By: Siddharth Roy

The economic future of nations and regions is increasingly being shaped not by the abundance of natural resources but by the quality of human capital, innovation, and knowledge creation. In the twenty-first century, prosperity depends as much on ideas as on industries, and as much on skills as on physical infrastructure. For India's Northeast, a region long associated with geographical isolation and developmental challenges, the emergence of a knowledge economy presents a unique opportunity to redefine its place in the national growth story. By investing in education, technology, research, and entrepreneurship, the Northeast can transform its demographic potential into a powerful engine of economic development.

The concept of a knowledge economy revolves around the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge to generate wealth and improve living standards. Unlike traditional economies that rely heavily on natural resources or manufacturing, knowledge economies derive their strength from skilled human resources, technological innovation, digital connectivity, and intellectual capital. Regions that successfully nurture these elements are better positioned to attract investment, create high-value jobs, and compete in an increasingly interconnected world.

The Northeast possesses several advantages that can support this transition. The region is home to a young and aspirational population with growing access to higher education. Over the past two decades, educational infrastructure has expanded considerably. New universities, institutes of national importance, medical colleges, and technical institutions have emerged across the region. Assam, in particular, has witnessed significant growth in higher education facilities, while states such as Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura have developed strong educational ecosystems relative to their population sizes.

However, educational expansion alone is not sufficient. A persistent challenge facing the Northeast is the migration of talented students and professionals to metropolitan centres such as Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, Pune, and Mumbai. Many young people leave the region in search of better employment opportunities, research facilities, and professional networks. While migration itself is not undesirable, the continued outflow of talent without corresponding opportunities for return creates a significant brain drain. The region effectively subsidises the growth of other economic centres while struggling to retain its

own skilled workforce. Addressing this challenge requires a shift in development strategy. Governments must move beyond viewing higher education merely as a social sector expenditure and recognise it as a critical economic investment. Universities and colleges should be encouraged to become centres of innovation, research, and entrepreneurship. Stronger collaboration between academia, industry, and government can help create an ecosystem where knowledge is converted into economic value.

Digital infrastructure will play a crucial role in this transformation. The rise of remote work, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and digital services has reduced the importance of physical proximity to major economic centres. A software developer in Guwahati or Shillong can now serve clients across the world if reliable internet



connectivity and supportive infrastructure are available. This creates unprecedented opportunities for the Northeast to participate in the global digital economy without requiring large-scale industrialisation.

The region has already demonstrated its potential in sectors such as information technology, creative industries, digital media, and entrepreneurship. Start-ups founded by young entrepreneurs from the Northeast are making their presence felt in fields ranging from e-commerce and fintech to healthcare and education technology. These success stories indicate that the region possesses both talent and ambition. What remains necessary is the creation of a supportive ecosystem that can help such ventures scale and thrive.

Innovation hubs, incubation centres, and technology parks should become integral components of regional development planning. State governments can encourage entrepreneurship through targeted funding, mentorship programmes, and simplified regulatory procedures. Equally important is the availability of venture capital and risk financing, areas where the Northeast continues to lag behind more developed innovation centres. Public-private partnerships can play an important role in bridging this gap.

The knowledge economy also extends beyond technology. The Northeast's rich cultural heritage, biodiversity, traditional knowledge systems, and creative industries represent valuable intellectual assets. Sustainable tourism, handicrafts, music, literature, design, and indigenous knowledge can all contribute to economic growth when supported by innovation and digital platforms. In an era where cultural industries generate significant economic value globally, the region's unique identity can become a source of competitive advantage.

Research and development must form another pillar of the region's strategy. The Northeast offers immense opportunities for research in fields such as climate change, biodiversity conservation, disaster management, agriculture, renewable energy, public health, and border studies. Establishing specialised research centres and strengthening existing institutions can generate knowledge that addresses local challenges while contributing to national and global understanding. Such investments would not only enhance academic excellence but also create high-quality employment opportunities.

Building a knowledge economy also requires improving the quality of school education. Foundational literacy, digital skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities must receive greater attention. The demands of the modern economy are evolving rapidly, and educational systems must adapt accordingly. Skill development programmes should align with emerging sectors rather than focusing exclusively on traditional employment pathways.

The Northeast today stands at an important crossroads. The region's future need not be defined by its distance from India's metropolitan centres. Instead, it can be shaped by its ability to generate ideas, nurture talent, and foster innovation. Investments in roads, railways, and airports remain important, but investments in minds may prove even more transformative. If governments, educational institutions, businesses, and civil society work together to build a robust knowledge ecosystem, the Northeast can emerge not merely as a participant in India's growth story but as one of its leading drivers. In the knowledge century, the region's greatest resource is not beneath its soil or within its forests, it is the potential of its people. (The author is a civil engineer, consultant (invitee) to Rashtriya Raksha University under the Ministry of Home Affairs, short story writer, contemporary affairs commentator and a columnist (for various leading publications like India Today, The Statesman, The Print, The Assam Tribune, The Sentinel, India Narrative etc.). The views are personal. He can be reached at siddharth001.roy@gmail.com)

Twelve years of the Modi Era: The rise of development, trust and a resurgent India

By: Lalit Garg

In the democratic history of India, certain periods are remembered not merely for a change in government but for the awakening of national consciousness. The twelve years under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi represent one such defining era. It is not simply the story of a Prime Minister's long tenure; it is the story of an India that has rediscovered itself with renewed confidence, fresh energy, and an enhanced global identity. By taking the oath of office for a third consecutive term, Narendra Modi surpassed the record of independent India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, as the longest-serving consecutively elected Prime Minister. This achievement is not merely a political milestone; it is a testament to the enduring trust that the people of India have repeatedly expressed through the democratic process. In a vast nation marked by immense linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity, the granting of three successive national mandates to one leader is both extraordinary and historic.

The most remarkable aspect of the Modi era is not development alone, but the harmonious blend of development and trust. If the Nehru era is remembered as the period of building modern India, the Modi era may well be remembered as the age of India's renewed self-confidence. Modi has not merely built roads, bridges, airports, and digital infrastructure; he has instilled in millions of Indians the belief that India is second to none and is capable of assuming a leadership role on the global stage. One of Narendra Modi's most distinctive qualities has been his ability to transform politics from a mere instrument of governance into a vehicle for fulfilling national aspirations and public sentiment. He is among the rare leaders who have elevated government schemes beyond administrative

programs and turned them into mass movements. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Mission) stands as a prime example. A subject once confined to municipal departments was transformed into a national mission linked to civic responsibility and collective character.

The Modi era will also be remembered for restoring India's cultural identity and civilizational pride. National symbols, sacred sites, and cultural heritage that had long remained neglected have been revitalized and accorded new dignity. The construction of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya was not merely a religious event; it became a symbol of respect for the cultural sentiments of millions of Indians. Likewise, the redevelopment of Kashi Vishwanath Dham, Mahakal Lok, Kedarnath, and Somnath reflects the belief that modernity and tradition are not opposing forces but complementary pillars of national progress. Another defining feature of Modi's leadership has been the transformation of India's foreign policy into an expression of self-confidence and strategic autonomy. A nation once viewed as balancing between global powers has emerged as a significant influencer of international discourse. Whether in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the crises in West Asia, India's leadership of the G-20, or its advocacy for the Global South, India has played a decisive and constructive role. The world increasingly views India not merely as a developing nation but as a provider of solutions to global challenges.

One of the most significant achievements of the past twelve years has been the sincere effort to place the last person in the queue—the most marginalized citizen—at the center of governance. Initiatives such as the Jan Dhan Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana, Ayushman Bharat, PM Awas Yojana, the free food grain program, and Direct Benefit Transfers have

transformed the lives of millions of underprivileged Indians. Transparency in governance has improved, and the role of intermediaries has been significantly reduced. Through the Digital India initiative, technology has reached not only metropolitan cities but also the remotest villages. A unique aspect of Narendra Modi's leadership style is his unwavering sense of purpose and determination. He sets ambitious goals and transforms them into national missions. Whether it was the abrogation of Article 370, the prohibition of triple talaq, the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, or firm action against terrorism and Naxalism, each decision involved considerable political risk. Yet he demonstrated the courage to act decisively. It is this willingness to take bold decisions that distinguishes him from many conventional politicians.

Like every democratic government, however, the Modi administration also faces significant challenges. Unemployment, inflation, agricultural distress, rising costs of education and healthcare, social inequalities, and uneven access to economic opportunities remain pressing concerns. If India is to achieve its vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047, economic growth alone will not suffice. Equal emphasis must be placed on quality education, affordable healthcare, employment generation, and corruption-free governance. The coming years hold great expectations. The government's campaign against corruption must become even more effective and far-reaching. India requires a system where integrity is not an exception but the norm. Education and healthcare must be liberated from the grip of profiteering interests and made genuinely accessible to ordinary citizens. Entrepreneurship should not remain confined to large industrial houses but should reach villages, youth, and women, en-



abling every citizen to become not merely a job seeker but a job creator.

I have had the privilege of meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi on several occasions and observing him closely. In 2007, when he was serving as the Chief Minister of Gujarat, I had the opportunity to engage in an extensive interaction with him during a massive tribal convention held at Kawant in Gujarat under the guidance of the revered tribal Jain saint, Gani Rajendra Vijayji. Modi was not present merely as a ceremonial guest; he attended along with his entire cabinet, demonstrating his commitment to the development of tribal communities. On that occasion, he entrusted the operation of an Eklavya Model Residential School to our Sukhi Parivar Foundation for the educational advancement of tribal children and announced the historic ₹15,000-crore Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana for tribal welfare. This reflected his far-sighted vision and commitment to ensuring that development reaches the most marginalized sections of society. An especially memorable and historic moment also occurred during that gathering. Gani Rajendra Vijayji remarked to Narendra

Modi, "You should now go to Delhi and take charge of the nation." Modi responded with a gentle smile, "Who will take me to Delhi?" Yet there is often a prophetic power in the words of saints. What appeared to be a simple exchange at the time later proved to be remarkably prescient.

During those years, I also had several opportunities to visit the Gujarat Secretariat and meet Chief Minister Narendra Modi. What impressed me most was the culture of discipline and efficiency that permeated the administration. Even senior IAS officers exemplified punctuality, self-reliance, and professional accountability. Performing routine tasks independently, avoiding unnecessary protocol, valuing time, and placing responsibility above all else had become integral parts of the administrative ethos. It was evident that this work culture had evolved under the influence of the leadership at the top. Narendra Modi is not merely an administrator who issues directives; he is a leader who shapes institutions through personal example. India's greatest strength lies in its youthful population. If this demographic energy is effectively

linked with skill development, innovation, and entrepreneurship, India can become not only the world's third-largest economy but also one of its most influential and dynamic economic powers. Likewise, by ensuring the full participation of women in the development process, the pace of nation-building can be accelerated manifold.

Perhaps the most significant achievement of the Modi era cannot be measured solely through statistics, infrastructure projects, or electoral victories. It lies in the psychological transformation visible across the Indian populace. Over the past twelve years, Narendra Modi has built not only physical infrastructure but also a vision of the future that has inspired millions of Indians. His dream of a developed India by 2047 will be realized only if development is accompanied by trust, prosperity by equal opportunity, and power by compassion and sensitivity. If this balance is maintained, history will remember the Modi era not merely as a long political tenure, but as an age marked by India's renewed self-confidence, cultural renaissance, and emergence as a leading global power.

Yoga for beauty



By: Shahnaz Husain

Celebrated worldwide on June 21, International Yoga Day is the perfect reminder to slow down, stretch out, and let your inner glow shine through.

Yoga is the complete route to physical, emotional and pranic beauty aimed to rejuvenate the skin, tone the body, and reduce signs of ageing!

Yoga beauty is the art of integrating traditional yoga practices into your beauty routine. It is a blend of physical postures, breathing exercises, and mindfulness techniques that help boost your skin's appearance from within.

Yoga offers a way to stay fit, reduce stress, boost circulation, support detoxification, and leave your complexion naturally radiant.

Yoga increases blood flow to the face, delivering oxygen and nutrients while flushing out toxins.

Blood flow delivers oxygen and nutrients, removes waste, supports healing, and keeps your complexion glowing. Oxygen and nutrients carried through the blood circulation keep skin strong, supple, and bright.

Whether it's a blemish, an irritation, or a small cut, skin heals much faster when the blood supply is strong.

If you are aspiring for radiant and glowing skin, shiny hair and attractive features, the solution may actually be a selection of yoga poses and exercises.

Pranayama, a powerful breathing practice rooted in yoga, works from within. Instead of treating skin issues only on the surface.

Pranayama enhances oxygen levels, better microcirculation and lymphatic drainage; conditions that are key factors that directly affect your skin health and makes it glow.

Pranayama helps purify the blood because of the increased intake of oxygen.

Mindfulness meditation can have benefits for health and performance, including improved immune function, reduced blood pressure and enhanced cognitive function.

Mindfulness meditation involves a breathing practice and holistic awareness of body and mind.

In a world filled with endless distractions, mindfulness meditation offers a pathway to inner peace, and surprisingly, to radiant skin.

Mindfulness techniques like breathwork and meditation lower cortisol levels, reducing flare-ups of acne, eczema,

and rosacea. As a result of it, our complexion appears brighter, more vibrant, and radiant, free from the dullness caused by daily pressures.

Meditation helps to preserve collagen, the protein responsible for skin's elasticity, thus reducing the signs of ageing and promoting a youthful glow.

When we practice mindfulness meditation, our complexion appears brighter, more vibrant, and free from the dullness caused by daily pressures.

Those who regularly practice yoga and meditation have a certain glow about them that comes from within and radiates outward. Yoga helps lower stress hormones that compromise the immune system, while also conditioning the lungs and respiratory tract, stimulating the lymphatic system tooust toxins from the body, and bringing oxygenated blood to the various organs to ensure their optimal function, which helps us to remain healthy and attain inner beauty.

The appeal of Yoga lies in the fact that it helps both body and mind. It not only works on all the muscle groups, but also increases vitality, tones the internal organs, stimulates the nerve centres, relieves stress and clears the mind, which boosts immunity and gives you an attractive personality and beauty from within. The other important aspect of Yoga is that it involves breath control and specifies the inhalation and exhalation of breath during the exercises. Thus, it helps oxygenation, which boosts immunity and imparts a feeling of physical and mental exhilaration.

This is so important for beauty because feeling good is an integral part of looking good. Yoga improves blood circulation, including the circulation of blood to the skin surface. This is so important for the good health of the skin, as it helps to supply essential nutrients to the skin. It also promotes the removal of toxins through the skin, which boosts immunity. This is so important, especially in cases of skin congestion.

It tones the skin, improves oxygenation, imparts a beautiful glow, and keeps the skin youthful and free from problems. Well-oxygenated skin looks firmer, revitalised, and more plump. Oxygenated blood fuels cellular repair, stimulates collagen production, and detoxifies the body—resulting in a natural, youthful glow.

The same goes for the hair. Yoga helps to promote blood circulation and oxygenation to the scalp and hair folli-

cles. This helps to supply nutrients in the bloodstream to the hair follicles. It promotes hair growth and keeps the scalp healthy.

When we talk of beauty, we do not talk only about the beauty of the face. It also includes the figure, giving it suppleness, good posture and grace. Where the appearance is concerned, a slim figure can take years off and help in staying youthful for a longer time. It supplies oxygen to every tissue, and this, itself, makes way for both health and beauty. If you are leading a life that does not provide enough physical activity, you are actually encouraging ageing. Yoga is a potent remedy for premature ageing, not only because it strengthens the body, but also keeps it looking trim, fit and enhances immunity in the body.

It fights ageing at a cellular level by reducing oxidative stress, lowering chronic inflammation, and preserving telomeres. The yogic asanas are designed to keep the spine and joints flexible and supple. They make the body strong and agile, tone the muscles, improve blood circulation, impart vitality and enhance both beauty and good health. Many beauty problems are triggered by stress. Elevated cortisol from stress breaks down collagen, triggers inflammation, and causes breakouts or dullness. The impact of stress can manifest differently for everyone: some may see dullness, sensitivity or irritation, whilst others may experience more inflammatory conditions like eczema or psoriasis.

Since yoga helps to induce relaxation and reduce stress, it certainly helps in dealing with stress-related conditions like acne, hair loss, dandruff, etc. Lower stress improves blood circulation for a brighter complexion, balances sebum production, prevents stress-induced hair loss or dullness and brings back your natural glow.

Studies conducted on those who practice yoga have shown that positive changes also occur in personality, in attitudes, emotional stability, and self-confidence. It has a direct effect on the mind, emotions and mood. In fact, it is a regular stress-buster and puts the glow back on the skin. You will feel instantly rejuvenated and good about yourself.

Indeed, the benefits of Yoga reflect external beauty. For flawless skin, shiny hair and a slim, graceful figure, make yoga a part of your daily life.

The growing woes of women in the scorching heat

By: Dr Vijay Garg

As climate change intensifies across the globe, heat waves are becoming more frequent, longer, and more severe. Summers that were once considered unusually hot are now becoming the norm. In many parts of the world, temperatures are regularly crossing dangerous thresholds, making daily life increasingly difficult. While extreme heat affects everyone, women often bear a disproportionate share of its burden due to biological, social, and economic factors. The growing intensity of heat waves is not only an environmental issue but also a gender issue that deserves urgent attention.

Heat and Gender: An Overlooked Connection

Discussions about climate change and rising temperatures often focus on environmental damage, energy consumption, or economic losses. However, the human dimension—especially the impact on women—is frequently overlooked. Women across rural and urban areas experience heat differently because of their roles, responsibilities, and living conditions.

In many societies, women are the primary caregivers, responsible for cooking, cleaning, fetching water, caring for children, and looking after elderly family members. These duties continue regardless of weather conditions. As temperatures soar, the physical and emotional toll of these responsibilities becomes significantly greater.

