

6 NATION

7 NE

- Rahul 'undermining' achievements of India, its people: FM Sitharaman
- Four, including minor girl, held for planned Govindpuri fire that killed 3
- People's Party of Arunachal opposes AP Freedom of Religion Act
- Peace unlikely in Manpur unless people possessing illegal arms are disarmed: CM

'The District Museum is a treasure trove of rich cultural and archaeological heritage'

Karbi Anglong holds rare medieval manuscripts

DIPHU, June 14: A trove of rare manuscripts in Assam's Karbi Anglong, believed to hold unknown secrets from the medieval period, is likely to provide an understanding of the region's history, culture and indigenous knowledge once the scripts are decoded.

The fragile folios, preserved in two museums in the district, have survived the ravages of time but remain unread, drawing interest from historians and linguists eager to unlock the mysteries inked on palm leaves and copper plates.

Out of these, the two Tai manuscripts, containing 67 and 158 folios of palm leaves, are preserved at the District Museum in Diphu, the headquarters of Karbi Anglong. These have been engraved by stone, not inked.

The copper manuscript, which has three folios, one ring and an elephant symbol, is kept at Nothenpi Karbi Heritage Museum. It is in the Sanskrit language, but the script is in Assamese.

The Karbi Anglong district ad-



ministration is considering contacting experts from the Institute of Tai Studies and Research (ITSAR) to decode the two rare Tai manuscripts in the near future as well as including the treasure in the Cen-

tral government's 'Gyan Bharatam' scheme.

"The District Museum is a treasure trove of rich cultural and archaeological heritage. It houses a collection of manuscripts dating

back to the Middle Ages, some of which are yet to be completely decoded," Karbi Anglong district commissioner Aranyak Saikia told PTI. It is believed that these manuscripts hold deep insights into the

Ahom era, which ruled for 600 years in Assam from 1228 to 1826, he added.

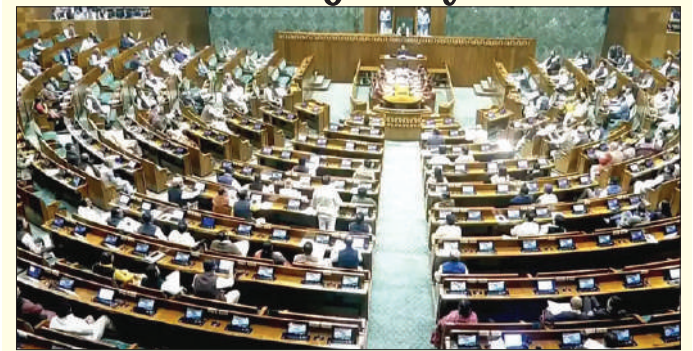
"We extended an open invitation to anyone interested in studying these Tai manuscripts, but we have not received a very favourable response yet. Now, we are thinking of contacting ITSAR and inviting them to study these rare items," Saikia said.

Simultaneously, the district administration is trying to incorporate these manuscripts under the 'Gyan Bharatam' scheme of the central government, helping them surveying and properly digitise them for future generations.

"We have sent a proposal to the state government's Cultural Department. They will take the necessary steps for sending it to the Centre for the Gyan Bharatam scheme," he added.

The objective of Gyan Bharatam is to safeguard and revitalise India's manuscript heritage through systematic survey and documentation, scientific conservation, digitisation (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NDA inches towards two-thirds majority in RS



NEW DELHI, June 14: Rebellion in Trinamool Congress is set to boost NDA numbers in Parliament as it strives for a two-thirds majority in both houses to help pass crucial constitutional amendment bills.

While the current round of Rajya Sabha elections will help the NDA inch toward the two-thirds mark, in the Lok Sabha, it is still far from that magic figure of 363, despite the TMC switchover.

Sources said that from its current strength of 148 MPs, the NDA is set to gain three seats in the current round of RS elections by winning the independent seats in Jharkhand and Mizoram, where elections are being held. With three TMC MPs resigning, the NDA is set to secure all three seats from West Bengal after the bypolls, upping its tally to 154, nine short of a two-thirds majority in the Upper House. As more TMC MPs are likely to resign in the Upper House, the NDA may achieve the figure of 163, which will give it the numerical strength to pass all constitutional amendment bills. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'21 infiltrators prevented from entering India'

GUWAHATI, June 14: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said 21 illegal immigrants were prevented from entering India by the state police and the BSF.

"In an excellent joint effort by @assampolice and @BSF_India, 21 infiltrators were swiftly identified and prevented from entering into India," Sarma said in a post on X. He, however, did not share details about the operation.

"Safeguarding borders, strengthening security... Our multi-pronged approach of safeguarding our border continues," Sarma said.

Assam's Sribhumi, Cachar, Dhubri and South Salmara-Mankachar districts share 267.5 km of international border with Bangladesh. (PTI)

India now a provider of global solutions, not just a consumer: Modi in France

NICE (FRANCE), June 14: India is no longer just a consumer of global solutions, but a major contributor to them, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday while laying out New Delhi's vision for a sustainable future for the world through innovation and technology.