Rural Women Face the Harshest Burden

For millions of rural women, extreme heat is not just uncomfortable—it is exhausting and sometimes dangerous. Women involved in agriculture spend long hours outdoors planting, weeding, harvesting, and tending livestock. Working under a blazing sun exposes them to dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke.

Water scarcity, a common consequence of prolonged heat and drought, adds another layer of hardship. In many regions, women and girls are responsible for collecting water. As local water sources dry up, they must travel longer distances, often carrying heavy containers under intense heat. This daily struggle consumes time, energy, and opportunities for education and income generation.

The impact extends beyond physical fatigue. Repeated exposure to high temperatures can worsen existing health conditions and reduce productivity, affecting household income and food security.

The Hidden Heat Inside Homes

When discussing heat exposure, attention is often directed toward outdoor workers. Yet millions of women face extreme temperatures inside their homes. Cooking in poorly ventilated kitchens, especially where traditional stoves are used, creates intense indoor heat. During summer months, kitchen temperatures can become unbearable.

Women living in low-income housing often lack access to air conditioning, cooling systems, or even reliable electricity. Tin-roofed homes and crowded urban settlements can become heat traps, with indoor temperatures exceeding those outside. In such conditions, ordinary household tasks become physically draining and potentially hazardous.

A Threat to Women's Health

Extreme heat poses several health risks for women. Dehydration is one of the most

immediate concerns, leading to headaches, dizziness, fatigue, and reduced concentration. Prolonged exposure can cause heat exhaustion and, in severe cases, life-threatening heat stroke.

Women are also more vulnerable to certain heat-related infections. Hot weather increases the risk of urinary tract infections and other health complications associated with inadequate hydration. Those suffering from anemia, a condition affecting millions of women worldwide, may find it even harder to cope with extreme temperatures.

Sleep disturbances are another growing concern. Hot nights make restful sleep difficult, contributing to fatigue, irritability, and reduced overall well-being. Over time, chronic sleep deprivation can affect both physical and mental health.

Pregnant Women at Greater Risk

Pregnancy significantly increases sensitivity to heat. Expectant mothers must regulate not only their own body temperature but also support the developing fetus. During heat waves, this additional physiological demand can create serious health challenges.

Medical studies suggest that prolonged exposure to extreme heat may increase the risk of dehydration, high blood pressure, premature birth, and other pregnancy-related complications. For women with limited access to healthcare, these risks become even more pronounced.

As temperatures continue to rise globally, protecting pregnant women from heat-related dangers must become a public health priority.

Mental Health Under Pressure

The effects of extreme heat are not limited to physical health. High temperatures can also influence mental well-being. Persistent discomfort, disrupted sleep, financial stress, and increased household responsibilities can contribute to anxiety, frustration, and emotional exhaustion.

Women often prioritize the needs of their families over their own. During heat waves, they may spend more time caring for children, elderly relatives, or sick family members, leaving little opportunity for rest or self-care. This invisible labor can significantly increase psychological stress.

Research has increasingly linked rising temperatures with mental health challenges, highlighting the need to address heat as both a physical and emotional health issue.

Economic Consequences for Women

Heat waves can reduce women's earning potential. Agricultural workers, street vendors, domestic workers, and construction laborers often find it difficult to maintain regular work schedules during extreme temperatures. Reduced working hours mean reduced income.

For women employed in the informal sector, the situation is particularly severe. Many lack access to paid leave, health insurance, or workplace protections. Missing work due to heat-related illness may directly affect their ability to support their families.

In addition, climate-related disruptions can increase household expenses, creating further financial strain on women who often manage family budgets and essential needs.

Girls and Education

The impact of extreme heat reaches younger generations as well. In areas experiencing water shortages, girls are frequently expected to assist with water collection and household chores. These re-

sponsibilities can interfere with school attendance and learning.

Hot classrooms without adequate ventilation can also make studying difficult. Concentration declines as temperatures rise, affecting educational outcomes. Thus, heat waves not only threaten present well-being but also future opportunities for girls.

Urban Heat Islands and Women's Safety

Cities are becoming increasingly vulnerable to what experts call the "urban heat island effect," where concrete, asphalt, and limited green spaces trap heat. Women living in densely populated urban neighborhoods often face compounded challenges.

Traveling long distances for work, waiting for public transportation under direct sunlight, and navigating crowded environments during heat waves can increase physical stress. In some cases, concerns about safety may prevent women from accessing cooler public spaces during evening hours, limiting their options for relief.

Climate Change and Social Inequality

Extreme heat does not affect all communities equally. Women from low-income households, marginalized groups, and underserved regions face greater exposure and fewer resources for protection. They often contribute the least to global carbon emissions yet suffer the most from climate-related consequences.

This reality highlights the importance of climate justice. Policies designed to address heat and climate change must recognize the unique vulnerabilities of women and ensure that adaptation strategies are inclusive and equitable.

Building a Heat-Resilient Future for Women

Addressing the growing impact of heat on women requires coordinated action at multiple levels. Governments, communities, healthcare systems, and employers all have important roles to play.

- Expanding access to safe drinking water.
- Improving healthcare services for women, especially pregnant women.
- Creating shaded and cooled public spaces.
- Ensuring workplace protections during heat waves.
- Promoting climate-resilient housing and infrastructure.
- Increasing awareness about heat-related health risks.
- Encouraging women's participation in climate policy and decision-making.

Women are not merely victims of climate change; they are also powerful agents of adaptation and resilience. Their knowledge, leadership, and experiences are essential for building sustainable solutions.

The scorching heat of today is more than a seasonal inconvenience—it is a growing public health, social, and economic challenge. Women stand at the frontline of this crisis, facing risks that often remain invisible in broader climate discussions.

Recognising and addressing the gendered impact of extreme heat is not simply a matter of fairness; it is a necessity for effective climate action. As the world warms, protecting women's health, livelihoods, and well-being must become a central part of our response. A society that safeguards its women against the dangers of extreme heat is better prepared to face the challenges of a changing climate and build a more resilient future for all.

US strikes Iran after blaming Tehran for helicopter crash

Iran fires on countries in region

DUBAI, June 10: The United States launched airstrikes early Wednesday against Iran after blaming Tehran for the crash of an American attack helicopter, and Iran fired back at countries in the region — another escalation that threatened to derail efforts to end the war.

Hours after Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan came under Iranian fire, US President Donald Trump posted on his his Truth Social platform that Iran was taking “too long to negotiate a deal” and that “now they will have to pay the price.”

It wasn't clear what exactly that would mean, but the back-and-forth strikes on Wednesday again raised the question of how much pressure the deal can take before it cracks. The exchange of fire was the second time this week that such strikes have tested the ceasefire after Iran and Israel targeted each other on Monday.

Trump has repeatedly vacillated between expressing optimism over the talks and warning that he was ready to return to all-out war. Iran, meanwhile, has proved resilient despite having faced weeks of heavy bombing, betting that its ability to effectively close the Strait of Hor-

muz — a crucial passageway for the world's oil and natural gas — gives it a strong bargaining chip.

Both countries seem to be looking for a way to end the conflict, if they can manage to sell it as a win-win. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appears intent on pursuing much more difficult goals: the collapse of Iran's theocratic government, the elimination of its nuclear program, and the destruction of the Iranian-allied Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon. That will make compromise much harder.

Netanyahu posted on X around the same time as Trump, again insisting that Iran could never have a nuclear weapon and defending Israel's decisions to attack the Islamic Republic in the past.

Strikes by the US and Iran shake the Mideast.

Since the US and Israel started the war with attacks on Iran on Feb. 28, the conflict has shaken the global economy, driven up energy prices around the world, and made many basics, including food, more expensive. Brent crude oil, the international standard, was at more than USD 91 a barrel on Wednesday, up more than 25 per cent since



the start of the war.

In the latest strikes, US fighter jets targeted “air defence, ground control stations, and surveillance radar sites,” the military's Central Command said. Iran acknowledged strikes around Bandar Abbas and Qeshm Island, but gave no details on the damage.

“The operation was a proportional response to recent attacks on US forces and international commercial ships transiting regional waters,” Central Command said.

Iran's top diplomat vowed that there would be a response, and

Tehran later claimed attacks in Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan.

Jordan said it shot down five incoming missiles, which Iran said targeted the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base. The base has hosted American F-35 fighter jets and other aircraft.

Jordan's state-run Petra news agency carried a military statement saying there were no injuries and that explosives experts examined the debris from the interceptions.

Bahrain and Kuwait said they intercepted incoming fire, without elaborating.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi condemned the American attacks as a violation of Iranian sovereignty in calls with his counterparts from Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and emphasised the inherent right of self-defence, including reciprocal action,” according to a post on his office's Telegram channel. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said in televised comments on Wednesday that in light of the new attacks, Iran would review its stance on negotiations to end the war.

The exchanges of fire came a day after a US Army attack helicopter crashed near the Strait of Hormuz after colliding with an Iranian drone, according to a US official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation. It wasn't clear whether the collision was intentional.

A drone boat rescued both of the helicopter's aviators, and Trump said they were uninjured.

A cargo ship is attacked by a small boat in the Gulf of Aden

Guards aboard a cargo ship off the coast of Yemen in the Gulf of Aden exchanged fire with gunmen in a small boat and repelled their at-

tack, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said. No group immediately claimed responsibility. Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels have said they will resume their attacks against Israel-affiliated ships in the Red Sea. Somali pirates have also become more active in the region.

The UKMTO later reported a fire in the engine room of a tanker in the Gulf of Oman, near the Strait of Hormuz, saying one person had been hurt and two others aboard were missing. It wasn't immediately clear what caused the fire.

Trump has said a deal to end the war is coming

Before he accused Iran of downing the US helicopter, Trump expressed renewed optimism over negotiations with Iran, but didn't say why there was reason for hope.

While Trump, wary of high gas prices and upcoming congressional elections in November, seems to be looking for a quick win, he is also making demands that will be tough for Iran to swallow.

The US wants to see Iran give up its stockpile of highly enriched uranium. While Iran insists its nuclear program is peaceful, it is a short, technical step from weapons-grade

levels. Iran is refusing to give up the uranium and demanding relief from sanctions. It also wants the release of frozen assets even before a final agreement is in place, something rejected by Trump.

It's not clear how those differences can be bridged — and Trump has repeatedly threatened to walk away from the talks. On his Truth Social platform overnight, he seemed to be warning again that he was ready to return to all-out war, posting a clip from the American TV series “The West Wing” with actor Martin Sheen as president belittling: “We don't come back with a proportional response, we come back with total disaster!”

Meanwhile, Iran has continued to insist that any deal to end the war must also end fighting between its ally Hezbollah and Israel. Instead, Israel has intensified its military campaign against the militant group.

Israel's military said on Wednesday it launched multiple strikes in southern Lebanon over the past day, targeting Hezbollah infrastructure.

An airstrike on a village east of Tyre killed at least six people, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported. (AP)

Pak says carried out air strikes at terror hideouts in Afghanistan, 26 killed

ISLAMABAD, June 10: Pakistan on Wednesday said it carried out “precise and calibrated” overnight air strikes targeted at alleged terrorist hideouts in Afghanistan and killed 26 people.

The affirmation by Information minister Attaullah Tarar came hours after the Afghan government said that Pakistan air strikes killed several people in an overnight attack. This is the third time that the two countries are engaged in armed conflict since October last year.

On Wednesday, Tarar said that in the aftermath of recent terrorist incidents in Pakistan, “precise and calibrated strikes were carried out along Pakistan-Afghanistan border areas on hideouts and safe havens of masterminds and planners belonging to Fitna Al Khwarij, killing 26 khawarijs.” Fitna-al-Khawarij is a term that Pakistan uses for the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Among the recent terrorist incidents that Tarar listed was a terrorists' attack on Federal Constabulary post in Musa Dara on June 9; vehicle-borne suicide attacks on a military post in North Waziristan on June 2, and an attack on a police station in Bannu on May 9.

“Based on credible intelligence, selective targeting of camps and hideouts was carried out with precision and accuracy. Four targets were completely destroyed including a training centre, a hideout & an ammunition cache and a Marakiz (hub) belonging to the Fitna Al Khwarij Commander Aleem Khan Khushali and Commander Akhtar Muhammad Jani Khel,” Tarar said in a statement on X. He also said Pakistan has always strived for maintaining peace and stability in the region, but at the same time “the safety and security of our citizens remains our top priority.”

Earlier, the Afghan government said that Pakistan air

strikes killed several people in the overnight attack.

Afghan govt spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said early Wednesday that Pakistan's air strikes in Kunar, Khost and Paktika caused casualties.

“Last night, the Pakistani military once again violated Afghanistan's airspace and bombed civilian homes in the provinces of Kunar, Khost, and Paktika. As a result of these attacks, 11 children, one woman, and one elderly man were killed, while 14 other women and children were injured,” he said.

Pakistan blames Afghanistan for not doing enough to prevent the attacks from its soil against Pakistan.

The current strikes came amid efforts by China to bring peace between the two countries. Before that, in February, Tarar had alleged that there was an “undeniable nexus” between the Afghan Taliban and the terrorist organisations carrying out attacks on Pakistani soil.

Pakistan on February 27 said it was in an “open war” with Afghanistan after its forces killed more than 270 Taliban fighters and injured over 400 others in airstrikes in response to what Islamabad described as the cross-border attack by the Afghan Taliban.

Afghanistan's Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid had then said that Afghan forces killed 55 Pakistani soldiers and targeted what he described as “important military objectives” inside Pakistan.

On March 18, Pakistan and Afghanistan announced a “temporary pause” in fighting in view of Eid-ul-Fitr and at the request of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, a day after the Afghan government accused Islamabad of killing 400 people in an attack on a rehabilitation hospital in Kabul. (PTI)

Markets, streets deserted in different parts of PoK after JAAC's protest call

ISLAMABAD, June 10: Shops and markets remained closed in different parts of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir after a protest call by the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC), as over 20 people have reportedly been killed in recent police action in the region.

About 2,000 protesters associated with the JAAC launched a protest march from Bhimber on Tuesday and they would reach Mirpur on onward travel to Muzaffarabad, BBC Urdu reported. It added that some protesters would reach Rawalakot and then proceed to Muzaffarabad. Police and security forces personnel are patrolling the roads and other areas.

JAAC has been staging protests demanding subsidised flour and electricity. The group was outlawed on Friday by authorities, citing concerns over public order and security.

The streets in Muzaffarabad were deserted, with hardly any vehicles on the roads, Dawn reported. It added that riot police and paramilitary personnel remained deployed in the city. However, no protests were witnessed in the city. It reported that hundreds of people



had gathered in the Quaid-i-Azam stadium of Mirpur, another major town of PoK.

“Shops are closed here, and traffic is off the roads,” local journalist Sajjad Jarral told Dawn by telephone.

The legal fraternity of PoK boycotted judicial proceedings on the Bar Council's call to protest the alleged arrest of senior lawyer Amjad

Ali Khan, a core member of the JAAC.

Pakistan's human rights body on Monday said that it was “deeply alarmed” by the ongoing violence in PoK during violent clashes.

Authorities on Tuesday announced a reward for those who helped in the arrest of the key leaders of the JAAC. According to an official notifica-

tion, a “Rs 10 million reward money” will be given to any person who provides information leading to the successful arrest of the central leaders of the JAAC, including Shaukat Nawaz Mir, Omar Nazir Kashmiri, Sardar Aman and Khawaja Mehran.

The notification states that the identity of those who provide information that helps in the arrest of the wanted persons will be kept confidential.

Meanwhile, PoK's so-called Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore urged a return to the negotiating table to end the tensions that have gripped the region over the past few days.

Rathore also acknowledged that while some of the demands of protesters, particularly related to refugee seats, require careful review, the solution must come through discussion rather than confrontation.

The JAAC has long been demanding the abolition of 12 “refugee seats” in the so-called Legislative Assembly in PoK. The seats are reserved for refugees from Kashmir who settled in Pakistan after 1947. (PTI)

Militants, police executed, maimed dozens of Palestinians in Gaza, UN report says

RAMALLAH, June 10: Hamas militants and police units in Gaza beat, maimed and publicly executed dozens of Palestinians during its war with Israel in acts amounting to war crimes, according to a United Nations report.

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' report released on Tuesday documented hundreds of cases of extrajudicial punishment in the war-ravaged territory, which it said were often publicised during and afterward to instill fear in the populace.

“These cases involved executions, kneecapping, bone-breaking with metal pipes or cement bricks and beatings and were framed by the perpetrators as punishments for alleged collaboration with Israel, looting humanitarian aid, theft, drug-related offenses or affiliations with internal rivals,” it said. The commission found that Hamas-affiliated militants and police forces were involved in nearly one-fourth of the 249 documented cases — including 108 deaths — from August 2024 to January 2026.

The commission specifically investigated cases involving Hamas-affiliated forces but also counted ones attributed to other armed groups.

Representatives for Hamas did not respond to questions about the report's allegations.

Hamas has run Gaza for nearly two decades since seizing control of the territory from the internationally recognised Palestinian Authority. Since an October ceasefire halted more than two years of full-scale war with Israel, Hamas has steadily reconsolidated its control over the areas of Gaza that it still governs. According to Tuesday's report, rather than being imposed through courts or judges, the punishments were carried out by Hamas' military wing and police units.

Srinivasan Muralidhar, the UN commission's chair, said the abuses documented in Gaza were occurring in an “environment engineered by Israel,” where “Hamas-affiliated forces have exploited the vacuum created by relentless Israeli attacks and widespread destruction.

Those targeted included anti-Hamas activists and members of Israel-backed clans and armed groups that emerged in areas where Hamas' grip weakened during the war, which has killed nearly 73,000 Palestinians, according to the territory's Health Ministry.

The UN report cites executions recorded on

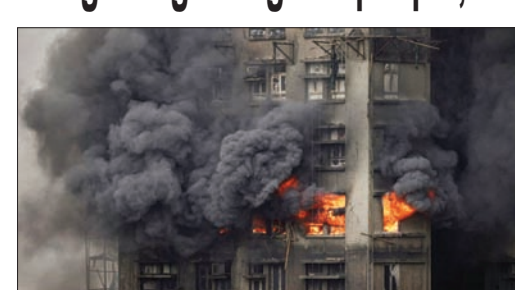
video, including one of three blindfolded men who were shot by masked men outside Shifa Hospital in September 2025 before a crowd.