The prime minister made the comments at the inauguration of the 'Bharat Innovates' event in the presence of French President Emmanuel Macron in this Mediterranean French city. The event brings together top innovation startups from India, France and some other countries. "Bharat Innovates is an invitation to the world to co-create the next chapter of global innovation with India," the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Indian-flagged dhow sinks off Oman coast; all 14 crew rescued

DUBAI/NEW DELHI, June 14: An Indian-flagged dhow sank off the Oman coast following a mechanical failure, and all 14 crew members were rescued on Sunday, officials said.

The Indian Embassy in Oman said all 14 crew members rescued are "safe and in good health", adding that they were moved to a vessel which is heading to Mumbai.

The Mumbai-bound vessel, MV Jabal Ali, is learnt to be a cargo ship.

"Rescue operation involving Indian Flagged MSV Virat 1 has been successfully completed. All 14 crew members have been rescued and are presently onboard

Jabal Ali 9 heading to Mumbai. The crew members are safe and in good health," the mission said in a post on X. Authoritative sources said the vessel sank because of "mechanical failure".

Earlier, in a separate post, the Indian Embassy in Muscat said: "It has emerged that the vessel experienced an engine failure, and the crew eventually transferred safely to a life-raft. Rescue operation is presently underway through ships in vicinity, under coordination of Omani authorities."

The incident comes amid American military actions on merchant vessels defying the US's naval blockade in the region. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Corrective steps including regular governing body meet mooted

CAG flags shortcomings at Social Audit Unit of Assam

GUWAHATI, June 14: Assam's Social Audit Unit, set up to ensure transparency and accountability in rural development schemes, has faced severe operational and governance challenges, according to a CAG report.

The report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on 'Local Bodies' for the period ending March 2024 highlighted that the registration of SAU expired long back due to infrequent governing Body meetings that hindered budget approvals and annual account certifications.

"The registration of the SAU under the Societies Act remained invalid for almost five years, since December 2019. Gross shortfall in holding of governing body meetings implies the deficiency in monitoring at the government level," it added.

The CAG recommended that governing body meetings should be held at stipulated intervals to ensure approval of the budget and annual accounts of SAU, and to facilitate effective monitoring of the activities.

It also pointed out that the manpower policy of SAU is yet to be firmed up, even after the same had been proposed in August 2017 and reviewed by the Finance Department.

"The SAU operates with a significant manpower shortage (43 per cent overall vacancy), particularly among key field personnel, impacting its ability to meet social audit targets and conduct timely audits," it added.

The CAG suggested that the manpower policy should be finalised and that initiatives

should be taken for the recruitment of resource persons in requisite numbers. Besides, the Code of Ethics was not introduced, though it is required under the Auditing Standards of Social Audit.

It said that the Code of Ethics should be developed and deployed by the SAU for social audit facilitators.

"The State Employment Guarantee Council (SEGC) at the state level had not monitored the action taken by the state government on social audit reports and action-taken reports. SAU did not submit quarterly reports in the format specified by the Ministry of Rural Development to the principal accountant general/accountant general," it said.

The impact of the social audit is diluted by a deficient follow-up mechanism, like insufficient public hearings at the block and district level, poor recovery of amounts objected to in social audit reports, the report said.

It recommended strengthening of follow-up actions on social audit reports through public hearings at all levels.

"Some village panchayats have not provided records to social audit teams, indicating a lack of sensitisation on social audit among panchayati raj institutions," it added.

Furthermore, there is a critical lack of follow-up on audit observations, evidenced by a less than four per cent recovery rate of misappropriated funds, weak state-level monitoring and ineffective public awareness campaigns, the CAG said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Less than 50% Assam farmers registered, enrolment drive planned

GUWAHATI, June 14: Less than half of the nearly 50 lakh farmer families of Assam are registered with the government, and it has decided to launch a drive to enrol 5-7 lakh more such families within the next six months, a state minister said on Sunday.

Agriculture Minister Pijush Hazarika chaired a high-level meeting with the District Agriculture Officers of Assam, and re-

viewed various schemes meant for the farming community.

"The minister issued a strict mandate to elevate farmer registration to an absolute priority. He noted that while nearly 50 lakh families in Assam depend on agriculture, only 24 lakh are currently registered," said an official release.

To bridge this gap, the department will launch a special drive to register an additional 5-7 lakh

farmers within the next six months, it said. Hazarika instructed the officials concerned to focus on transforming subsistence farming into a wealth-generating sector for the state's poorest families.

To maximise grassroots welfare, he directed officials to aggressively scale up enrolment under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and accelerate PM-KISAN registration (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

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Modi transformed NE from 'no-hope' zone to attractive destination: Sonowal

AGARTALA, June 14: Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Sunday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has transformed the Northeast from a "no-hope" zone to an attractive destination in the past 12 years.

Addressing the 'Jan Kalyan Shivir' to mark PM Modi's 12 years in office at Rabindra Bhavan, the Union minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways said the northeast was known for violence, kidnapping, blockade and shooting before Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister.

"A sense of security was missing before 2014, and the Northeast was infamously tagged as a disturbed area. Now, the region is witnessing a sea change in all-round



growth with peace returning. At least 10,000 armed insurgents have shunned the path of violence to usher in peace," he said.

Asserting that PM Modi has transformed the northeast from a "no-hope zone to an attrac-

tive destination", he said peace has paved the way for faster development in the region to meet the people's aspirations.

"Under PM Modi, development works—whether infrastructure, railway connectivity or communication—are pro-

ceeding at the highest ever speed. Modiji has made it mandatory for his cabinet colleagues to regularly visit the northeast to expedite development," he said.

Sonowal also claimed that PM Modi removed the distance between Delhi and the northeast by boosting connectivity and communication.

He said Modi ji is the only Prime Minister since independence who pushed for financial inclusion drive across the nation, resulting in the opening of 61 crore bank accounts.

"Due to the success of the financial inclusion drive, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) is possible to transfer money to the accounts of crores of beneficiaries. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India's Russian oil imports rise in May as refiners boost purchases

NEW DELHI, June 14: India remained the world's second-largest buyer of Russian fossil fuels in May, importing an estimated 5.8 billion euros (USD 6.7 billion) worth of Russian hydrocarbons as refiners stepped up crude purchases from Moscow, European think tank Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) said in a report.

Crude oil accounted for about 83 per cent of India's imports from Russia during the month, valued at 4.8 billion euros, while oil products and coal imports stood at 550 million euros and 429 million euros, respectively.

"India's total crude import volumes recorded an 8 per cent month-on-month increase in May. This is partially explained by a 21 per cent month-on-month increase in Russian imports," CREA said.

Some of India's largest refining hubs recorded notable increases in Russian crude arrivals. Unloaded volumes at the Vadinar refinery in Gujarat rose 36 per cent from April levels, while deliveries to the Jamnagar refining complex in the state increased 14 per cent.

According to CREA, state-run refiners also expanded purchases after resuming imports earlier this year. The New Mangalore and Visakhapatnam refineries, which had halted Russian crude imports at the end of November 2025, continued buying Russian oil after restarting purchases in March.

Russian crude deliveries to New Mangalore rose 13 per cent month-on-month in May, while imports at Visakhapatnam jumped 42 per cent, it said.



The Paradip refinery on Odisha's east coast also unloaded its highest volume of Russian crude in two years, underscoring the continued attractiveness of discounted Russian barrels for Indian refiners despite evolving geopolitical and sanctions-related pressures.

India emerged as one of the largest buyers of Russian oil since Western sanctions and trade restrictions reshaped global energy flows following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Indian refiners have consistently increased purchases of discounted Russian crude, helping offset higher energy costs while boosting refining margins and exports of petroleum products. The latest figures suggest Russian oil continues to account for a significant share of India's crude import basket, even as the country diversifies supplies from the Middle East, Africa and the United States.

According to CREA, China bought 50 per cent of Russia's crude exports in May, fol-

lowed by India (36 per cent), Turkiye (6 per cent), and the EU (5 per cent).

"In May 2026, China remained the largest global buyer of Russian fossil fuels, accounting for 38 per cent (Euro 7.0 billion) of Russia's export revenues from the top five importers. Crude oil made up 69 per cent (Euro 4.8 bn) of China's purchases, followed by pipeline gas (Euro 618 million), then coal (Euro 525 million), and lastly LNG (Euro 510 million). Oil products (Euro 479 million) constituted the remainder of China's imports," it said.

CREA said despite the EU's ban on imports of oil products made from Russian crude on January 21, 2026, 10 shipments of oil products from refineries using Russian crude were unloaded at EU ports in the month of May.

"Refineries using Russian crude in India, Turkiye, Brunei, and Georgia exported Euro 641 million of oil products to sanctioning countries in May 2026. The importers included the EU (Euro 174 million), Australia (Euro 275 million), the US (Euro 147 million) and New Zealand (Euro 45 million). An estimated Euro 214 million of these products were refined from Russian crude," it said.

Exports to the US originated at Reliance Industries Ltd's Jamnagar refinery, the SOCAR-owned STAR refinery in Turkiye, and the Tupras Izmit refinery as well. "In the prior three months, 39 per cent of the STAR refinery's crude oil feedstock and 15 per cent of the Jamnagar refinery's feedstock came from Russia," it added. (PTI)

Diesel curbs raise concerns for hospitals, IT parks dependent on generator power

NEW DELHI, June 14: The government move to restrict diesel purchases through petrol pumps is raising concerns among hospitals, IT campuses, data centres and industrial facilities that rely heavily on diesel generators not only as emergency backup but also as a regular source of power during peak-demand periods.

The government on June 11 barred industrial, commercial and institutional consumers from purchasing diesel at petrol pumps and limited sales through retail outlets to 200 litres per customer or vehicle per day, a move aimed at conserving supplies and preventing diversion of fuel meant for retail consumers. Industry executives said the restrictions could disrupt fuel procurement for sectors where diesel generators remain critical to operations.