It describes another public execution a month later, when eight men were dragged into a public square in Gaza City and shot. Both groups were accused of being spies, traitors and collaborators, according to the report.

The instances, the commission said, “amount to the war crime of murder and to a violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including the right to life, the right to liberty and security and the right to a fair trial.” Others targeted with beatings and forms of public shaming — including children — were accused of theft, drug trafficking or illegally selling tobacco. Witnesses also told the commission that the punishments were carried out in hospital compounds, including the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis.

However, it concluded that activities documented — which don't target Israel — don't forfeit hospitals' protection under international law. Israel has repeatedly accused Hamas of using schools, hospitals and mosques to stage operations. (AP)

Hong Kong charges 7 people, 2 firms over massive fire that killed 168



HONG KONG, June 10: Hong Kong authorities on Wednesday charged seven people and two companies with offences including manslaughter and conspiracy to defraud over the city's deadliest fire in decades.

The massive blaze engulfed seven apartment buildings and killed 168 people on November 26, 2025. Former residents and relatives of the dead have been waiting for answers for months after the fire shattered the close-knit community of Wang Fuk Court, which housed thousands of people in the suburban district of Tai Po.

In a statement on Wednesday, authorities said police and the Independent Commission Against Corruption charged the suspects with 25 counts. Money launder-

ing, attempting to pervert the course of public justice and tax evasion were also among the allegations.

The seven people played different roles in the major renovation project of Wang Fuk Court. The two companies charged are the project consultancy firm, Will Power Architects Company, and Prestige Construction & Engineering Co., the main contractor involved in the project.

The seven defendants, Wong Hap-yin, Hau Wa-kin, Ho Kin-yip, Ng Yeuk, Hung Kwok-wai, Chung Sofan and Lin Min, were brought to court on Wednesday afternoon. Authorities said they included directors of the two companies and a registered inspector of Will Power. The defendants told the court that they understood the charges, and most appeared calm.

In March, police said they arrested 38 people on accusations related to the fire, including manslaughter and fraud. Nine have been charged, police said. The anti-graft agency said in the same month that they also arrested 23 people on suspicion of offences such as bribery and conspiracy to defraud. Victor Dawes, a lawyer representing an independent committee conducting an ongoing inquiry into the fire's cause, previously said almost all fire safety systems failed on the day of the blaze because of human error. (AP)

Pak Army helicopter crashes in PoK

All personnel on board killed

ISLAMABAD, June 10: An Mi-17 helicopter of the Pakistan Army Aviation crashed near Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on Wednesday, killing all personnel on board, the army said.

“There were no survivors,” the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the Pakistan military, said, without giving the number of those killed.

In a brief statement, it said that the accident occurred “during take-off due to a technical fault”.

Rescue and recovery teams immediately reached the crash site. A board of inquiry has been ordered to ascertain the exact technical cause of the accident.

Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir and all ranks of the army “express deep grief over the tragic loss of precious lives and extend heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families”, the ISPR said.

In September 2025, five personnel were killed after an army helicopter crashed in Gilgit-Baltistan's Diامر district after a “technical fault”. (PTI)

US Senators, business leaders greet Modi on India's longest-serving elected PM milestone

WASHINGTON, June 10: US Senators, business leaders and members of the diaspora have greeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi for becoming the longest-serving elected prime minister, saying his tenure has been “nothing short of transformational”.

On Wednesday, Narendra Modi became India's longest-serving prime minister, with an unbroken tenure of 4,399 days in office, surpassing the record of the first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

“Congratulations to Prime Minister @narendramodi on becoming India's longest-serving elected Prime Minister 4,399 days of leadership earned through the trust of 1.4 billion people across three democratic mandates,” John Cornyn, the Republican Senator from Texas, said in a post on X.

“From lifting 250 million out of poverty to making India the world's fastest-growing major economy, PM Modi's tenure has been nothing short of transformational. The US-India partnership



has never been stronger,” said Cornyn, the co-chair of the Senate India Caucus.

“Congratulations to Indian Prime Minister @narendramodi who has become the country's longest-serving prime minister. Under PM Modi's leadership, the US-India partnership has truly be-

come comprehensive, global, and strategic,” Senator Bill Hagerty, a Republican from Tennessee, said.

American singer Mary Millben described Modi as her friend and offered heartfelt congratulations on “becoming India's longest-serving Prime Minister.”

“You have outlasted consecutive

US Presidents, some with whom you had great relationship and others you have had great grace towards, yet you never wavered in exercising clear diplomacy that upheld the interests of the Indian people coupled with the health of our two countries,” Millben said.

Nikesh Arora, CEO of Palo Alto Networks, congratulated Prime Minister Modi on the leadership earned through the trust of 1.4 billion people across three democratic mandates.

Nehru, who was first elected to the post in 1952, took the oath of office on May 13 and served until May 27, 1964 — a tenure of 4,398 days.

Nehru's previous stint from 1947-52 was as head of an interim government, as elections were yet to be institutionalised and held.

Indira Gandhi had a fractured tenure as prime minister for 14 years from 1966 to 1984. She was voted out as prime minister in the 1977 general elections held after the lifting of the Emergency. (PTI)

Taiwan fires rockets in China's direction from US-supplied mobile launching system in drill

TAICHUNG (TAIWAN), June 10: Taiwan's military fired rockets in China's direction from “shoot-and-scoot” mobile launchers on Wednesday in a demonstration of how it might try to repel a Chinese attack.

While the US-supplied system known as HIMARS has been tested before, the latest live-fire exercise was the first time its rockets were fired into the waters of the narrow Taiwan Strait that separates the self-governing island from China.

“Due to the current enemy threat, we will continue HIMARS training with unwavering determination to protect Taiwan as the nation's strongest force,” Army Sgt. Wang Ming-hui said.

The military said it used reduced-range training rockets, which don't fly very far off the coast before going into the water.

China views Taiwan as a renegade province and says it must come under its control at some point in the future. It sends warships and planes into the skies and waters near the island almost

every day and has held major military exercises in its vicinity in recent years. The United States does not recognise Taiwan as a country, but it opposes any change to its status by force and is its main supplier of weaponry for its defence.

HIMARS, which stands for High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, is a truck-mounted pod of rockets that can be driven out from a hidden position to fire its missiles, then quickly taken to a new hiding place in what are called “shoot-and-scoot” tactics.

They were fired on the second day of exercises on Taiwan's west coast, which faces China. The drills, which also included 155mm howitzers, simulated a response to a Chinese invasion and were designed to test rapid deployment and precision-strike capabilities.

The HIMARS was the centre-piece of the drill. After receiving a firing order, the vehicle manoeuvred into position and launched its rockets with bright flashes within three minutes, demonstrating its “shoot-and-scoot” mobility. (AP)

Singh seeks early approval for proposed elevated highway; Centre responds positively

Manipur CM meets Gadkari in Delhi, discusses progress of key national highways in state

IMPHAL, June 10: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Wednesday met Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari in New Delhi and discussed the progress of key national highway projects in the state, including the Imphal-Jiribam and Imphal-Dimapur roads, according to an official statement.

During the meeting at Gadkari's official residence, the chief minister also sought early sanction of the proposed elevated highway project in Manipur.

The Union minister responded positively to the state's requests, the statement said.

Regarding National Highway-37 (Imphal-Jiribam road), Singh informed Gadkari that land compensation issues in Noney district had been resolved following a revised survey and approval by the state cabinet, and that work on the project had commenced.

On the Imphal-Dimapur highway, the chief minister said issues



related to Kangpokpi district had been resolved, and a special package had been approved by the state cabinet.

Singh also informed the Union minister that land issues contin-

ued to affect the Imphal-Ukhrul-Jessami highway project and that the state government was engaging with stakeholders to ensure an early resolution, the statement added. (PTI)

Meghalaya suspends state-funded foreign trips of ministers, officials for six months

Austerity measure aims to rationalise expenditure and prioritise development spending

SHILLONG, June 10: The Meghalaya government on Wednesday put on hold all state-funded foreign visits by ministers, MLAs and officials for six months as part of an austerity drive aimed at rationalising expenditure and prioritising development spending, a notification stated.

The decision, taken in the larger public interest, comes amid growing global economic uncertainties, including rising geopolitical tensions and pressure on foreign exchange resources, they said.

According to the notification by the general administration department, the governor has ordered that all official foreign visits of ministers, MLAs and officials of the state government, whether permanent or contractual, shall be on hold for six months.

The notification said the measure has been imposed "in public interest and for complying with austerity measures".

As a result of the decision, eight proposed foreign study visits and exposure programmes involving around 63 to 68 officials and representatives from various depart-



ments have been deferred.

The postponed programmes were related to governance, livestock development, climate-resilient water management, healthcare systems, project implementation, environmental management and electoral administration.

The proposed visits were to destinations including the United Kingdom, Denmark, the United States, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam and Argentina.

Officials said the temporary suspension should not be viewed as a withdrawal from international engagement or knowledge exchange. "Rather, it reflects a temporary

pause in expenditure-bearing overseas travel while ensuring continued focus on governance priorities within the state," an official said.

The government said many of the intended learnings and collaborations would continue to be pursued through virtual engagements, technical partnerships and other avenues during the restriction period.

The notification stated that the order would apply to all foreign visits funded by the Meghalaya government and would cover both permanent and contractual employees.

However, it clarified that the restriction would not apply to visits fully funded by the government of India or entirely sponsored by multilateral development banks, subject to obtaining the necessary political clearance from the Ministry of External Affairs.

Officials said the move is aimed at curbing non-essential expenditure and ensuring that public resources remain available for development programmes and other priority commitments of the state government. (PTI)

Manipur inks MoU with Centre for implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0



IMPHAL, June 10: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Wednesday attended the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony between the Ministry of Jal Shakti and the state government in New Delhi for the implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) 2.0, an official statement said.

Speaking on the occasion, Singh said it was a matter of pride for him to be part of the MoU signing ceremony.

He noted that Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 represents a strategic restructuring of the national rural drinking water programme. Its main focus has shifted from quick creation of infrastructure to ensuring long-term and sustainable service delivery.

Singh also highlighted that the key features of JJM 2.0 include assured service delivery, the Sujalam Bharat digital framework, clear operation and maintenance (O&M) policies, measures for source sustainability, reform-linked funding and community ownership.

"These features, he said, will make the mission not just a government scheme but a way to achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047", it said.

Singh also praised the Ministry of Jal Shakti for its efforts in preparing the guidelines of the mission.

Reaffirming the state government's commitment, the CM assured full support for the effective implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 in Manipur. He said the state government would work to achieve the objectives of the mission in both letter and spirit, he added. (PTI)

Nagaland minister seeks support to enforce ban on tobacco

DIMAPUR, June 10: Nagaland health & family welfare minister P Paiwang Konyak called for a collective and coordinated approach to support the one-year ban on tobacco imposed across the state.

On June 4, the state government imposed a one-year statewide ban on the manufacture, storage, transportation, distribution and sale of all food products containing tobacco or nicotine as ingredients, citing public health concerns and directions from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

At a high-level review meeting of the department in Kohima on Tuesday, the minister emphasised the need for a collective and coordinated approach toward public health, calling upon civil society organisations, churches and community leaders to extend their wholehearted support to the one-year ban on tobacco.

Konyak stated that such a measure would significantly contribute to improving public health and safeguarding the younger generation from the harmful effects of tobacco consumption.

He urged all stakeholders to cooperate closely with the district administration and police authorities to ensure effective implementation and enforcement of the initiative.

Reviewing the department's performance and ongoing programmes, including preparedness for Ebola outbreak, review on 100-day mission under NOAS, TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan campaign, Konyak directed the department to strengthen its outreach at the district level, enhance service delivery and ensure that government healthcare initiatives effectively reach the grassroots population.

On the Ebola outbreak, state nodal officer, Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme, Dr Nyan Kikon said no Ebola case has been detected in Nagaland so far.

The department however has been directed to maintain heightened surveillance, strengthen preparedness at all levels, and ensure prompt response mechanisms are in place as a precautionary measure.

GST awareness drive concludes in Bomdila

BOMDILA, June 10: As part of a continuing regional tax outreach campaign, a two-day intensive GST awareness programme successfully concluded in Bomdila on Wednesday. Held on June 9 and 10, the initiative was jointly organised by the CGST Bhalukpong Range in close coordination with the SGST Bomdila Division. This follows a similar successful awareness drive conducted by the department in Seppa on June 4 and 5.

The primary objective of the Bomdila programme was to demystify complex tax structures for local businesses and deductors. Over the two days, expert sessions focused on crucial aspects of tax compliance, including Tax Deducted at Source (TDS), Tax Collected at Source (TCS), Input Tax Credit (ITC) and the fundamentals of GST registration.



The sessions were led by a team of dedicated officials, including CGST Bhalukpong Inspectors Chandan Kumar, Samir Shankar and Vishal Singh Rana, along with Tsang Norbu Thongdok, Assistant Commissioner of SGST Bomdila. To provide deeper technical insights, CA Ankit Setia, a renowned Chartered Accountant from Tezpur, joined as the special faculty member, spearheading the core technical sessions and explaining legal nuances.

The programme concluded with an interactive open-floor Q&A session, during which local traders, entrepreneurs and official deductors cleared their doubts directly with the experts. Officials emphasised that these consecutive drives in Seppa and Bomdila are vital for building a transparent, tax-compliant ecosystem and bridging the gap between taxpayers and the administration.

Connectivity expanded, healthcare strengthened under Modi govt: Tripura CM

AGARTALA, June 10: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday said connectivity has expanded, healthcare strengthened and educational opportunities enhanced under the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Modi crossed the record of Jawaharlal Nehru's 4,399 days in power as an elected prime minister following the 1952 general elections. From 1947 to 1952, Nehru was head of an interim government, as elections were not held till 1952.

"From expanding connectivity and strengthening healthcare to enhancing educational opportunities and fostering innovation, India has witnessed remarkable progress across sectors over the past 4,399 days," Saha wrote in a social media post.

"Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji, the nation continues its journey towards a stronger, more prosperous and self-reliant India, driven by development, good governance and inclusive growth for all," he added.

BJP state president Abhishek Debroy and state Finance Minister Pranajit Singha Roy attended a religious programme at Tripura Sundari Temple in Gomati district to mark the occasion.

"The country witnessed a history! Narendra Modi has set a record after becoming the longest serving Prime Minister of the country by completing 4,399 days in office. This is indeed a milestone in the country's growth, progress and stable leadership," Debroy wrote in a social media post.

Former prime minister Indira Gandhi had a tenure of 14 years, more than that of Modi, but her prime ministership was not uninterrupted. By surpassing Nehru's 4,399-day record, Modi became the longest-serving elected prime minister of India.

On May 26, 2014, Modi took charge as India's prime minister with a landslide victory. He got re-elected with a bigger mandate in 2019 and his second term began on May 30 of the same year. His third consecutive term started on June 9, 2024. (PTI)

Sikkim CM appeals to people to participate in 'Har Ghar Yoga' initiative for world record bid

GANGTOK, June 10: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang has appealed to the people of the state to take part in the 'Har Ghar Yoga' initiative being organised by the Ministry of AYUSH on June 14, saying the campaign aims to create a Guinness World Record through nationwide participation.

The CM in a statement issued on Tuesday, urged people to register through the 'Habuild Online Yoga Registration' platform and become part of what he described as a "national movement".

"I warmly urge the people of Sikkim to enthusiastically participate and register through the Habuild Online Yoga Registration initiative. Our active participation will make Sikkim a proud contributor to this national movement," Tamang said.

Those registering will receive a special link on June 14 to take part in the online yoga event, according to the statement.

The chief minister called upon people to complete the registration process at the earliest.

Emphasising the broader significance of the campaign, Tamang said the initiative is not only about setting a world record but also about promoting a healthy lifestyle and strengthening the spirit of national unity.

"Let us come together to promote a healthy lifestyle, yoga, and the spirit of national unity," he said.

The event is scheduled at 6.15 am on June 14 under the theme 'Yoga: India's gift to the world'. (PTI)

Heavy rain, thunderstorms likely across Arunachal over next five days



ITANAGAR, June 10: The weather department on Wednesday forecast widespread rain and thunderstorms in Arunachal Pradesh over the next five days and issued an orange alert for parts of the state, warning people to be prepared for any calamity.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), thunderstorms accompanied by heavy to very heavy rain are likely in Kamle, Lower Subansiri, West Siang, Siang, Leparada, Lower Siang, East Siang and adjoining districts, on Thursday.

It has forecast a further escalation of adverse weather conditions on Friday, with Upper Siang remaining under the orange alert, while Papum Pare, Lower Siang and Leparada are also expected to witness intense rainfall.

Several adjoining districts, including West Siang, Siang, East Siang, Kamle, Lower Sub-

ansiri, Pakke Kessang, East Kameng, Lohit and Namsai, may witness heavy rain, thunderstorms and lightning.

On Saturday, the focus of the weather system is likely to shift towards the southwestern and eastern parts of the state.

The weather department has indicated the possibility of heavy to very heavy rainfall in West Kameng, East Kameng, Pakke Kessang, Papum Pare and Lohit.

The forecast for Sunday suggests a gradual easing of the weather situation across much of Arunachal Pradesh, although isolated heavy rainfall and thunderstorm activity are likely to persist.

By Monday, weather conditions are expected to improve further, with only isolated pockets of the state likely to receive moderate to heavy rainfall, the IMD said. (PTI)

CMs congratulates Modi on becoming India's longest-serving PM

'PM Modi's record-breaking tenure era of transformative governance'

ITANAGAR/GANGTOK, June 10: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday hailed Narendra Modi's record-breaking tenure as the country's longest continuously serving elected prime minister as an era of transformative governance marked by bold reforms and a commitment to improving the ease of living.