Hospitals are among the most vulnerable. Large healthcare facilities typically maintain multiple diesel generator sets capable of powering entire campuses during grid disruptions and often run them proactively during surgeries, intensive-care operations and other critical procedures where even momentary voltage fluctuations can pose risks to patients. "Many hospitals do not depend exclusively on grid electricity for critical functions. Diesel generators are an integral part of operational planning because uninterrupted power is non-negotiable," said an executive at a hospital chain.

Data centres, IT parks and telecom facilities also rely extensively on diesel-based backup systems to meet uptime commitments. Industry officials said many facilities routinely top up diesel inventories from nearby fuel stations to ensure uninterrupted op-

erations. "Peak hour power tariffs in some states are higher than the cost of generating electricity using diesel gensets. And so many IT companies rely on diesel gensets to meet power demand during peak hours," another industry executive said.

The restrictions could also increase operating costs for some industrial and commercial consumers. During periods of peak electricity demand, power purchased from the grid can become significantly more expensive than captive diesel generation, prompting some facilities to switch part of their load to generator sets to manage costs and maintain reliability.

The government said the measures were prompted by "abnormal increases" in diesel and petrol sales at retail outlets as industrial and institutional consumers shifted purchases from bulk supply channels to lower-priced retail pumps, creating risks of local shortages.

Under the order, such consumers will be required to source fuel through dedicated consumer pumps and bulk supply arrangements rather than retail outlets. Industry representatives are seeking exemptions and operational clarifications for essential services, arguing that hospitals, telecom networks, data centres and other critical infrastructure require assured access to diesel supplies regardless of prevailing market conditions.

Executives said organisations with established bulk fuel contracts are likely to face limited disruption, but institutions dependent on flexible retail purchases may need to rapidly overhaul procurement practices if the restrictions are activated. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Karbi Anglong holds rare

and publication, along with the creation of a National Digital Repository (NDR), ensuring its accessibility for research, education and public engagement.

Saikia also said that to increase inquisitiveness among the youth, the administration is looking forward to organise exposure trips and summer camps in the museum for school and college students.

Talking about the copper manuscript kept at the Nothenpi Karbi Heritage Museum, the DC said that some people tried to decode it earlier, but they did it as a hobby and not very professionally.

"We want to understand and read the manuscripts properly to gain insight into our past heritage. We are now looking to contact researchers and invite them to decode the same," he added.

When contacted, Karbi Anglong District Museum Officer Kaustuv Saikia told PTI that the copper manuscripts are likely to be from the 9th century and it was recovered in 2020.

"The rare copper plate was found at Ok-Kereng Nihang Engti village and it was formally handed over by the villagers to the CEM of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC). The artefact is now displayed in the Nothenpi Karbi Heritage Museum," he added.

Regarding the Tai manuscripts, Kaustuv Saikia said the department will carry out a condition assessment of the two ancient treasures.

"It is proposed that a scientific condition assessment of the manuscripts may be arranged by the Conservator of the Assam State Museum," he added.

After that, curative conservation will be undertaken either at the District Museum in Diphu or at the Assam State Museum Laboratory, if required based on the Conservator's suggestions and report, Kaustuv Saikia said.

"After confirmation by the Conservator that the manuscripts are fit for handling and exposure to light, digitisation may be undertaken through a camera mounted on slider tripods or through handheld or other scanners. The images can then be fed into the office computer corresponding with object accession records already present," he added.

DC Aranyak Saikia said that the Museum Department has been instrumental in preserving the indigenous cultures of various communities residing in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts.

"This was achieved by collecting various ethnographic and archaeological objects from the region. These objects are documented and are now on display. The collection has been acquired over a period of time through fieldwork done by staff members and various District Museum officers posted in Diphu," he added.

The objects include manuscripts, stone sculptures, textile specimens, everyday household implements, jewellery, musical instruments, hunting implements and various other ethnographic objects, which symbolise the rich heritage of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, the DC said. (PTI)

NDA inches towards two-

The ruling alliance's strength may decrease by November when 10 MPs from Uttar Pradesh retire, and the Samajwadi Party may gain some seats in the Rajya Sabha, with its improved numerical strength in the state assembly.

The Opposition INDIA bloc currently has 64 MPs on its side, after the exit of DMK with eight MPs and AAP with three MPs distancing itself from the grouping.

Independent parties such as YSRCP and BJD, with seven and six seats, and MDMK, can go either way in the Rajya Sabha. In the Lok Sabha, however, the NDA's numbers can go up to 213 with around 20 more TMC MPs forming a separate group and supporting it. The defected MPs are set to meet Speaker Om Birla on Monday and hand over a letter announcing their separation from the TMC. In the Lok Sabha, 363 MPs are needed to get a two-thirds majority. (PTI)

Indian-flagged dhow

The Oman coast witnessed tensions last week as three vessels with Indian crew members came under US attack. One of them killed three seafarers.

India on Friday summoned US charge d'affaires Jason Meeks, the second time in a week, and told him that American military's "lethal and deadly" strikes on commercial vessels with Indian crew members off the coast of Oman are "unacceptable" and they undermine the safety, security and stability of international maritime commerce. (PTI)

Less than 50% Assam

by expediting ID creation. The minister emphasised that seed and fertiliser distribution must be entirely open and transparent, and that high-quality seeds should reach farmers at least one month before the sowing season.

Warning that delays or inefficiencies would not be tolerated, he instructed the department to explore legal avenues for criminal proceedings, blacklisting and license cancellation against agencies supplying substandard products or engaging in the black-marketing of fertilisers.

Hazarika also said that Assam must diversify beyond traditional rice cultivation, and declared horticulture, pulses and oil palm production as top departmental priorities.

"This push will be paired with immediate discussions on market development to secure fair pricing for agricultural products. To execute these initiatives, Agricultural Development Officers were directed to conduct regular field visits and actively support Farmer Producer Organisations," the release said.

Hazarika stressed that accountability and a disciplined work culture are non-negotiable, explicitly forbidding officers from leaving their stations without prior approval. "To incentivise best practices, the department will soon host ceremonial distributions of quality seeds, saplings and power tillers to progressive farmers," he added. (PTI)

India now a provider of global

prime minister, who landed in Nice last night, said. The prime minister said India's young innovators are finding solutions that can benefit all of humanity. In his address, Modi highlighted his government's reform initiatives in several key sectors, including high-technology, defence and innovation.

"India's 'reform express' will not stop, it will continue to run," he asserted. Modi said the world looked at India as a technology adopter a decade back, but the country is now emerging as a technology provider. "India is innovating for a sustainable future. India is innovating for the world," he said, adding innovation is in the country's DNA.

"India has emerged not as a consumer of solutions but as a contributor to solutions in the world," he noted. The prime minister also delved into India-France relations.

"India and France have a special partnership; it has connection, conviction, innovation, inspiration and shared vision," he said. In his address, President Macron said France respects the Make-in-India initiative and that Paris has been a part of it in diverse sectors.

Describing India as a "country of innovation," he said New Delhi and Paris have a "true partnership" in critical sectors like AI and climate change. There is scope to expand bilateral cooperation in civil nuclear energy sector, including the area of Small Modular Reactors, he said.

Bharat Innovates 2026 is a flagship initiative by the Indian government designed to accelerate the country's deep-tech startups and research ventures on a global stage. (PTI)

Modi transformed NE from

This ensures transparency and accountability of the Modi government," he said.

"Tripura has been receiving the benefit of the double-engine government during the past 8 years. The connectivity - be it railway or airway, the state witnessed a massive change. The state is now well connected with first-class train service and air service, accelerating the development process," he stated. (PTI)

Corrective steps including

SAU was first registered in December 2016 for the functioning of the MGNREGS Audit of Scheme Rules 2011. It has an independent director and is governed by a governing body, headed by the chief secretary. (PTI)

GRA elects new executive committee at 9th AGM

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, June 14: The Guwahati Realtors Association (GRA), a leading body of verified and regulated real estate professionals in Assam, held its 9th Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Swearing-In Ceremony at Hotel Ormate in Guwahati, ushering in a new leadership team for the 2026-2028 term.

The event marked the induction of newly elected office-bearers and reaffirmed the association's commitment to promoting an organised, ethical and professional real estate ecosystem in the state.

Affiliated with the National Association of Realtors India (NARI India), the association continues to advocate transparency, professionalism and best practices in the real estate sector while safeguarding the interests of both consumers and industry stakeholders.

The newly elected executive committee will be led by Abhimanyu Modi as president, with Rahul Jain as vice-president, Vishal Kumar Todi as secretary, Pabitra Kumar Deka as treasurer and Ashis Shah as joint secretary.

The association also announced that the International Real Estate Conference (IREC) will be held in India for the first time in Hyderabad, with participation open to industry stakeholders through a registration process.

During the programme, GRA acknowledged the contributions of immediate past president Gaurav Agarwal for his leadership during the 2024-2026 tenure.

The governing body members for the new term include Sanjay Kumar Agrawal, Lalita Jain, Sanjay Gupta, Pankaj Maheshwari, Gautam Bahety, Gaurav Borkakaty, Sachin Agarwal, Vishal Sharma, Vivek Agarwal, Amit Jain and Tapan Das.

Addressing the gathering, GRA president Abhimanyu Modi said Assam's real estate sector is witnessing rapid growth and transformation, making it essential to uphold professional standards and ethical business practices.

Unicorn Infosolutions celebrates 100-store milestone, eyes expansion to 150 outlets

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, June 14: Unicorn Infosolutions, India's largest Apple Premium Partner, has achieved a major milestone with the opening of its 100th Apple Mono Brand Store, marking more than two decades of growth and expansion in the country's premium technology retail sector.

The company's journey began in 2006 with the launch of its first store in Ahmedabad.

Since then, Unicorn has expanded its presence across North and West India and now operates in 49 cities spread across nine states. Building on this achievement, the company has announced plans to expand its network to 150 stores over the next three years through continued investment in retail infrastructure and customer

service facilities. With an annual turnover exceeding ₹3,700 crore and a workforce of more than 1,500 professionals, Unicorn has established itself as a leading player in Apple retailing and customer support services in India.

Over the years, the company has focused on making Apple's ecosystem more accessible through dedicated retail outlets, trained staff and comprehensive after-sales support. Unicorn currently operates Apple Mono Brand Stores and Apple Authorised Service Centres across Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Goa.