He said the Centre's Act East Policy has repositioned the frontier state from a "strategically neglected" border region to a key gateway and a pillar of India's developmental and security vision.

Modi on Wednesday became the longest continuously serving elected prime minister of India, breaking the record of the first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

On May 26, 2014, Modi took charge as India's prime minister with a landslide victory. He got re-elected with a bigger mandate in 2019 and his second term began on May 30 of the same year. His third consecutive term started on June 9, 2024.

Congratulating the prime minister, Khandu highlighted major gains in connectivity, infrastructure, hydropower, border development and welfare sectors in the state since 2014.

In a letter on behalf of the people of Arunachal Pradesh, the chief minister expressed gratitude to PM Modi for the Centre's sustained support and said his



leadership has been marked by bold reforms, selfless service and a commitment to improving the ease of living.

He said the northeastern state, which shares over 1,080 km of international boundary with Tibet, Bhutan and Myanmar is no longer viewed merely as a border state but as a strategic and civilisational frontier.

Referring to several development measures undertaken in the past 12 years, Khandu said, "The prime minister's greatest legacy lies not only in creating

physical infrastructure but also in transforming lives, aspirations and opportunities across the country."

Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Wednesday congratulated Narendra Modi on becoming India's longest-serving prime minister by eclipsing the record of Jawaharlal Nehru.

"Heartiest congratulations to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji on becoming India's longest-serving elected Prime Minister," he said in a post on X.

"By surpassing the record of India's first prime minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and crossing the historic milestone of 4,399 days in office, you have created a new chapter in the democratic history of our nation," Tamang said.

The CM said the "remarkable achievement" reflects the unwavering trust of India's people in "your visionary leadership, tireless dedication and steadfast commitment" to nation-building.

"As you complete 12 years in office, your leadership continues to inspire millions and guide India's transformative journey towards a Viksit Bharat by 2047," he said.

"On behalf of the people of Sikkim, I extend my heartiest congratulations and best wishes for your continued service to the nation," Tamang added. (PTI)

No.DPRD/BTC/15th FC(T)-142/2026/6

Dated, Kokrajhar the 8th June, 2026

PRESS NOTICE

The Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids for the work- "Imp. of water distribution network at Kachugaon Block (ID-1236, Activity Code- 127389486)" under the award of 15th FC Tied Grant (1st installment) for the year 2024-25 during 2025-26 for an amounting of Rs. 72,86,842.00 (Rupees seventy-two lakh eighty-six thousand eight hundred forty-two) only from the registered contractors of Register Firm/ Class-I (A, B, & C) category of Assam, PHE, BTC.

Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours.

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IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/505

Newly sworn-in WB ministers get portfolios

Finance for Swapan Dasgupta, industries for Tapas Roy

KOLKATA, June 10: Ten days after the swearing in of the extended cabinet of the BJP government in West Bengal, portfolios were allocated among the ministers on Wednesday, with senior leader Tapas Roy named the industries minister and journalist-turned-politician, Swapan Dasgupta, getting the finance department.

According to a notification issued by the state home department and signed by Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Agarwal, BJP MLA from Bidhannagar, Dr Sharadwat Mukherjee, was named the health minister.

It stated that besides the home department, Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari would continue to hold the charge of land and land reforms, refugee relief and rehabilitation, power, information and cultural affairs, personnel and administrative reforms and departments not allotted to other ministers.

As part of the latest portfolio allocation, journalist-turned-politician Jagannath Chattopadhyay, who won the Suri Assembly seat in Birbhum district, has been given the responsibility of the state's higher education department.

BJP leader from Birbhum, Dudh Kumar Mondal, was named the agriculture minister, while the north Bengal leader from Falakata in Alipurduar district, Dipak Bar-



man, was put in charge of the state school education department.

Among the other significant portfolios, tourism and parliamentary affairs went to Siliguri MLA Shankar Ghosh, while the charge of labour and transport departments went to Neopara MLA Arjun Singh.

Among the ministers of state with independent charge, Indranil Khan was named sports and youth, and consumer affairs minister, while the BJP's Cooch Behar district leader, Malati Rava Roy, was allocated the Women and Child Development department.

Chief Minister Adhikari was sworn in on May 9 along with five cabinet ministers -- Dilip Ghosh, Agnimitra Paul, Ashok Kirtania, Nisith Pramanik, and Kshudiram Tudu. They have already been as-

signed the charge of departments.

On June 1, the state cabinet underwent a significant expansion, with Governor R N Ravi inducting 35 more ministers, of which 13 were cabinet ministers and 22 ministers of state, including three with Independent Charge.

With this expansion, the total strength of the ministerial council rose to 41.

Cabinet Ministers Paul and Dilip Ghosh had been allotted the urban development and municipal affairs department, and the panchayat and rural development, with the additional charge of agriculture marketing, respectively.

Cooch Behar leader Nisith Pramanik continues to remain the North Bengal development minister and is also in charge of the water resources investigation and

development department, while Ashok Kirtania would be the food and cooperation minister.

Tribal leader Kshudiram Tudu had been named minister for tribal development, minority affairs and madrasah education departments.

Of the later inductees in the Suwendu Adhikari cabinet, educationist-turned-politician from the Khardaha assembly seat, Kalyan Chakraborty, was allocated the state IT and electronics department with additional charges of the departments of science and technology, food processing and horticulture.

BJP's North Bengal leader from Kumargram in Alipurduar, Manoj Kumar Oraon, was named the state forest minister while Gouri Shankar Ghosh, an MLA from Murshidabad, was put in charge of the backward classes welfare department.

Arup Kumar Das has been named the irrigation and waterways minister, while Ajoy Poddar was allocated the public health engineering department. Kudmi community leader from Jhargram, Rajesh Mahata, was put at the helm of the animal resources and fisheries departments as a junior minister with independent charge.

Portfolios to assist cabinet ministers were also distributed among the 19 ministers of state who comprise Adhikari's ministerial council in the state. (PTI)

Modi shares jhalmuri and a message at NDA meet

NEW DELHI, June 10: The humble jhalmuri found itself in the political spotlight once again at the 12th anniversary conclave of the ruling NDA at the Bharat Mandapam here on Wednesday.

And yet again, this was courtesy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had sent the popular Bengali snack's stock soaring by consuming it at a campaign pitstop during the West Bengal Assembly polls.

Modi shared a video clip on Instagram showing West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari serving him jhalmuri -- essentially a mixture of pulfed rice, crunchy vegetables, spices, and a drizzle of mustard oil -- at a makeshift stall set up at the NDA meeting venue.

The images brought back memories of the Bengal polls, when Modi's jhalmuri break had drawn a "drama" barb from Trinamool Congress supremo and the then chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

Modi had then hit back with a pun, saying while he enjoyed the snack, the TMC felt the "jhal" (heat).

With the TMC having suffered a resounding defeat at the hands of the BJP in the polls, Modi on Wednesday appeared to gently rub it in once again.

"Sharing Jhalmuri with fellow NDA leaders at the NDA meeting today," Modi captioned the video.

BJP chief Nitin Nabin, Union ministers H D Kumaraswamy and Chirag Paswan, BJP ally and Rashtriya Lok Morcha chief Upendra Kushwaha, Uttar Pradesh minister Sanjay Nishad and Bodoland People's Front chief Hagrama Mohilary stood around the prime minister as he munched on the snack.

As Adhikari handed over a serving of jhalmuri to Modi, the prime minister responded with a thank you. Modi then served portions of it to Nabin and Nishad.

During the meeting, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also stopped by the jhalmuri counter. In photographs posted by the prime minister on X, Union ministers Anupriya Patel and Ramdas Athawale were among the leaders seen enjoying the snack.

"A jhalmuri break during the NDA meeting at Bharat Mandapam. All our leaders greatly enjoyed this snack!" Modi wrote on X, sharing a set of pictures.

The everyday snack was catapulted to political stardom after Modi made an unscheduled stop at a modest jhalmuri shop in Jhargram during his Bengal poll campaign on April 19. What began as a roadside snack break soon became a political talking point. (PTI)

Punjab BJP leaders offer prayers at religious places

CHANDIGARH, June 10: Punjab BJP leaders on Wednesday offered prayers at religious places and congratulated Narendra Modi for becoming India's longest continuously serving elected prime minister.

They said Modi's journey as PM is a symbol of unwavering dedication to nation-building, resolute will, and a spirit of service.

Modi, who first assumed office on May 26, 2014, on Wednesday became the longest continuously serving elected prime minister of India after surpassing the previous record of 4,398 uninterrupted days held by the first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

Punjab BJP chief Kewal Singh Dhillon paid obeisance at a gurdwara in Chandigarh, while party leader and Pathankot MLA Ashwani Sharma participated in a collective recitation of 'Hanuman Chalisa' while offering prayers at Kali Mata Mandir.

In Chandigarh, Dhillon said he paid obeisance at a gurdwara to offer 'shukrana' (thanks) on the completion of "our beloved, hard-working and visionary Narendra Modi's unprecedented and historic tenure of 12 years as Prime Minister".

Also, prayed for the prosperity of the country, Punjab and the strength of the BJP, he said in a post on X. Because of Modi ji's strong leadership, historic work has been accomplished for the country and the Sikh community in the past 12 years. We are proud of our Prime Minister, who is taking the country to new heights with the slogan of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', he said.

Later in a statement, Dhillon said under the visionary leadership and strong governance of Modi, India has reached new heights on the global stage. He said an extensive network of highways, expressways, and airports has been developed across the country.

Alongside the modernization of Indian Railways, advanced high-speed trains such as the Vande Bharat Express have been introduced. He further said that India has emerged as a global leader in digital transactions. By expanding internet connectivity and digital services to even the remotest villages, the government has made the lives of ordinary citizens more convenient and accessible.

Dhillon highlighted that the BJP government facilitated the development of the Kartarpur Corridor, exempted Langar services from GST, and constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate long-pending cases related to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. (PTI)

Siddaramaiah alleges BJP used poll machinery to reject Meenakshi Natarajan's RS nomination

BENGALURU, June 10: Former Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claiming that the election machinery under his watch had "illegally" rejected the nomination of Congress candidate Meenakshi Natarajan for the Rajya Sabha election from Madhya Pradesh.

Alleging that the BJP used the election machinery to reject the Congress candidate's nomination, he said it was "peak irony" that this happened on the day the BJP was celebrating Modi's "supposed long stay in power as a cooked-up milestone for Indian democracy."

The upcoming elections to three Rajya Sabha seats in Madhya Pradesh took a dramatic turn in Bhopal on Tuesday after Natarajan's nomination was rejected on charges of concealing information about a case in her affidavit.

"It is peak irony that, on the day the BJP is celebrating PM Modi's supposed long stay in power as a cooked-up milestone for Indian

democracy, the election machinery under his watch has illegally rejected the nomination of Congress candidate Meenakshi Natarajan for the Rajya Sabha election from Madhya Pradesh," Siddaramaiah said. "This is the real condition of democracy under Modi. The rejection of Natarajan's nomination is not a routine scrutiny decision. It is a blatant illegality and a clear political conspiracy," the Congress Working Committee member posted on X.

Noting that the BJP had the numbers to win only two Rajya Sabha seats from Madhya Pradesh, the former CM said the party had nevertheless fielded a third candidate and then attempted horse-trading by allegedly offering huge sums of money to Congress legislators. "When those attempts started failing, and Congress MLAs stood united, the BJP used the election machinery to directly reject the Congress candidate's nomination," he alleged.

The grounds cited for rejecting

her nomination were "completely illegal," he further claimed.

"There is no criminal case against Natarajan in the eyes of the law. A private complaint does not become a criminal case unless the court takes cognisance of it. A mere notice from a court is not a criminal case and need not be disclosed," he said. "This clear legal position was placed before the returning officer. Yet, her nomination was rejected. This shows that the decision was neither independent, fair, nor impartial. It was politically driven to help the BJP manufacture a victory it could not win honestly," Siddaramaiah added.

"This is part of a larger design. Through SIR and other methods, the BJP has been carrying out vote theft. Now, seat theft has been added to the same project," the former CM said. "Whether by manipulating voters, breaking parties, buying loyalty, misusing institutions, or stealing seats, the BJP's aim is the same: to create artificial numbers in Parliament." (PTI)

CJP to launch nationwide protest demanding education minister's resignation from today

NEW DELHI, June 10: Asserting that India's youngsters are not scared of questioning the government, the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), which led a protest here last week demanding Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation, said on Wednesday that it would launch an "indefinite sit-in" at Jantar Mantar from June 20 if the minister does not step down.

In a statement here, the CJP, which started as a satirical social-media account and has transformed into a movement following last week's agitation at Jantar Mantar, also announced that it would hold protests in different cities, starting with Pune on June 11, followed by Lucknow, Amritsar, Bengaluru, Jaipur and Hyderabad. The CJP said the protests will continue until Pradhan resigns.

Calling it a national issue affecting millions of families and young people whose future has been placed at risk due to alleged irregularities in the conduct of examinations, the CJP said, "The Education Minister, Dharmendra Pradhan, has failed to take responsibility for these repeated failures. Accountability must begin at the top. That is why we reiterate our demand: Dharmendra Pradhan should resign."

"If the government does not answer this demand and remove the minister, or if he does not offer his resignation, the youth of this country will gather together on June 20 at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi for an indefinite peaceful sit-in protest till the minister resigns. We will not leave until accountability is delivered," it



added. Calling it a movement to defend the integrity of India's education system and ensure that no student is forced to pay the price for institutional failure, the CJP invited students, parents, teachers and citizens from all over the country to join the "struggle for accountability and justice".

In a post on X, CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke said climate activist Sonam Wangchuk would join the protest in Pune. The CJP has emerged in recent weeks as a student and youth-led movement protesting against alleged irregularities in competitive examinations and broader issues in the education system.

The group has drawn attention through social-media campaigns and public demonstrations, including the recent protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar that attracted significant participation. (PTI)

Digitisation enhanced ease of access to judicial services: Centre

NEW DELHI, June 10: A series of measures taken by the Centre in the past 12 years have made judicial services faster, more transparent and citizen-friendly, the government said on Wednesday.

As Narendra Modi on Wednesday crossed Jawaharlal Nehru's record of 4,398 days in office as an elected prime minister, the government brought out a series of booklets showcasing its achievements across fields in the past 12 years.

According to one of the documents, 49 e-Sewa Kendras have been established across 25 high courts and more than 2,400 district courts in the country, providing citizens with easy access to judicial information and services.

It noted that the e-Courts service now allows people to check case status, court orders and cause lists online, reducing the need for repeated court visits. Digital judicial services have helped increase transparency, reduce corruption, improve efficiency and speed up judicial processes, it said.

These initiatives are intended to ensure faster delivery of justice and make legal services more accessible to ordinary citizens, the government said. (PTI)

Shivakumar meets Sonia, Rahul, Priyanka in Delhi; visits NSUI, IYC offices



NEW DELHI, June 10: Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Wednesday met Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, former AICC chief Rahul Gandhi and party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and thanked them for reposing faith in his work.

Shivakumar, who is in the national capital, met the Gandhis at the 10, Janpath residence of Sonia Gandhi. Sources said he thanked Sonia Gandhi along with Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi for their constant guidance and support.

This was Shivakumar's first meeting with Sonia Gandhi after assuming the post of chief minister. Rahul Gandhi had attended Shivakumar's swearing-in in Bengaluru last week.

Earlier, Shivakumar met NSUI and Indian Youth Congress leaders and members at their offices here and said it brought back countless memories from his student days.

"As a young NSUI member, I spent many mornings

and evenings here, learning, growing and nurturing my aspirations in public life. Seeing the energy, discipline and commitment of today's young leaders was both heartening and inspiring," Shivakumar said.

"I am a product of NSUI, and this place remains deeply special to me because it shaped my journey and the values I carry to this day. We must never forget our roots, for they are the foundation of everything we become. A true leader is one who creates more leaders, and our nation needs committed leadership at every level, from the panchayat to the Parliament, united by a shared belief in India's unity amidst its diversity," he said on X.

"I continue to see this office as a temple of opportunity and hope, and I wish every student and youth who walks through its doors the confidence to dream, serve and succeed," Shivakumar said. He also visited the Congress' Indira Bhawan headquarters.

Shivakumar is likely to attend the Niti Aayog governing council meeting on Thursday. His Delhi visit comes as several Congress legislators are camping in Delhi lobbying for cabinet berths during the next expansion. There is a demand to induct fresh faces into the ministry.

Shivakumar was sworn in as the chief minister along with 13 Ministers on June 3, following Siddaramaiah's resignation as CM on May 28.

With the sanctioned strength of Karnataka's ministry being 34, including the CM, 20 berths are still vacant, and speculation is rife that most of them will be filled by the end of this month.

With many ministerial aspirants and limited berths available, Shivakumar has a tightrope to walk, as he risks large-scale disgruntlement among those who will be left out. (PTI)

Priyank Kharge questions legal basis of RSS exemption from registration

BENGALURU, June 10: Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge on Wednesday questioned the legal provision under which the RSS is exempted from registration and accountability to the government, and said he was willing to visit its headquarters to understand the matter.

He also invited RSS leaders to visit his office if they wish to explain the legal status or provisions of exemption.

He said he would evaluate their explanation and apologise if he was wrong.

"Why are they afraid when asked to register? Why is the BJP speaking when we ask the RSS to register? Let them call me to Jagannath Bhavan (BJP state headquarters) or Keshava Krupa (RSS state headquarters). Let them show me the law under which they are exempted from being accountable to the government or government agencies," Priyank said in response to a question.

Speaking to reporters, he said, "Or let them come to my office with documents. Let them show which law exempts them from following constitutional provisions or laws. I will evaluate it, and if I'm

wrong, I will apologise. Otherwise, let them make amends."

Noting that even a street vendor must register in this country, and that temples are accountable for donations received while citizens pay taxes, Priyank asked, "How are they (RSS) exempted? For what? Under which law? Can they do whatever they want?"