Speaking on the occasion, Baljinder Paul Singh, Director of Unicorn Infosolutions, said reaching the 100-store milestone was a

significant achievement that reflected the trust and support of customers, employees and business partners over the past two decades.

He said the company's vision of bringing the best of Apple products and services to customers has evolved into one of the country's largest retail networks and credited the milestone to the dedication of its workforce and the confidence shown by consumers.

The company has established a strong presence in major shopping destinations and premium high-street locations, with outlets in more than 31 malls across the country, including Pacific Mall in New Delhi, CyberHub in Gurugram, Oberoi Mall in Mumbai, Alpha One in Ahmedabad, Lulu Mall in Lucknow, Mall of India in Noida and Mall of Millennium in Pune.

Blenders Pride launches 'Reserved Experiences' platform

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, June 14: Blenders Pride Packaged Drinking Water has launched 'Reserved Experiences', a new cultural platform aimed at transforming the way consumers perceive and engage with flavour through immersive, multi-sensory experiences.

The initiative is built around the concept of "Reserved in Every Sense" and seeks to redefine flavour as a journey that extends beyond taste to include sight, sound, touch and aroma.

The launch comes at a time when consumers are increasingly seeking meaningful and elevated experiences that reflect evolving lifestyles and preferences.

Through the platform, flavour is presented as a multidimensional experience designed to stimulate multiple senses simultaneously.

Curated in collaboration with noted chef Kunal Kapur, the inaugural showcase featured an intimate and exclusive experiential event.

The highlight of the evening was a live gastro-performance that combined culinary artistry with music, integrating texture, aroma and rhythm into a unified sensory presentation.

The experience also featured a series of immersive installations and interactive spaces designed to interpret flavour through different sensory dimensions.

Visitors explored dynamic visual environments,

aroma-based installations, tactile experiences and curated tasting sessions that encouraged a deeper engagement with flavour.

Following activations in Chandigarh, Gurgaon and Jaipur, the platform continued its journey in Kolkata and is expected to host more than ten activations across key markets in the country, creating new opportunities for consumers to explore flavour beyond conventional formats.

Speaking about the initiative, chef Kunal Kapur said flavour is inherently layered and evolving, and the platform offers an opportunity to interpret it beyond the plate through immersive and unexpected experiences.

Debasree Dasgupta, Chief Marketing Officer of Pernod Ricard India, said consumers today are increasingly looking for distinctive and intentional experiences that go beyond functionality.

She said the new platform translates the depth and complexity of flavour into immersive, multi-sensory expressions, reflecting the way modern audiences prefer to engage with discovery and experiential culture.

With the launch of Blenders Pride Reserved Experiences, the brand aims to strengthen its cultural narrative by positioning flavour as a refined sensory exploration tailored to a new generation of discerning consumers.

Jungle Adventures Park opens in Guwahati with Jungle Book theme

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, June 14: Guwahati has added a new attraction to its adventure tourism and family entertainment landscape with the opening of Jungle Adventures Park, billed as Northeast India's first Jungle Book-themed adventure park, at Amchong Tea Estate on the outskirts of the city.

Spread across nearly 10 acres, the park has been developed as an outdoor adventure destination catering to children, families, students, tourists and adventure enthusiasts. Built around the theme "A Page from Jungle Book", the facility combines adventure activities, themed zones, entertainment options and visitor amenities within a natural setting.

The park features six themed adventure zones inspired by characters and settings from Rudyard Kipling's classic tale. These include Mowgli's Jungle Trail, Shere Khan's Hunting Ground, Bagheera's Peak, Kaa's Skyway, Bandar Badshah's Kingdom and Raksha's Arena.

The zones offer a mix of ground-based and aerial adventure activities designed for visitors of different age groups. According to the management, the park currently offers more than



20 adventure activities, including a 50-foot giant swing, zip line, rocket injector, roller coaster-style rides, inflatable play areas, bull ride, human catcher, meltdown and ATV rides.

The facility is also expected to cater to school and college excursions, family outings, birthday celebrations, tourist groups and corporate events.

Speaking at a media interaction, Director Ananya Khemka said the park was conceived to provide the region with a unique outdoor recreation destination that combines adventure with family-friendly experiences.

"We wanted to create a place where children, families and adventure lovers can enjoy outdoor

activities in a safe and well-managed environment. The natural surroundings of Amchong Tea Estate and the Jungle Book theme add a unique dimension to the overall experience," Khemka said.

The management stated that safety and visitor comfort have been given priority, with trained personnel deployed to oversee rides and activities. Facilities such as parking spaces, restrooms, first-aid support, waiting areas and food courts have also been made available for visitors.

Located at Amchong Tea Estate and connected by road to Guwahati and nearby areas, the park is expected to emerge as a new destination for leisure and adventure tourism in the region.