"They (RSS) repeatedly refer to themselves as a body of individuals. Even the Bangalore Club is a body of individuals; can anyone do it?" he questioned.

Taking a jibe at the BJP, the minister had on Monday asked the party to tell its "political superiors" -- the RSS -- to keep their registration documents ready.

He referred to the RSS as a "body of individuals", accusing the organisation and the BJP of "abusing and threatening him", citing a social media post by an individual.

In November 2025, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, in a veiled response to Congress leaders criticising the organisation for operating without registration, said the RSS is recognised as a body of individuals.

According to him, the Income

Tax Department and courts have termed the RSS a body of individuals, and the organisation has been exempted from income tax.

In the past, Priyank has repeatedly pointed out that the RSS is an unregistered organisation, accusing it of indulging in "money laundering" and questioning its sources of income.

Meanwhile, responding to Priyank's statement asking the RSS to keep its registration documents ready, senior BJP leader and MLC C T Ravi said that in the past, leaders, including Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, had tried to ban the RSS and failed.

He further said that even Priyank Kharge's father, Mallikarjun Kharge, could not do anything when he was the state's home minister.

Reacting to this, the minister said, "Ravi does not know the RSS's history. When Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Nehru banned it, the RSS fell at their feet. When Indira Gandhi banned the RSS, the then Sarsangchalak wrote a long appreciative letter supporting the Emergency. Ask him to read history first." (PTI)

Order rejecting Natarajan's RS nomination is egregious: Cong to EC

NEW DELHI, June 10: The Congress on Wednesday took up with the Election Commission the issue of rejection of its Madhya Pradesh candidate Meenakshi Natarajan's nomination for the Rajya Sabha polls, saying the order was "egregious" and should be set aside immediately.

A delegation of top party leaders, including K C Venugopal, Jai Ram Ramesh, Abhishek Singhvi, Vivek Tankha, Randeep Surjewala and Deepa Dasmunshi, along with Natarajan, met the Commission and demanded that the decision should be reversed. "This is a subversion of democracy... We still have full faith in constitutional in-

stitutions. That is why we are fighting this battle," Natarajan told reporters after the Congress delegation met the EC officials.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Singhvi said, "This delegation made a detailed representation to the EC. We have told them and demonstrated, according to us, beyond doubt and beyond any matter of controversy, that the RO (returning officer), has passed a perverse order. An order akin to likening 2 plus 2 is equal to 7."

"Why do I say so. The Election Commission's own law the representation of people's act has a section 33A which states that you have to disclose only those cases

which have a punishment of over two years but above all, only those cases in which charges have been framed," Singhvi said.

"The process of framing charges is a judicial process... you have rejected Ms Natarajan's nomination on the non-existence of cognizance," he said. The Congress hopes and trust that the EC will realise that this creates a very bad, distorted and non-level playing field that strikes at the heart of democracy. A violation of that strikes further at the heart of the basic structure of the Constitution. Therefore, we have requested for an immediate decision. Singhvi said.

"We have come on the day of



withdrawal (of nominations), there is sufficient time. This is a completely egregious and blatantly unlawful order, and should be set aside

immediately, is our request," the Congress MP said. Singhvi, who also heads the legal cell of the Congress, earlier said on X that "the de-

cision of the Returning Officer is indeed poor and absolutely partisan."

Singhvi said he spoke to Natarajan and several other senior Congress leaders on Tuesday after he learnt of this "most remarkable and astonishing rejection" of her nomination papers by the Returning Officer. "This is, on the face of it, patently and blatantly illegal because no criminal case, in the eyes of the law, exists against Ms Natarajan," he said in a video message on X. "This is because, in a private complaint, which anyone can file against anyone, no criminal case comes into existence unless and until the magistrate or the concerned judge takes cogni-

sance," he said in the message.

"At the highest, in the present case, a court has only issued a notice to her on a private complaint well before that court has taken cognisance, and indeed, the issue of cognisance is yet to be decided after hearing her by that court. So, where is the question of a criminal case which she had to disclose?"

"This is well established by Indian jurisprudence, including a high court judgment directly on point. It is not possible that the Returning Officer took an independent, objective, fair, and impartial stance; otherwise, there is no way in law her nomination could have been rejected," he said. (PTI)

Bomb threat emails target RSS HQ, CM's Office, civic bodies in Maharashtra

MUMBAI/NAGPUR/PUNE, June 10: Civic authorities in Maharashtra on Wednesday received bomb threat emails targeting the RSS headquarters in Nagpur, the Chief Minister's Office, and the mayoral offices in Mumbai and Pune, prompting evacuations at some places and security searches, officials said.

Police went into a tizzy after Nagpur Mayor Neeta Thakre received an email claiming an explosive device was planted at the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) headquarters in Mahal area Dr Hedgewar Smruti Bhavan in Reshimbagh.

Following the threat, a Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS) was immediately rushed to the spot for a thorough search, the officials said, adding that nothing suspicious was found.

Security checks were intensified, and all sensitive areas were being inspected as a precautionary measure.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) received emails "warning" of explosions at multiple locations in the state cap-



ital, including the mayor's office and the Chief Minister's Office, officials said.

The emails, sent to many official email IDs of the civic corporation, prompted security agencies to launch an investigation, they said.

According to officials, the emails warned of bomb blasts at the mayor's office, CMO, the BSE building and civic offices. They allegedly contained references to Khalistan and included inflammatory and threatening content target-

ing various organisations and institutions, BMC officials said.

The emails, with similar content, claimed that an improvised explosive device-laden car would be used to trigger a blast at the Mumbai mayor's office at 1.11 pm. It also allegedly carried bomb threats to the BSE building, the CMO and BMC offices at specified times.

In Pune, the Municipal Corporation's main office and the mayor's office also received an email threatening a bomb blast. The en-

tire main administrative building was evacuated, and a thorough search was carried out by the bomb detection squad, a civic official said. The email, purportedly sent by a group identifying itself as the Khalistan National Army, threatened a series of IED blasts at the Pune Municipal Corporation mayor's office at 1.11 pm, the Vidhan Bhavan at 3.11 pm, and the RSS headquarters in Nagpur at 3.11 pm, police and civic officials said.

The email claimed that the RSS had supported the 1984 Operation Blue Star and Operation Woodrose, and called for "badla" (revenge) along with the "end" of the BJP and the RSS, they said.

Entry to the PMC premises was prohibited till further orders, the officials said.

Security was stepped up at the civic headquarters and the mayoral offices in Mumbai and Pune, they said. Investigations were underway to trace the source of the emails, they added.

The police urged people not to panic and assured that all necessary security measures were in place. (PTI)

Delhi hotel fire probe Accountant, owner reveal operational details; licensing under scanner

NEW DELHI, June 10: Police probing the fire at a bed-and-breakfast in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar have found fresh details and are now examining possible irregularities in licensing, operations and fire safety compliance, sources said.

The latest revelations emerged during the interrogation of hotel owner Lavkesh Bajaj and accountant Jai Mishra, both of whom were arrested in connection with the June 3 fire at the Flourish Stay B&B in Hauz Rani that claimed 21 lives.

During questioning, Mishra told investigators that he had provided his personal documents for obtaining the bed-and-breakfast licence at Bajaj's request, while the application process was handled by the hotel owner.

The disclosure has prompted investigators to examine how the licence was obtained in the name of an employee despite Bajaj allegedly being the owner of the building and the establishment.

Police are also looking into whether there was any irregularity or possible collusion in the licence approval process, sources said on Tuesday.

Investigators found that their versions were largely similar and are now cross-checking them with documentary and technical evidence collected during the probe.

Police learned that Mishra had been working with Bajaj as an accountant for nearly a decade and was considered one of his most trusted employees. He was reportedly drawing a monthly salary of around Rs 35,000.

Investigators further found that the day-to-day operations of the hotel were largely controlled by



Mishra. He allegedly supervised both work shifts, managed staff deployment and duty rosters, maintained guest-related records and oversaw administrative functions.

According to sources, Mishra was also responsible for monitoring compliance with safety requirements, maintaining licence-related documents and handling various legal and operational formalities of the establishment.

When questioned about guest registers, identity records, licensing papers and other documents, Mishra claimed that all records had been maintained at the hotel but were completely destroyed in the fire.

Police, however, are seeking independent verification of the claim. Investigators are collecting records from various government departments, online portals and associated agencies to reconstruct the hotel's documentary history and determine accountability.

The probe has also confirmed that Mishra was present during the

fire incident. According to investigators, he reached the hotel at around 9.30 am after learning about the blaze, when fire department personnel were already carrying out rescue and firefighting operations.

Sources said he remained at the spot for some time before leaving. Thereafter, he allegedly travelled across different parts of the city using buses and the Metro while following developments through news reports and social media updates.

Police are now trying to ascertain why he left the scene and to establish his movements and activities during the period he remained away from investigators.

The June 3 fire, one of the deadliest hotel blazes in the national capital in recent years, killed 21 people and left several others injured.

The investigation is focusing on possible negligence, fire safety violations and alleged lapses in the licensing and operation of the establishment. (PTI)

Massive fire erupts at govt building in Kolkata

KOLKATA, June 10: A massive blaze erupted at a multi-storey government building in Alipore area of Kolkata on Wednesday morning, fire officials said.

One person trapped on the top floor of the eight-storey building, which serves as the South 24 Parganas district administrative office, was rescued by firefighters. Ten fire tenders were engaged in the operation to battle the blaze, which was reported around 9.50 am. Although the blaze was largely contained, pockets of fire remained, the officials said.

Fire officials said the blaze originated on the third floor and spread to the fourth floor, while thick smoke billowed from several floors.

Flames and smoke were seen gushing out of windows, and loud thuds were heard from inside the structure during the firefighting operation. Parts of air-conditioners also fell off the building, they said. Heavy smoke accumulation, caused by the presence of paper and wooden materials inside the offices, hampered firefighting efforts. Fire personnel initially faced difficulties entering the building through the staircase and were using hose pipes to spray water from outside before moving into the structure. "The concentration of the fire was on the third and fourth floors," a fire official said.

The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained, though officials said a malfunctioning air-conditioner could be one of the possible reasons. The building houses several state government departments. (PTI)

BRICS delegates learn about 'Indore Method' of compost-making

INDORE, June 10: Amidst the ongoing BRICS Agriculture Working Group meeting in Indore, representatives from member nations were introduced to the nearly century-old organic manure (compost) production method that has brought global recognition to the city.

The working group meeting is addressing topics such as food security, sustainable farming, climate change challenges, and enhancing mutual cooperation in the agricultural sector, officials said. To acquaint them with Indore's heritage, delegates from Ethiopia, Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia, and other BRICS nations were taken on a tour of the historic Rajwada Palace. During the visit, the administration also provided them with information about the 'Indore Compost' method, an organic manure production technique that was subsequently adopted by many countries around the world.

Albert Howard, a British agricultural scientist considered the father of modern organic farming, studied traditional farming practices in Indore during the early decades of the 20th century, officials said. He observed farmers preparing manure from agricultural residue, cow dung and other organic materials. He then developed a systematic composting method that later became famous as the 'Indore Method of Compost Making'.

Historian Zafar Ansari told PTI, "The Government Agriculture College of Indore was first established in 1923 as the Institute of Plant Industry. Howard conducted his studies and experiments at this very institute." (PTI)

Katihar-Kuretha and Katihar-Sonaili double line sections set for CRS inspection

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, June 10: The Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS), Northeast Frontier Circle, Kolkata, Sumeet Singhal is scheduled to carry out the statutory inspection of the newly constructed Broad Gauge (BG) double line sections between Katihar (1.380 km) - Kuretha (12.440 km) and Katihar (1.327 km) - Sonaili (17.542 km) in Katihar Division of Northeast Frontier Railway from 12th to 14th June 2026. These sections form part of the Katihar - Kumedpur and Katihar - Mukuria New Double Line Projects.

The Katihar - Kumedpur and Katihar -

Mukuria New Double Line Project, spanning a total length of 64.14 km is a significant infrastructure development initiative aimed at enhancing rail capacity and operational efficiency in the region. The project includes 2 important bridges, 27 major bridges and 23 minor bridges, along with extensive track and associated railway infrastructure. Upon completion, the double line corridor will serve 16 railway stations, facilitating improved train operations, increased line capacity, reduced congestion and more efficient movement of both passenger and freight traffic across the Katihar Division of Northeast Frontier Railway.

CSIR-NAL ties up production partner for HANSA-3 trainer aircraft

BENGALURU, June 10: CSIR-NAL Director Abhay A Pashilkar on Wednesday said the organisation has already identified a production partner for its HANSA-3 (NG) trainer aircraft, and work in this regard is underway.

He also said that the SARAS Mk-2 aircraft programme remains in the design phase.

He was speaking on the sidelines of a pre-event press conference held for Conclave-RISE 2026, which is scheduled to begin this weekend. SARAS Mk-2 is a 19-seat multi-role light transport aircraft, while the HANSA-3 (NG) is an indigenous next-generation two-seater trainer aircraft. Responding to a question on the status of the SARAS programme, he said, "It is still in the design phase. We have changed the configuration, so the critical design phase

will be completed in a month or so. Once those activities are completed, we will start producing the parts..."

The CSIR-NAL director said Pioneer Clean Amps had been working with the laboratory for nearly a year on pilot training initiatives, in the context of the HANSA aircraft.

He said there are currently around 38 Flight Training Organisations in the country and that the Ministry of Civil Aviation aims to increase the number to about 70 or more in the coming years to meet the growing demand for trained pilots.

"They require aircraft such as this one (HANSA). This aircraft has been designed for that purpose. The HANSA-3 aircraft was developed nearly two decades ago, but only a limited number were produced because there were very few

flight training organisations at that time, most of them government-run," he told reporters. Pashilkar noted that although the number of FTOs has increased, India still needs many more, with a requirement to train more than 400 pilots annually.

Stating that the HANSA trainer aircraft has been designed specifically for Commercial Pilot Licence training, he explained that students undergo theoretical instruction and practical flying training at FTOs before qualifying for a CPL after clearing the required examinations conducted by regulatory authorities. The CSIR-NAL director said that if the organisation is able to produce and supply these aircraft to existing and upcoming FTOs in large numbers, many young men and women who currently go abroad for training could instead complete their training in India. (PTI)

Calcutta HC grants interim protection to WB ex-sports minister in Messi event chaos case

KOLKATA, June 10: The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday granted interim protection to former West Bengal sports minister Aroop Biswas from any coercive action in a case related to the chaos at the Lionel Messi event at Salt Lake Stadium in December.

Granting protection to Biswas, the court said that while similar programmes showcasing the Argentine star were seamlessly organised in three other metros -- Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi -- the failure to smoothly conduct the event in Kolkata left a blot on the city's football-loving image.

Justice Saugata Bhattacharyya directed Biswas, who did not comply with two notices sent by the Bidhannagar police to appear before it for questioning, not to leave station without the court's permission.

The former minister was directed to submit his passport to the trial court within seven days.

The high court also directed him to appear before the probe agency on a notice by

it, which is to be served at least 48 hours prior. It said that no coercive action should be taken against Biswas till August 17 or further order, whichever is earlier.

Justice Bhattacharyya also directed the commissioner of Bidhannagar Police to conduct an independent inquiry as to why the event could not be organised properly on December 13, 2025, and submit a report within four weeks.

During the hearing, the judge said everyone was ashamed as Messi had to leave the Salt Lake stadium much before the scheduled time due to a security concern.

Too many people had entered the ground that day, and the petitioner was the sports minister then, the court observed.

"Thousands of Messi fans purchased tickets to get a glimpse of their hero, but his early exit shattered their dreams," the court said.

Observing that the Messi event in Kolkata turned into a fiasco, Justice Bhattacharyya said, "Similar programmes were

organised in Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi seamlessly. Failure to organise the event here left a blot on the image of Kolkata."

This court cannot shut its eyes to such a fiasco, the judge said and posted the matter for further hearing on August 4.

Complainant Satadru Dutta has accused Aroop Biswas of extortion and criminal intimidation, abuse of official and political influence, illegal diversion, monetisation and sale of complimentary tickets for the Messi event for wrongful gain.

Dutta's lawyer told the court that Biswas had taken 22,000 complimentary tickets from the event organiser out of the Salt Lake stadium's total seating capacity of 70,000. In a complaint at Bidhannagar South police station, Dutta alleged that he had to hand over a huge number of complimentary passes, accreditation cards and close proximity passes to Biswas, which were wrongfully distributed for financial gain. (PTI)

SC directs Kerala govt to take custody of state's 'tallest' elephant Raman

NEW DELHI, June 10: Observing that well-being of voiceless animals is of paramount importance, the Supreme Court has directed the Kerala government to take over custody of the elephant Raman, described as the tallest in the state, and house it in an appropriate rehabilitation centre.

A bench of justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma noted that Raman has been subjected to commercial exploitation and used in ceremonial processions and rituals.

It was hearing a contempt petition filed by Jayakrishna Menon, who claimed that the elephant belonged to the Mata Amritanandamayi Mutt and had only been temporarily handed over to a person named Krishnankutty for upkeep and care.

"It is truly unfortunate that the elephant in question i.e., Raman, who also happens to be the tallest elephant in the state of Kerala has been subjected to commercial exploitation despite an order restraining such exploitation, that too on the strength of an undertaking made before this court," the bench said.

"We would be failing in our duty towards the voiceless, if we turn a blind eye towards such defiance. We cannot be a mute spectator, more so in matters pertaining to voiceless animals, whose well-being is also of paramount importance," it said.

The top court found Krishnankutty, who had retained custody of the elephant based on a contested will, guilty of contempt for wilfully violating an undertaking given to the apex court and imposed a fine of Rs 2,000 on him.

The apex court clarified that its order giving custody of Raman is only temporary and will be subject to the final orders passed by it.

"The state of Kerala may also proceed to temporarily care for the elephant at its own expense, in which case, it may pass appropriate administrative orders in accordance with the statutory safeguards enshrined under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972," it added.

The top court also discharged the state authorities from contempt noting that it made an endeavour to conduct the medical inspection of the elephant. (PTI)

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Advocate General Surjit Nath Mitra, representing the state, told the court that two notices were served upon Biswas for appearance before the investigating officer, but he did not comply. (PTI)

New turtle nesting sites to be identified in Goa: Minister Rane

PANAJI, June 10: The Goa government has decided to notify additional turtle nesting sites on the state's shorelines, in addition to the existing four, Forest Minister Vishwajit Rane said.

Youngsters and school children will be involved in turtle conservation and educational activities, especially during the nesting season and release of hatchlings, Rane told reporters on Tuesday.

The minister chaired a review meeting of the forest department on Tuesday, during which it was decided to include additional turtle nesting sites in the new Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP).

The objections have been sent to the state Environment Department and the Goa Coastal Zone Management Authority to ensure that all turtle nesting sites are notified, Rane said.

"Four sites are currently notified, and additional sites are to be included in the new CZMP 2019," he said.

The issue of a leopard cub's death recently in North Goa's Pernem taluka was also discussed during the meeting.

Rane said an inquiry has been initiated and the cause of death is being identified.

"The autopsy has been conducted, and the viscera sent to



Gorewada Zoo in Maharashtra for analysis. Appropriate action to be initiated after the cause of death is established," he said.

Issues like the requirement of an adequate road network in Mollem and other protected areas for effective patrolling and monitoring were also discussed in the meeting.

"A plan will be drawn up with timelines and milestones for the next five years," Rane said.

In another decision, Rane said that native species will be planted in the state's forest areas to improve nutrition availability.

"A per-year, per-protected-area target will be set. Native forestry species will be identified, with specific focus on fruit-bearing trees and grasslands to improve nutrition availability in forest areas and reduce the movement of monkeys, bisons, and leopards into human-inhabited areas," he said.

On visitors rushing to waterfalls during the monsoon season, Rane decided that all operators/individuals conducting tours and treks in protected areas will mandatorily register with the chief wildlife warden in the interest of the safety of ecotourists.

"Entry will be regulated to ensure safety. Local community's involvement in such activities is a must," he said. A decision was also taken in the meeting to increase the number of waterbodies in the protected areas, the minister said.

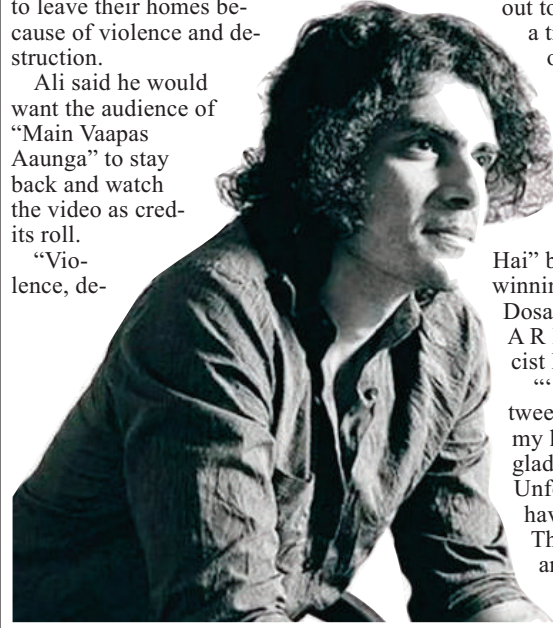
The forest department also decided that a wildlife movement, tracking and documentation study will be initiated to understand the patterns for better management and human-wildlife conflict mitigation. "World-class camera equipment will be put up in key locations, implemented through CSR partnerships," he added. (PTI)

Imtiaz Ali, Diljit Dosanjh re-release special end credit 'Kya Kamaal Hai'

Director Imtiaz Ali and Diljit Dosanjh on Wednesday re-released a special video of the song "Kya Kamaal Hai", which will play during the end credits of the film as a tribute to those forced to leave their homes because of violence and destruction.

Ali said he would want the audience of "Main Vaapas Aaunga" to stay back and watch the video as credit's roll.

"Violence, de-



struction, killing and forced migration is happening all around us. And this song and video is an ode to people that are getting disadvantaged by it daily. This song is a balm to heal the hearts that are crying, to stand in solidarity with all of humanity, no matter what the region," Ali told PTI.

"And it is an appeal to ourselves and everybody else to be as positive, loving and kind at this hour. Our subcontinent has seen the devastating effects of the violence of Partition. Let us be the ones to take the message of the futility of violence to the world. This video comes at the end of the film as the titles roll. It's a bonus feature for

the viewers of the film and I would encourage the audience to stay back and watch it till the end," the director said.

Dosanjh, who is currently on his AURA Tour, specially took time out to shoot the video as a tribute to the spirit of the film, a part of which is set against the backdrop of Partition. The movie releases in theatres this Friday.

"Kya Kamaal Hai" brings together the winning quartet of Dosanjh, Ali, composer A R Rahman, and lyricist Irshad Kamil.

"If I had a choice between death and leaving my home, I would have gladly chosen death. Unfortunately, I did not have such a choice." This is a quote from an anonymous refugee in the video," Ali said, recalling how migration has been one of the defining stories of our times.

"Kya Kamaal Hai" is dedicated to those forced to leave their homes because of war and hatred. It is a cry of hope and a salute to the resilience of mankind," he added.

Starring Dosanjh, Vedang Raina, Sharvari and Naseeruddin Shah, "Main Vaapas Aaunga" follows a romance that unfolds across decades, linking the past with the present through recollections of a love that time could not erase.

The film is produced by Birla Studios and Applause Entertainment in association with Window Seat Films. (PTI)

LEGENDARY FILMMAKER BHARATHIRAJA NO MORE

CM Vijay announces state honours for director

Veteran director, producer and screen writer P Bharathiraja died on Wednesday due to age-related complications here, leaving behind a rich legacy of filmmaking that saw the studio-to-village transition in Tamil cinema.

According to family sources, the 84-year-old Padma Shri recipient died at his city residence, after battling age-related ailments for sometime. Bharathiraja is survived by wife, Chandraleela, and daughter, Janani.

Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay, himself a top Tamil star, veteran stars Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan, both of whom have worked with Bharathiraja in films including his blockbuster debut venture "16 Vayathinile," and scores of celebrities and political leaders, including DMK president M K Stalin, visited the director's residence and paid tributes.

In his condolence message, Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar said he was "deeply saddened by the demise of legendary filmmaker Bharathiraja, a true pioneer who transformed Tamil cinema with his unique storytelling and profound portrayal of rural life."

CM Vijay, in a statement said, "I was deeply saddened and grieved to learn of the passing of Tamil film director Bharathiraja."

"A director who rose from a rural background and infused his films with vibrant life and realism, Mr Bharathiraja left a distinct mark on Tamil cinema with numerous successful films. For his work, he received many national and state honours, including the prestigious Padma Shri," he added.

The CM announced that in recognition of his contributions to cinema, state honours will be accorded to the veteran.

In his message, Stalin termed Bharathiraja's death a "great loss" for Tamil cinema.

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami said, "A son of south Tamil Nadu who rose to reshape Tamil cinema, he turned the camera towards villages and filled the film world with the scent and soul of the soil."

The actor-director was known as a trendsetter for his choice of stories and their treatment.

A multiple national award winner

known for his predominantly rural content, Bharathiraja shot to fame with his debut directorial venture "16 Vayathinile" in 1977. It also marked his maiden association with legendary musician Ilayaraja as the songs of the film, especially "Senthooorpoove," were chartbusters.

Kamal Haasan and the late Sridevi were the lead pair, with superstar Ra-

arrival in the late 1970s, Tamil cinema was heavily dominated by indoor studio sets, high-decibel theatrical melodramas, and urban-centric narratives.

Bharathiraja shattered this status quo with his explosive directorial debut "16 Vayathinile" (At the age of 16). By taking his cameras out of the studio floors and onto the dusty, sun-drenched tracks of actual villages, he

demonstrated a remarkable stylistic range, moving effortlessly from rural dramas to psychological thrillers.

His pathbreaking films in Tamil include 'Sigappu Rojakkal' (1978), a sophisticated, gritty psychological thriller that broke his rural mould; 'Alaigal Oivathillai' (1981): a poignant, critically acclaimed romance addressing caste and religious barriers; 'Mudhal Mariyathai' (1985): a masterful, mature narrative on platonic love featuring thespian Sivaji Ganesan; and 'Karuthamma' (1994): a hard-hitting social commentary tackling the menace of female infanticide.

Beyond his technical prowess behind the lens, Bharathiraja was widely recognised as the industry's ultimate star-maker. He possessed an uncanny eye for raw talent and systematically introduced a generation of performers who would go on to shape the future of Indian cinema.

In a characteristic and superstitious tradition, he frequently rechristened his lead actors with names beginning with the letter "R". Through this unique grooming school, he introduced iconic artistes such as Radikaa, Revathi, Radha and Rekha. He was also instrumental in launching the careers of male stars like Karthik and Pandian, alongside legendary technicians, comedians, and character actors.

In the latter half of his career, Bharathiraja seamlessly transitioned to the front of the camera, reinventing himself as a formidable character actor. His powerful screen presence and distinct dialogue delivery earned him widespread critical acclaim from younger generations of filmmakers.

He delivered memorable, gritty performances in Mani Ratnam's political drama 'Aayutha Ezhuthu' (2004), playing the role of a cunning politician, 'Pandianadu' (2013), and the box-office hit 'Thiruchitrabalam' (2022). His acting prowess was further highlighted in his final onscreen appearances, which included the recent blockbuster thriller 'Maharaja' and the Malayalam feature 'Thudaram' starring superstar Mohanlal.

Industry veterans described his demise as the definitive curtain call on a golden era of cinematic storytelling.

Final rites and funeral arrangements are expected to be announced by the family later today. (PTI)



jinnikanth playing the villain in a film that went on to rule the box office. The movie is rated one among the best Tamil films even today.

As a professional, Bharathiraja broke the shackles of studio-bound filmmaking to inject raw, rural realism into Tamil screenplays.

He was affectionately revered as "Iyakkunar Imayam" (Everest of directors). Family associates noted that his physical decline was accelerated by severe emotional trauma following the sudden demise of his son, actor-director Manoj Bharathiraja, in March 2025.

Born Chinnasamy on July 17, 1941, in Allinagaram, Theni district, Bharathiraja rose from humble beginnings to alter the trajectory of South Indian cinema permanently. Before his

introduced mainstream audiences to an unglamorous, authentic rural landscape. The film, starring a young Kamal Haasan, Rajinikanth, and Sridevi, became a cultural phenomenon and established a new lexicon for commercial filmmaking.

His signature technique coupled folk aesthetics, localised dialects, and complex human vulnerabilities. For generations of viewers, the filmmaker's booming, emotive voiceovers introducing his works with the iconic phrase, "En Iniya Thamizh Makkale" (My dear Tamilians), became synonymous with high-quality, rooted storytelling.

Over a prolific career spanning nearly five decades, Bharathiraja helmed more than 40 feature films across Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi. He

Bracketing showbiz women in stereotypes and other questions

From epitomising the stereotype to breaking it, right on the most glittering of global showbiz events, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan has sashayed down many a red carpet with poise and pizzazz. Not the Peter Pan-esque beauty but one setting benchmarks for aging gracefully — and happily.

She did so again in Cannes last month, becoming the centre of a furious debate on why women must be held to impossible standards, why they must conform to the expectation that they look the same year after year. Notwithstanding the vagaries of life and time.

As Alia Bhatt and Aditi Rao Hydari, brand ambassadors for cosmetic giant L'Oréal, made their way to the Cannes film festival this year, there was one oft-repeated question — where was the OG L'Oréal girl Aishwarya Rai, a regular fixture at the movie gala for 24 years whose look is carefully dissected each year.

The 52-year-old model-actor, one of India's most well known faces, made her appearance in a sculpted blue gown by Amit Aggarwal towards the end of the festival, her photographs and videos immediately flooding social media platforms. And the conversation once again turned to her weight. There was trolling and much body shaming.

Among those who spoke was journalist Mrinal Pande. "The natural beauty has diminished this time. The cheeks appear somewhat more puffed up," the Padma Shri winning journalist known for her feminist writing said on X and it soon spiralled into a huge debate.

When she was questioned, Pande defended her take down, reasoning that celebrities are judged on a different metric.

"Sorry lady, she has been promoted the world over as an iconic beauty and a brand ambassador since 1994 when she won the beauty contest. Any dimming of that aura will be naturally pointed out using the same criteria beauty pageant industry has set," she wrote.

Some of her more critical posts were pulled out later.

Aishwarya has been subjected to trolling earlier. Unlike many of her contemporaries, the "Devdas" actor appeared comfortable with her post-pregnancy weight after the birth of her daughter Aaradhya in 2011.

According to clinical psychologist Shweta Sharma, the criticism about Aishwarya's looks is more about the way society perceives beauty.

"It happened before also when she gained weight after the delivery... Aishwarya has always existed in the minds of Indian women or I would say globally as a beauty icon, as a Miss World, as a symbol of perfection. But the problem is that our idea of a

beauty icon itself has become deeply corrupted by rigid societal standards," Sharma told PTI.

"We admire her for her beauty, but at the same time, we never understand or we deny that they always have a right to age naturally, they can gain weight, they can change physically or simply look human, which she accepts as a celebrity, definitely with grace," she added.

Actor Kangana Ranaut was the first from within the industry to school trolls targeting Aishwarya, telling them to get used to seeing older women on red carpets.

"Fashion and style is a self expression. It is one's own interpretation of life and their attitude. No woman owes anything to anyone. Ash looks great! Those of you who want to see her any other way, why don't you show what you got?"

"She is not here to please you. She is glorious. If you are not used to seeing older women on red carpets, get used to them now.

Thanks," the "Queen" star wrote on Instagram.

Aishwarya's "Devdas" co-star Madhuri

Dixit said such trolling was sending a wrong message to society and especially young people.

"She (Aishwarya) has been going there for 20 years. She has done the whole country proud. She is a global star. As a Miss World, she has done so much for the country. You cannot reduce her to a number on a scale or a number on the dress or the size or a number on the calendar years. You cannot reduce her to that. She is beautiful. She looks beautiful but she is beautiful inside," Madhuri told PTI.

"I think people have to realise that when you make these kinds of comments, what kind of message are you sending to the youngsters today? That your worth is on how you look, not on your achievements. I think this is a completely wrong message being sent," Madhuri said.

Aishwarya first appeared at the Cannes Film Festival in 2002 when "Devdas" was shown at the festival. The following year, she became brand ambassador for L'Oréal and has been there since. She was also the first Indian actor to be on the festival jury.

Many Indians equate her appearance in Cannes

as India's representation, regardless of whether there is an Indian film in the reckoning. In 2016, for instance, her choice of purple lipstick was the subject of intense debate.

"Education is not going to help unless we are not able to break that conditioning, which constantly tells women that their worth lies in maintaining a certain appearance and a body image. I feel this conversation is important because it shows how uncomfortable society still is with the natural relation of a woman's body and identity," Sharma said.

What is more concerning, she said, is when educated women participate in this criticism because it reflects how beauty norms are deeply internalised in social structures.

These unrealistic demands from women stars are diametrically opposite to how male stars are treated in the industry, Sharma said.

Sharma said men are accepted or allowed to age naturally and have the choice to play romantic and lead roles but that grace is not extended to women in showbiz.

"The conversation (when it comes to women) quickly shifts towards their appearance, their weight, their wrinkles, or whether they still fit the image society created for them years ago. So that difference clearly reflects a gender-based double standard, which is very prominent in this industry," she said, adding that celebrities sometimes contribute to setting these rigid standards.

Unlike Hollywood, where actors like Meryl Streep have roles written for them, mainstream Hindi cinema mostly marginalises women after a certain age though that is changing with time as actors like Shefali Shah, Madhuri Dixit and many other stars find lead vehicles, if not in cinema, on OTT.

Shah, in a past interview, for instance, spoke about how she regretted playing Akshay Kumar's mother despite being younger to him in "Waqf" in 2005.

In the years since, she has steered clear and has got roles of her choice in offbeat movies and OTT shows, while Dixit is earning praise for her turn in "Maa Behen". (PTI)



Industry didn't understand silent performances: Manoj Bajpayee

Actor Manoj Bajpayee credits filmmaker Shekhar Kapur for teaching him a vital lesson about performing in front of the camera during the shoot of "Bandit Queen", a film that he says did not immediately open doors for him in the industry.

The actor, who is set to reunite with the filmmaker for the highly anticipated film, "Masoom: The Next Generation", made his acting debut in a minor role in the 1994 biographical crime drama.

In "Bandit Queen", based on the life of dacoit-turned-politician Phoolan Devi, Bajpayee essayed the role of Maan Singh.

"It ('Bandit Queen') has not done wonders to my career but it has done wonders to other actors' careers. I got Ram Gopal Varma's film four and a half or five years later. It took a long time because he was a silent character and in those days this industry, the makers and the audience didn't understand a quiet or silent performance," Bajpayee told PTI in an interview.

He vividly remembers Kapur's advice to focus purely on performance rather than the camera, and it has stayed with the actor throughout his career.

"He said 'Don't think there is a camera, just do your performance'. And after that, I never cared about the camera, I only cared about my performance, only cared about what I am supposed to do in that scene," Bajpayee said.

The National Award-winning actor is thrilled to work with acclaimed movie stars Naseeruddin Shah and Shabana Azmi on "Masoom: The Next Generation".

"It's exciting. When you are working with very fine actors you know that your performance will be enhanced, you will be working extra. You will not be taking any moment for granted. For me the excitement is (also) to work with Shekhar Kapur, I'm just waiting for him to call me for this script reading."

Bajpayee also expressed a deep desire to re-team with another old collaborator, Anurag Kashyap, calling him a "great mind and a rebel".

Kashyap worked as a writer on some of Bajpayee's most acclaimed films -- "Satya", "Shool" and "Kaun". He later directed the two-part crime drama "Gangs of Wasseypur", in which Bajpayee played the fan-favourite character of Sardar Khan.