NAME CORRECTION

My actual and correct name is Ratan Chandra Das, but in my Assam Gramin Bank pass book A/c No. 723801005523, Borboha Branch has incorrectly recorded my name as Ratan Das. Therefore the names, Ratan Chandra Das and Ratan Das belong to the same and single person, i.e., me, Ratan Chandra Das. Ratan Chandra Das, S/o- Late Dasharath Das, Vill.- Ampukhuri, PO- Bhalukmari, PS- Lanka, Dist.- Hojai, Assam

LOST

I, Anjani Chauhan, F/N Sukharam Chauhan resident of Village- Watoriz No.2, PO. Forest Bazar, PS. Kheroni, Dist. West Karbi Anglong would like mention that I have lost my HS Admit Card bearing No. 2152018A006.

LOST

I have lost my DELED first year marksheet May - jun 2017, first year marksheet March - april 2018, second year marksheet april - may 2018 of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, Guwahati, on 10.10.2025 mailout out post area. Prem chand chauhan S/o Subash Chand chauhan Vill - Musaka P.S.- kheroni Dist - west Karbi Anglong Phone no 9706722328

AATSU demands SC/ST Act charges in Susmita Basumatary death case

Student body seeks murder probe, strict action against accused and justice for victim's family



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 14: The All Assam Tribal Students' Union (AATSU) has demanded the application of provisions of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, in connection with the death of Susmita Basumatary, whose body was recently found in a rented house at Hatigaon in Guwahati.

In a statement issued on Sunday, AATSU general secretary Deba Kumar Pegu called for a thorough investigation into the case and urged authorities to ensure stringent legal action against the accused.

According to the organisation, the case was registered at Hatigaon Police Station under Case No 104/2026.

Susmita Basumatary, daughter of Breznev Basumatary of Uttar Nalbari in Udalguri district, was found dead under circumstances that have triggered widespread concern.

Pegu alleged that a non-tribal outsider, identified as Akash Prasad, was linked to the incident.

He claimed that the accused had allegedly subjected the victim to repeated harassment, including persistent phone calls, intimidation and mental pressure.

The student body further alleged that Basumatary had been

forced to resign from her job at a bank due to the alleged harassment.

It also claimed that she had been sexually exploited and deceived and maintained that the case should be investigated as a murder rather than a suicide.

AATSU alleged that the accused frequently visited the victim's rented accommodation and had access to the premises.

The organisation expressed suspicion over the circumstances surrounding her death and demanded a comprehensive investigation into all aspects of the case.

Pegu said the relevant provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act should be incorporated into the case and urged investigators to invoke appropriate sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita relating to murder if evidence supports such charges.

The organisation called on Hatigaon Police to conduct a fair and impartial investigation, ensure justice for the victim's family and take all necessary legal steps to prosecute those found responsible.

AATSU also stressed the need to protect the rights of members of Scheduled Tribe communities and ensure that cases involving alleged atrocities are investigated with due seriousness under the provisions of the law.

World Blood Donor Day observed across state

Statewide blood donation programmes promote voluntary donation and public awareness

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 14: World Blood Donor Day was observed across several parts of Assam on Sunday with blood donation camps, awareness programmes and felicitation ceremonies organised by security forces, healthcare institutions, social organisations and youth groups to promote voluntary blood donation and strengthen healthcare services.

In Sivasagar, a series of blood donation camps were organised by various organisations.

At the 149 Battalion CRPF camp in Jaysagar, CRPF personnel participated in a special blood donation camp conducted in collaboration with the Blood Bank of Sivasagar Civil Hospital.

The programme was inaugurated by Second Commandant BK Sharma, who underlined the importance of voluntary blood donation in saving lives during medical emergencies.

Continuing its year-long social welfare initiatives, Drishyapat Sivasagar organised a blood donation camp at Sivasagar Civil Hospital.

Members of the organisation, including president Dr Mani Pathak, Dr Aminur Rahman, Dr Sarita Yadav, Mitali Hazarika, Shyamal Rajguru and Swapnali



Sharma Bhattacharjya, actively participated in the programme.

Another camp was jointly organised by Dragon Mawateka Shitu Ryo Karate Academy and the Sivasagar Boxing Association at Sivasagar Government Higher Secondary School.

Students and members of both organisations took part in the initiative under the leadership of Jiten Chowdhury.

In Biswanath district, the Lokra Battalion of the Assam Rifles observed the day with a voluntary blood donation drive organised in collaboration with Kanaklata Civil Hospital, Tezpur.

According to a press release, the programme aimed at raising awareness about the importance of blood donation and recognising the contribution of voluntary

donors in saving lives.

Eleven personnel of the Lokra Battalion donated blood during the programme, which was conducted with the support of medical teams from Kanaklata Civil Hospital.

Speakers highlighted the need for regular blood donation to ensure the availability of safe blood for emergency treatment, surgeries and other medical procedures.

Representatives of the hospital appreciated the efforts of the Assam Rifles and acknowledged the positive impact of such initiatives on public health and emergency medical care.

Meanwhile, in Mangaldai, the Blood Centre of Mangaldai Civil Hospital, in collaboration with local NGOs and other stakeholders, organised a series of pro-

grammes to mark the occasion.

An awareness meeting was held at the blood centre where veteran and young regular blood donors, including several women, were felicitated for their contributions towards voluntary and safe blood donation.