"I love to work with rebel people because they are not happy with the going of the society. And their rebellion gives you a new edge, not only to the story but to your performance. Anurag is somebody I have known since the time he was 21 or 22-year-old, he was always a very exciting young man," he said.

"Now, he has gotten old, he is raring to go, he wants to do something path-breaking. And people who are restless, people who are rebellious by nature they may go quiet for some time but they always have an ability to surprise you," the actor added.

Bajpayee is currently awaiting the release of his movie "Governor: The Silent Saviour", which is based on true events, the film dives deep into the financial turmoil that shook India during the 1990s economic collapse.

Directed by Chinmay Mandlekar of "Inspector Zende" fame, the movie is set for release in theatres on Friday. (PTI)



Gurnoor Brar: Gentle giant who took up cricket at 17 and got picked for India at 26

CHANDIGARH, June 10: When Sukhbir Singh Brar came to know that his teenage son Gurnoor was passionate about cricket, he was more than happy to give wings to his dreams for two reasons.

One, he truly wanted to be a supportive father. Two, being an ASI in Punjab Police he thought of it as a perfect way to ensure that the 17-year-old stays away from "bad company".

"As he was reaching late teens, I wanted my son to get into the sport apart from pursuing his studies so that he doesn't have time to indulge in anything else," Sukhbir recalled in an interview to PTI reflecting on his pacer son's rise at his upscale residence in Chandigarh's sector 125.

"Also systematic coaching means you don't keep any bad company. And moment Gurnoor joined Champs Academy under coach Ravi 'sir', he didn't look back," he said with a smile.

Gurnoor was a lanky boy who took up cricket in 11th standard. At

26, he is a part of India's Test and ODI squads even though the national debut is yet to come.

But Brar senior, who stands at an imposing 6 feet 4 inch which is just an inch less than Gurnoor, is quite confident of his son's bright future.

"I am a Policeman but I get more emotional than Gurnoor's mother (Manvinder). When we got the news of his India selection, I literally had tears in my eyes," Brar senior, who represented Punjab in the 1995 National Basketball Championship.

The Brar family got the news from their son in a very matter of fact manner.

"The day the squad for Afghanistan Test was announced, we were at my ancestral home in Muktsar Sahib due to a death in the family. Now Gurnoor, if he had evening practice during IPL, would go off to sleep in afternoon and always tell his mom to wake him up around 4:45 pm.

"So my wife called to wake him up and asked, 'Wasn't there team

announcement today?' 'Oh yes Mama, I have been selected' is all he said before keeping the phone down," Sukhbir laughed.

"My son has always been like that. He doesn't go overboard with anything. Very reserved, apne kaam se kaam rakhnewala ladka hai woh (believes in minding his own business)."

He remembered how Gurnoor took up cricket quite late compared to other kids, who are sent to academies by the time they are 9 or 10 years old.

"Being a policeman, I hardly had time during their (his two sons) growing up years. After Gurnoor completed his 10th standard board exams, I made him try basketball since that was the sport I played and height is something we are blessed to have.

"Gurnoor tried it for two-three weeks but he told me 'Papa I am not enjoying'," he recalled.

Unlike the 1970s, '80s and '90s, university cricket isn't the most dynamic in India but Gurnoor's



first big break was representing DAV College Chandigarh in an inter-college tournament where he got Player of the match award in both the semi-final and final.

"My son, despite his cricket commitments, got 80 per cent in Arts in 12th standard and got into DAV College on sports quota. He

had a role in DAV College's triumph and was supposed to play the International College tournament to be held in Dubai.

"At that time, Mohali District Association named him for Katoch Shield (Punjab's biggest inter-district meet). He decided that to play for Punjab, he needs to play Ka-

toch rather than go to Dubai. I felt he made a good decision," Sukhbir said.

Gurnoor's rise has been phenomenal and he caught the national selection committee's attention for his height and ability to extract awkward bounce from length with skills to hit the deck hard.

The Indian team management had first called him for nets when they wanted simulation for 6 feet 5 inch tall Bangladeshi pacer Nahid Rana.

"He was specifically called so that he could give the batters practice before they played Bangladesh's Nahid Rana. After that his performance at home against Australia A and South Africa A was impressive and now he has got an India call-up," he said.

He hasn't played too many IPL games but Brar senior couldn't stop thanking Gujarat Titans head coach Ashish Nehra for his support during the tournament.

"The amount of support and help Nehra 'sir' has given, we are

indebted. Even during IPL, Nehra 'sir' helped Gurnoor with his red ball bowling. I always tell him, this is your time to learn.

"You have Kagiso Rabada, Mohammed Siraj, Prasad Krishna, all senior international bowlers. You go and ask them questions and clear your doubts. Seniors won't come to juniors. Juniors will have to approach seniors."

However, the IPL riches haven't swept Gurnoor off his feet and that is what makes the father proud.

"When he first got Rs 20 lakh from Punjab Kings, he asked me 'Papa can I buy a car?' I told him, 'it's your income, you are free to buy a car.' That's how he bought his first car."

Gurnoor will be travelling to Sri Lanka with India A side for two four-day fixtures but ask Brar senior if he wants to accompany him, he answers in negative.

"If me and my wife go to Sri Lanka, he will be abroad with us. At this point, he should only focus on his game," he concluded. (PTI)

Somali World Cup referee denied entry to US arrives home to hero's welcome

MOGADISHU (SOMALIA), June 10: A World Cup referee from Somalia who was denied entry to the United States was received by a crowd of supporters and officials Wednesday as he arrived in Somalia's capital of Mogadishu, where he said he plans to be at the next World Cup and urged Somali youths to be proud of their country.

Omar Artan was set to be the first referee from Somalia to officiate at a World Cup after making FIFA's final list for the tournament. He is one of Africa's top referees and was named the continent's best male referee in 2025.

He was denied entry at Miami International Airport on Saturday over "vetting concerns." U.S. Customs and Border Protection said in a statement without giving details of those concerns. FIFA subsequently cut him from the tournament's referee list.

Artan was issued a visa to travel to the U.S. last week, according to the Somalia Embassy in Kenya that processed it. U.S. is co-hosting with Mexico and Canada, and Artan was due to meet up with other World Cup referees at their training base in Miami.

He returned to a hero's welcome



at the airport in Mogadishu, where he thanked the Somali government and people as well as FIFA for their support for him.

"I promise you, God willing, that I will attend the next one," he said as hundreds of supporters at the airport waved the Somali flag. "I want the Somali public to take comfort in this and remain confident."

The U.S.'s highly unusual move to deny a FIFA-appointed match official permission to enter a World Cup host country drew outrage across the world and raised ques-

tions among some fans about America's capacity to host the competition.

Somalia is one of nearly 40 countries subject to new travel restrictions under the Trump administration's crackdown on immigration.

Hundreds of supporters, government officials and members of Somalia's football community gathered hours before Artan arrived at Aden Adde International Airport at about 8:30 a.m. local time.

As Artan disembarked, support-

ers waving Somali flags crowded around him before draping him in the flag.

He was then escorted by police officers to the airport's VIP terminal, where he was welcomed by Somalia's Minister of Youth and Sports, officials from the Somalia Football Federation and other dignitaries and spoke to press.

"It is up to all of us to defend the Somali name," Artan said. "Somalia belongs to us, whether it is in a bad state or a good state. That flag belongs to us, and that passport belongs to us."

In a country where decades of war and the rise of the al-Qaida-linked al-Shabab extremist group has limited the potential of many, Artan's denial brought disappointment to many but reminded some in the country about what is possible if they chase their dreams.

Artan's expected milestone at this year's World Cup "stands no matter what," the World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus wrote Tuesday on X. "You reached the summit of your profession and inspired a generation back home just by getting there, and being kept off the pitch you earned doesn't change that," he added. (AP)

Sancho leaves Man United, Bissouma out at Tottenham

LONDON, June 10: Manchester United winger Jadon Sancho and Tottenham midfielder Yves Bissouma are among the players being released by their Premier League teams at the end of their contracts.

Sancho joined United from Borussia Dortmund for \$5 million euros (\$100 million) in 2021 but has been underwhelming, only making 83 appearances during his five years there. He had loan spells in that time at Dortmund, Chelsea and most recently Aston Villa.

United confirmed Wednesday that Brazil midfielder Casemiro and left back Tyrell Malacia were also leaving the team. (AP)

Kochhar, Bhullar in 10-member Indian golf contingent for Morocco event

RABAT (MOROCCO), June 10: In excellent form with three top-10 finishes in just five Asian Tour starts this season, Karandeep Kochhar will lead a 10-member Indian contingent in the International Series Morocco golf tournament which will tee off on Thursday.

The other Indians in the USD 2 million event are Anirban Lahiri, Gaganjeet Bhullar, Aryan Roopa Anand, Udayan Mane, SSP Chawrasia, Rashid Khan, Shaurya Bhattacharya, Ajeetesh Sandhu and Shubham Jaglan

The 26-year-old Kochhar was tied ninth at last week's AM Green IGPL Bharat Classic, after a tied fifth at International Series Japan and fourth place at the Philippine Golf Championship. Late last year, he won the Egypt Golf Series Red Sea Open on the Asian Development Tour.

"I think I've been playing really well this year.

I've only played five events so far and I've already had three top-10 finishes, so that's definitely encouraging," said a confident Kochhar.

"Even in the other events, I felt like I was playing solid golf. In New Zealand, I just had a poor Sunday, and in Singapore I wasn't playing my best, but I still managed to make the cut, which I was happy about."

That consistency has been tested over the past three weeks as Kochhar competed throughout Morocco's unique professional golf swing, progressing from the Asian Development Tour and Asian Tour to this week's International Series Morocco.

This week's International Series field also gives Kochhar another opportunity he has been relishing, spending time alongside Indian golfing icon Anirban Lahiri. (PTI)

Athletes confused, ministry mum

What's delaying National Sports Awards?

NEW DELHI, June 10: There is simmering disquiet in India's sporting circles these days and at the heart of it is an unprecedented delay.

The annual celebration of India's sporting excellence, the National Sports Awards, are yet to be announced even though the selection committee gave its recommendations six months ago.

The Sports Ministry, whose seal of approval turns recommended names into award winners, has attributed the situation to a "re-evaluation of names picked for the Arjuna awards".

According to well-placed Ministry sources, the lingering wait is a matter of procedure and necessary to "preserve the integrity of the awards".

However, that explanation is hardly a consolation for the athletes.

"It is unfortunate that no announcement has come so far. It is de-motivating for the athletes, especially because unofficially most people come to know whether they have been shortlisted or not," lamented an Olympic-medal winning former Khel Ratna awardee in a conversation with PTI.

The date of the ceremony, held at the majestic Rashtrapati Bhavan, has not been a fixed one for quite a while now.

It was traditionally slated for

August 29 to commemorate the National Sports Day, which is also the birth anniversary of one of India's greatest sportspersons -- hockey wizard Major Dhyan Chand.

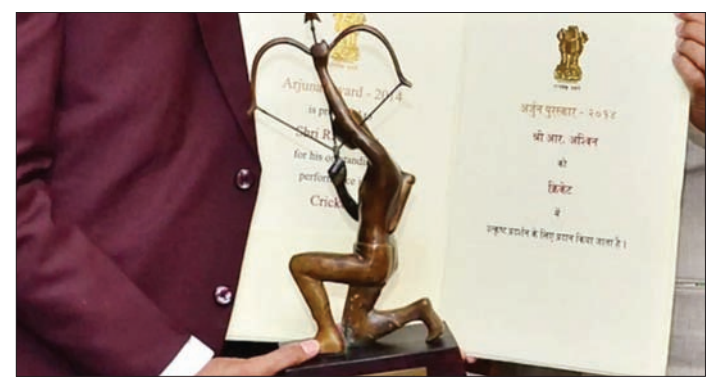
However, after the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when the ceremony was conducted virtually due to health protocols in place, the date is now locked.

More than once, it has been pushed a couple of months after August 29 to accommodate the Olympic and other multi-sport events' performances. The latest that it was held was last year on January 17.

It is now well past one year since the last ceremony and the recommendations for the 2025-26 honours were made in December 2025. As per existing norms, they were to be formally announced by the Sports Ministry within a week of the finalisation with minor tweaks, if needed.

The weeks have turned into months but there is no word on when the announcement would come and adding to the "frustration" is the fact that the nomination process for the next edition is also not too far away on the calendar.

"These awards should always follow a set schedule. Whatever evaluation that needs to be done, it can be done but by withholding names like this, I am sure most of



those who have been selected are worthy of the honours," said the former Khel ratna winner.

The view was echoed by a former Arjuna awardee and Commonwealth Games gold-medallist.

Also speaking on conditions of anonymity, he said the date should never have been altered and if the idea was to make August 29 solely about Major Dhyan Chand's legacy, then a new fixed date should be allotted for the awards.

"At first the date kept moving for different reasons and now the entire process stands halted, which is not the athletes' fault at all. The ministry needs to at least give some explanation because these honours are like an annual festival for sportspersons. Getting those blazer fittings, the dress rehearsal of the entire protocol and finally that moment with the President, it's

a major highlight for athletes," he said.

"There are emotions attached to these awards and it is just not fair that there is no word on what kind of scrutiny is being carried out. There has to be some transparency. If you don't want to have the ceremony on August 29, it's fine but have a fixed date which becomes a tradition eventually," he added.

It's not that only the former awardees are uneasy with the inordinate delay.

After the Ministry's announcement of re-evaluation, Asian championship gold-winning decathlete Tejaswin Shankar, who is recommended for the Arjuna award, had voiced his displeasure without mincing words.

"This delay is not just de-motivating to athletes and coaches but also a sign of disrespect," he had

posted on X.

World Cup-winning chess player Divya Deshmukh and gymnast Pranati Nayak are among the Arjuna awards recommendations this year. The Khel Ratna, which is the country's highest sporting honour, comes with a medallion, a citation and a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh and according to sources, men's hockey team star Hardik Singh is the only recommendation for 2025-26.

The Arjuna recommendations exceed 20 and cover diverse disciplines, including chess and the indigenous Yogasana, which would be recognised for the first time if the list remains unchanged. The Arjuna award makes the winner richer by Rs 15 lakh.

The Ministry has avoided a formal statement on what exactly has delayed the process but speaking off the record, top officials have cited concerns around whether a few recommended names have the requisite achievements for the honour.

"It shouldn't be the case that we have Arjuna awardees in every nook and corner but when you ask them about their accomplishments, there is nothing much to show. Please also don't forget the litigations and outrageous media statements that come out when some don't get awards," an official had stated. (PTI)

Real Madrid parts ways with soccer coach Alvaro Arbeloa

MADRID, June 10: Real Madrid and coach Alvaro Arbeloa have agreed to part ways, setting up the return of José Mourinho.

Club president Florentino Pérez had vowed to bring Mourinho back as part of his campaign promises that led to his re-election on Sunday.

Mourinho, who was featured in promotional material for Pérez during the campaign, would be back for a second stint at Madrid. He coached the club from 2010-2013.

Arbeloa's departure was already expected and he had talked about it at the end of the season.

Madrid said Tuesday it was "deeply grateful" to Arbeloa, "who throughout his career at the club, from the time he joined our academy, has always demonstrated loyalty, commitment, and professionalism."

Arbeloa took over the helm in January to replace Xabi Alonso amid the team's struggles.

Arbeloa was not able to put Madrid back on track and the club endured a second straight season without a major trophy.

Last month, Arbeloa gave his blessing to former boss Mourinho's return to Madrid, saying he would "be happy to see him back home."

Arbeloa played for Madrid when Mourinho was in charge of the club — a tumultuous time in which Madrid won Spanish league and Copa del Rey titles but was overshadowed by Pep Guardiola's great Barcelona side. Mourinho's abrasive attitude to opponents like Guardiola as well as some of his own players turned off many in Spain. He also had his faithful backers, like Arbeloa and some hardcore fans. Arbeloa saw Madrid struggle toward the end of the season and watched some of his players get into altercations during training. The team was eliminated by Bayern Munich in the Champions League and couldn't catch up with Barcelona in the Spanish league. Pérez's campaign promises included a high-profile signing.

On Tuesday, the club said that city rival Atletico Madrid ejected an offer of 150 million euros (\$173 million) for Argentina forward Julián Álvarez. (AP)

Hyderabad to host second season of APL from October 8-18



NEW DELHI, June 10: Hyderabad will host the second season of the Archery Premier League from October 8-18, with no expansion to the six-franchise field that competed in the inaugural edition last year.

The 11-day tournament will be held at People's Plaza on Necklace Road and will retain the six franchises from the inaugural edition - defending champions Rajputana Royals (Rajasthan), Mighty Marathas (Maharashtra), Prithviraj Yodhas (Delhi), Kakatiya Knights (Telangana), Chero Archers (Jharkhand) and Chola Chiefs (Tamil Nadu).

A total of 48 Indian and international archers will compete across recurve and compound disciplines. Unlike last year, when the league began on the day of Dussehra, the second season will conclude well before the festival.

Details regarding team squads, player signings, fixtures and broadcast arrangements will be announced later.

Announcing the second edition, APL director Anil Kamineni said Hyderabad's sporting culture and

support from the Telangana government made it an ideal venue for the league.

"The inaugural season demonstrated not only the immense potential of archery as a spectator sport but also the value of creating a platform where Indian archers can compete alongside the world's best," Kamineni stated in a release.

Launched by the Archery Association of India in 2025 with the aim of strengthening India's Olympic medal prospects, the league brings together recurve and compound archers, both men and women, in the same competition.

The event also features a unique 15-second shot clock, five seconds shorter than the limit used in Olympic and World Archery competitions, adding greater emphasis on speed and decision-making under pressure.

Each franchise will field a squad of eight archers, with the competition following a double round-robin format.

The top four teams will advance to the semifinals, with the final scheduled for October 18. (PTI)

Stadium workers near LA say they have a tentative deal, averting strike ahead of WC



INGLEWOOD (CALIFORNIA), June 10: Southern California stadium workers who threatened to strike for the U.S. men's soccer team's opening World Cup match said Tuesday they expect to stay on the job after reaching a tentative contract deal with higher wages and more labor protections.

The union representing 2,000 bartenders, servers, cooks and dishwashers at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, California, announced the deal at a news conference and said workers would vote Wednesday on whether to ratify it. It came after workers last week voted to authorize a strike as contract talks had stalled with the stadium's food service provider, Legends Global.

In a statement, Legends Global said the company was pleased to reach an agreement with workers and looks forward to providing "an outstanding hospitality experience" at the World Cup matches in Inglewood. Eight matches are scheduled for SoFi Stadium, starting with Friday's match between the U.S. and Paraguay. The stadium, which opened in 2020, seats 70,000 people and is home to the NFL's Los Angeles Rams and Los Angeles Chargers.

Workers said they won wage increases and protections from subcontracting. The tentative contract will give stadium cooks among the highest wages for the job in the country, with many earning \$40 an hour in about two years, said Kurt Petersen, co-president of UNITE HERE Local 11, which represents the workers. That's well above California's minimum wage.

"Economically, it is the strongest agreement at any NFL stadium," Petersen told reporters outside the stadium near Los Angeles, while workers cheered. "In short, we won every major issue that we brought to the table."

The contract would last through April 2028 — just ahead of the Olympic Games in Los Angeles — and includes protections against subcontracting and a contribution to build housing for hospitality workers. Some cooks currently make about \$31 an hour and will see their hourly wages rise over the next two years to \$38 or \$39, said Islagisbel Castillo, 21, a suite cook on the bargaining committee. (AP)

SERENA RETURNS!

Williams makes a winning comeback in doubles at Queen's Club with Mboko

LONDON, June 10: After nearly four years away from professional tennis, Serena Williams showed she still has plenty of power to her game as she made a winning return at Queen's Club on Tuesday.

The 44-year-old Williams hit service winners of up to 120 mph and some ferocious winners as she teamed up with 19-year-old Canadian Victoria Mboko to win their opening doubles match at the Queen's Club grass-court tournament.

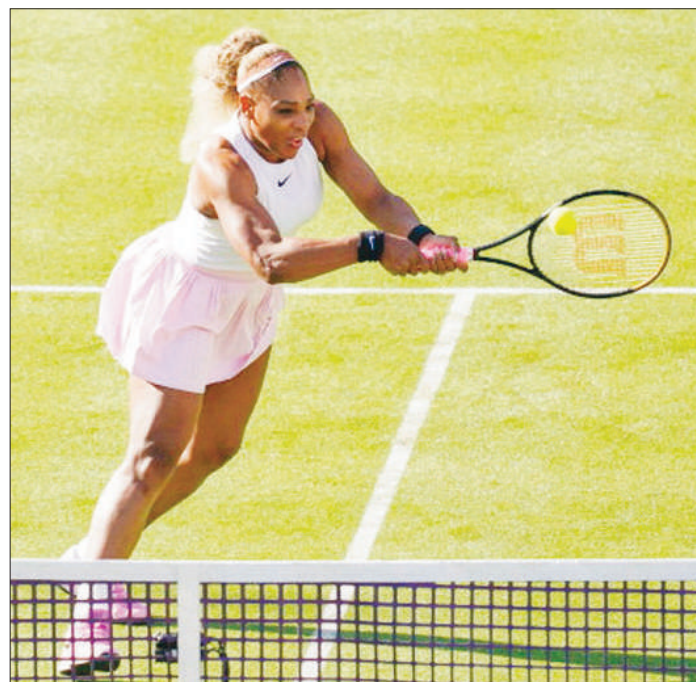
Williams and Mboko beat third-seeded duo Nicole Melichar-Martinez and Erin Routliffe 7-6 (2), 6-2 in Williams' first professional match since the 2022 U.S. Open. They next face Leylah Fernandez and Laura Siegemund in the quarterfinals.

As if to punctuate that she's back, Williams served out the first-round match with two aces followed by a service winner.

"It was so fun. I had so much fun playing with Victoria," Williams said in an on-court interview. "We've never played together but it just felt so natural playing with her."

Later, though, Williams gave herself a modest grade in her post-match news conference.

"A C-minus," Williams said, before cutting herself some slack. "With all the elements, considering coming back on grass is probably not the easiest surface. ... Grass, four years. Overall, I think it was



Williams and Mboko beat third-seeded duo Nicole Melichar-Martinez and Erin Routliffe 7-6 (2), 6-2 in Williams' first professional match since the 2022 U.S. Open.

Even Williams seemed to be surprised at the quality of her rapid-reaction backhand winner at 4-4 in the first set, laughing as she five-fired Mboko.

Her teenage partner was clearly impressed.

"I thought she was moving great," said Mboko, one of the rising stars on the WTA tour who is already ranked No. 9 in singles. "There was that one shot you hit, remember, you were on the run, on the backhand, and I was like, Oh, my gosh, she's got it."

The crowd loved it too, from the moment Williams stepped onto the court on a sunny but windy afternoon.

Williams received a standing ovation as she made her entrance, by far the loudest cheer of the day at the Andy Murray Arena, even from a crowd that had earlier watched British players Emma Raducanu and Katie Boulter secure wins in the singles tournament at the HSBC Championships.

It was Williams' first appearance at Queen's Club, which is nestled among residential blocks near Hammersmith in west London. The club, which held its first championships in 1881, did not stage a women's tournament for more than 50 years before the WTA tour returned to the venue in 2025.

'Really special'

The men's tournament, which starts next week, has long been one of the main grass-court warm-up events for Wimbledon and counts Carlos Alcaraz, Andy Murray, Rafael Nadal, Pete Sampras, Boris Becker and John McEnroe among its former winners.

"I never got to play here, it was always just the men," Williams said. "It felt really special to play some place so iconic."

Aside from a sell-out crowd, Williams also drew some celebrity faces to Queen's Club. Her friend Lindsey Vonn, the skiing star whose own comeback ended in a crash at the Milan Cortina

Olympics, watched on from one of the balconies.

Williams' two daughters, Olympia and Adira, were also in attendance. For Adira, who was born in 2023, it was the first time watching her mother play a match.

Not that their response to the win was overly enthusiastic, according to Williams.

"Adira wanted to go to the toy store, and Olympia wanted to know what was for dinner," she said.

No Wimbledon decision yet

Williams is also set to play doubles at the Berlin Open in Germany next week. But even after a winning return, she remains undecided when it comes to whether to extend her comeback to Wimbledon, which starts June 29.

"It's just a day at a time," Williams said. "I still have a little time to decide, and they have been great about giving me that space and time to decide."

Williams had not competed since bidding farewell at the 2022 U.S. Open. At the time, she said she didn't want to use the word "retiring" and instead declared that she was "evolving" away from tennis.

Williams won 23 Grand Slam singles titles, including seven at Wimbledon, before stepping away from the game. She also added 14 Grand Slam doubles titles, including six at Wimbledon — all with her older sister Venus Williams. (AP)

Indian women shine in Australian Open

Sindhu cruises, Tanvi stuns fifth seed opponent



SYDNEY, June 10: Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu led a strong show by Indian women with an easy victory while teenager Tanvi Sharma pulled off an upset win in the women's singles competition at the Australian Open Super 500 badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

Third seed Sindhu, Tanvi, Malvika Bansod, Isharani Baruah and Tanya Hemanth all progressed to the round of 16, but it was a disappointing day for the Indian men with Kiran George, Tharun Manepalli and qualifier Saneeth Dayanand bowing out in the opening round.

Sindhu barely broke a sweat in her opener, outclassing Peru's Ines Lucia Castillo Salazar 21-13, 21-11 in just 32 minutes.

The former world champion was in complete control throughout the contest, dominating the rallies and never allowing her opponent to settle into a rhythm.

Sindhu will next face compatriot Isharani, who fought hard to overcome China's Han Qian Xi 22-20, 10-21, 21-14 in a one-hour three-minute battle.

The biggest result of the day came from 17-year-old Tanvi, who upset fifth seed and world No. 11 Chiu Pin-Chian of Chinese Taipei 21-12, 22-20 in 45 minutes.

World No. 36 Tanvi will now take on fellow Indian Malvika in the round of 16 after the latter recovered from a game down to beat Thailand's Tonrug Saeheng 15-21, 21-7, 21-13.

PCB to decide Test captain Shan Masood, head coach Sarfaraz Khan's future over weekend

KARACHI, June 10: The top officials of the Pakistan Cricket Board are set to meet over this weekend here to decide on the future of Test captain Shan Masood and head coach Sarfaraz Khan.

The meeting will be attended by PCB chairman Mohsin Khan and it will determine if Masood and Sarfaraz, who were in charge of the Bangladesh tour where the team was drubbed 0-2, would continue or not for the upcoming assignments in England and the West Indies.

"The most important decision is about whether Shan Masood will continue as Test captain for the tours of West Indies and England," a PCB source said.

"Many selectors and some board officials believe it is time to give Salman Ali Agha the chance to lead the Test side now," the source said, adding that despite Masood's desire to continue, the outcome in Bangladesh could go against him.

Agha is already in charge of the national squad in white-ball formats. The source added that the PCB has not yet finalised any deal with Sarfaraz, and former skipper Younis Khan is being touted to come in as the next head coach. "For the time being it appears that Sarfaraz will remain until a deal is reached with Younis, who has always been a tough negotiator when it comes to holding any post in the board," the official said.

Former captain Mohammad Hafeez is another choice for the role of the head coach but nothing has been finalised yet, despite PCB officials holding discussions with both.

"The situation will become clear by Saturday when the meeting is scheduled but apparently Mohsin Naqvi wants changes as he is not satisfied with the overall progress of Pakistan cricket," the official said.

Naqvi also wants to reduce the burden of those officials who hold dual roles in the PCB. At present, former skipper Misbah Ul Haq, Asad Shafiq, Sarfaraz and Aaqib Javed are the national selectors while some of them are also holding other roles in the board. (PTI)

Wolvaardt demands sharper Proteas response ahead of Australia clash

MANCHESTER, June 10: South Africa skipper Laura Wolvaardt has urged her team to sharpen their strategies after the warm-up defeat to New Zealand, stressing they cannot afford to "go through the motions" against powerhouse Australia in Saturday's Women's T20 World Cup game here.

The Proteas followed a narrow win over Ireland with a five-wicket loss to the reigning champions New Zealand, and will need to raise their game against the six-time champions Australia.

Wolvaardt described the loss as an eye-opener for the Proteas, insisting they must significantly raise their game against Australia while using the lead-up to the blockbuster clash to fine-tune their strategies.

"We would have liked to win both (warm-up fixtures), but maybe this is just what we needed just before the tournament starts," Wolvaardt was quoted as saying by ICC.

"Just a little eye-opener that is not just going to happen and we can't just go through the motions with the ball. I think we've come up against a quality side and they outsmarted us with the bat."

"So we're going to have to have some good strategies in place for the Australia game and hopefully we're able to turn it around," added Wolvaardt.



Wolvaardt described the loss as an eye-opener for the Proteas, insisting they must significantly raise their game against Australia while using the lead-up to the blockbuster clash to fine-tune their strategies.

Amid the disappointment, Chloe Tryon lit up the contest with a brutal unbeaten 61 off just 26 deliveries, launching six towering sixes. With the all-rounder hitting top gear at the right time, Wolvaardt believes Tryon could be South Africa's X-factor at the

ball and it's quite hard to bolt her when she's in that form.

"I think she was taking some balls from outside leg and hitting them over the covers for six. It's great that she's able to find, or has been able to find a bit of form before the tournament," said the veteran South African who is just two games shy of completing a century of T20Is.

Defending champions New Zealand head into the tournament on the back of two warm-up wins and will open their title defence against 2016 champions West Indies in Southampton on Saturday.

Despite a confidence-boosting unbeaten 61 against South Africa, skipper Melie Kerr warned her side cannot afford complacency and must be at their best to start their campaign on a winning note.

"West Indies are a quality side and they have some real match winners within that team," said Kerr.

"For us, it's a massive game and you've just got to turn up and again. Both teams start on zero and you can't get complacent so it's just (about) trying to I guess control what you can and play really good cricket and for each individual to try and nail their role and the outcome will be what it will."

"I guess if we can play our best cricket I think we give ourselves a great chance," she added. (PTI)

My cricket kitbag was often mistaken for a hockey bag when I started playing: Mithali Raj

NEW DELHI, June 10: As a confident Indian team chases T20 World Cup glory to add to last year's ODI triumph, Mithali Raj said on Wednesday that her journey -- from limited opportunities to becoming the highest run-scorer in women's international cricket -- mirrors the remarkable growth of the sport in the country.

With Harmanpreet Kaur leading India into the T20 World Cup in England and Wales, women's cricket has come a long way since the 1990s, when the game struggled for structure and visibility.

The transformation culminated in India's maiden ODI World Cup title in India and Sri Lanka last year, a landmark achievement that helped reshape long-held stereotypes.

As India begins its quest for a first T20 World Cup crown to complement its ODI title, Mithali stressed the importance of adaptability, awareness and a willing-

ness to learn -- qualities she believes will be vital for the Harmanpreet-led side when it opens its campaign against Pakistan in Birmingham on Sunday.

"There are times when we work very hard and feel we've done our best, only to face conditions we are not prepared for. If you are aware of your environment and the conditions around you, you will be in a better position to adapt," Mithali said at an event of "WeRise", a partnership between DP World and Women Entrepreneurship platform.

"Adaptation is so important, and that comes from being open-minded, willing to learn, gain new experiences and incorporate them into your training. My advice would be to stay aware and remain open to adapting to new things," added the legendary cricketer-turned-commentator.

Recalling the challenges of her early years, Mithali said that when



she travelled by train with a large kit bag, people invariably assumed she was a hockey player because very few knew women played cricket in India.

"When I started playing cricket,

not many knew women played the sport in the country. People would see my kit bag and ask if I played hockey. Not one person imagined it could belong to a girl cricketer," said Mithali, the only woman to score more than 10,000 international runs.

She said the prevailing belief in the 1990s was that women simply did not play cricket. "The thought process was, 'We've never seen women playing on the streets, so perhaps they don't play cricket,'" she recalled.

Mithali said it was not as if opportunities were served on a platter in her era; aspiring cricketers had to carve out their own path through individual perseverance, resilience and sustained effort.

"And when we were playing, we had to create opportunities, we had to work towards creating visibility in the sport... and sometimes it had to do with individual perseverance, individual brilliance that we are

able to attract people to come and watch the game."

Mithali added that a stronger support system and ecosystem could have helped many players extend their careers, instead of leaving the sport out of frustration or a lack of opportunities.

Mithali said the absence of a strong support structure in the '90s slowed the growth of women's cricket and shortened many careers.

"If we had a proper ecosystem in the '90s, it would have helped women cricketers prolong their careers. It would have accelerated the growth of the sport and raised its profile much earlier. It wouldn't have taken so long had the ecosystem been in place," she said.

"Like, right now, we do have the BCCI. We came under the BCCI in 2007, so until then it was survival for the sport in the country or for women cricketers," she added. (PTI)

Suthar to play for Warwickshire for next two rounds of English County C'ship

LONDON, June 10: Left-arm spinner Manav Suthar, who starred in India's win against Afghanistan in the recent one-off Test, has signed with English club Warwickshire for the next two rounds of the County Championship.

Warwickshire on Wednesday announced the signing of Suthar on a short-term contract.

It said he will be available for selection for the next two rounds of the Rotherham County Championship -- the game against Yorkshire at Scarborough from June 12-15 June and the next fixture against Somerset at Taunton the following week.

Suthar, a left-arm finger spinning all-rounder, made his Test debut for India in the one-off Test against Afghanistan in New Delhi which ended on Monday, and announced his arrival on the international stage by taking six for 33 in the first innings and 1-29 in the second.

The 23-year-old Suthar has also taken 129 wickets in 29 first-class matches prior to his Test debut. (PTI)

Hardik Pandya ruled out of Afghanistan ODI series due to quadriceps strain



MULLANPUR, June 10: Cleared to play just hours ago, India all-rounder Hardik Pandya was on Wednesday ruled out of the three-match ODI series against Afghanistan after picking up a fresh quadriceps strain.

Pandya was at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru to get clearance for his back spasm injury which he sustained in the IPL while playing for the Mumbai Indians.

It is learnt that the new injury could be a result of him bowling the full quota of 10 overs at the CoE during the assessment.

The ODI series against Afghanistan begins on Saturday at Dharamsala followed by games in Lucknow and Chennai on June 17 and 20 respectively.

"With three weeks for recovery, there is absolutely no chance of him playing the ODI series as his rehabilitation will not be complete," said a BCCI source.

Pandya had missed quite a few games in the IPL for MI but returned for the team's last couple of matches.

The latest injury setback to the 32-year-old all-rounder comes at a time when he is being pushed towards playing more ODI cricket with next year's ODI World Cup in mind.

A left ankle injury to Pandya in the 2023 ODI World Cup during a first-round clash against Bangladesh had altered the team's balance. Pandya continues to remain integral to India's plans for the mega event in 2027 in South Africa.

In order to keep him match-fit for the immediate ODI assignments ahead -- three each against Afghanistan and England next month -- Pandya was dropped from the Indian T20 side despite being a part of two World Cup-winning campaigns.

"He is a part of the one-day squad right now in (the) Afghanistan (series). Like (Jasprit) Bumrah, if we can get him playing well and keep him fit for one-day cricket -- I don't think he's played one-day cricket for a while -- that is the main objective," chairman of selection committee Ajit Agarkar had told reporters last week.

"We can always bring him back. So, there will be a little bit of rest and rotation with regards to T20 (in Pandya's case)," he had asserted.

India are already missing senior batter Virat Kohli in the series due to a hamstring strain but former captain Rohit Sharma has recovered from a similar injury to be available for the games. (PTI)