Office-bearers of various social organisations from Darrang and Udalguri districts were also honoured for their efforts in promoting humanitarian causes.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Daud Ali, In-Charge Medical Officer of the Mangaldai Civil Hospital Blood Centre, highlighted the significance of this year's theme, "One Drop of Humanity, Give Blood, Save Lives," and stressed the importance of voluntary blood donation in maintaining a steady

supply of safe blood for patients in need.

Among those present were Sekhar Mazumdar of Crystal Vision, Rumu Boro of Unity, We the Blood Donors, Mangaldai, Sachindra Sarma of Satra, Sipahjar, Bapon Bank of Bank Foundation, Dimakuchi, and Major Harimom Deka of NCC, Mangaldai College (Autonomous), along with several other dignitaries and social workers.

The programme was followed by a voluntary blood donation camp, while an awareness road show flagged off by Darrang Zilla Parishad member Anita Rajbongshi was organised earlier in the day to spread the message of voluntary blood donation among the public.

Organisers across the state said the observances were aimed at encouraging greater participation in voluntary blood donation, dispelling misconceptions related to the practice and ensuring adequate blood supplies for patients requiring transfusions and emergency medical care.

The programmes also served to honour the selfless contributions of blood donors and reinforce the importance of community participation in healthcare initiatives.

Two pistols recovered near Dibrugarh Railway Station

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, June 14: Two pistols were recovered from near a railway track at Banipur, close to Dibrugarh Railway Station on Sunday morning, prompting a security alert and an investigation into a possible arms smuggling link.

According to railway police officials, passersby noticed the firearms lying beside the tracks and immediately informed the authorities.

One pistol was found wrapped in black polythene, while the other was lying in the open.

Acting on the information, Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel rushed to the spot and recovered the weapons.

"We received information about suspicious objects near the tracks and immediately sent a team to the location. Upon inspection, two pistols were found, one concealed in a polythene packet and the other lying exposed," an RPF official said.

Investigators suspect that the firearms may have been deliberately abandoned by unidentified individuals to avoid detection.

Officials believe the weapons could have been discarded in haste during transit through the railway station area, possibly due to fear of security checks.

The possibility of the firearms being part of an arms smuggling network is also being examined.

Following the recovery, a joint team of the Railway Protection Force, Government Railway Police (GRP) and Assam Police reached the site and seized both pistols for forensic examination and further investigation.

Police are reviewing all possible angles and efforts are underway to identify the persons responsible for abandoning the weapons near the railway track.

Youth-led cleanliness drive cleans up Ha-i Long Park in Diphu

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 14: In an effort to promote cleanliness and civic responsibility, educated youths of Diphu town under the banner of "Our Karbi Anglong", in collaboration with "Karbi Dreams", organised a major cleanliness drive at Ha-i Long Park along the bank of the Diphu river recently.

More than 50 volunteers participated in the initiative, which was supported by the Diphu Municipal Board (DMB) and the district administration. The drive, conducted from 6 am to 12 noon, focused on cleaning the park and its surrounding areas by removing garbage and clearing weeds from the riverside recreational spot.

Volunteers collected large quantities of plastic waste, empty drinking water bottles, chips packets, polythene bags, pan masala sachets and other litter scattered across the park and disposed of them at designated dumping sites.

Speaking on the occasion, co-founder of Our Karbi Anglong, Barithe Rongpi, acknowledged the efforts of the Diphu Municipal Board in maintaining cleanliness across the town but expressed concern over the lack of civic sense among some residents and shopkeepers.

He said municipal workers regularly collect garbage and waste from markets

and commercial establishments, but many people continue to litter public spaces soon after the cleaning operations are completed.

Rongpi stressed that maintaining cleanliness in public places is as important as keeping one's home and surroundings clean, adding that unhygienic conditions contribute to the spread of diseases.

Founder of Our Karbi Anglong, Shivani Engtipi, urged people to become more conscious about maintaining cleanliness and protecting the environment.

"By keeping our surroundings clean, we are ensuring a healthy environment for future generations," she said.

CEO of Karbi Dreams, Arbika Teronpi, said the primary objective of the drive was to create awareness among young people about the importance of cleanliness and environmental hygiene. She noted that greater civic awareness and public participation would help make Diphu cleaner and healthier, while also complementing ongoing development efforts in the town.

Teronpi also thanked DMB Chairman Rah Kro, Executive Engineer Prodig Rongpi and municipal staff for extending support to the initiative by providing gloves, face masks, garbage collection bags and refreshments for the volunteers.

SSB, police seize 705 grams of ganja

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 14: A joint team of the Sashtra Seema Bal (SSB) and Kachugaon Police seized 705 grams of suspected ganja and apprehended one person during an anti-narcotics operation conducted in Kokrajhar district on June 13.

The operation was carried out at around 2.45 pm at Joypur village in the Kachugaon area following specific intelligence inputs received by the security agencies.

According to officials, the operation was conducted under the guidance of Amit Singh, Commandant of the 31 Battalion SSB, Gossaigaon.

During the search, the joint team recovered 705 grams of suspected ganja from the possession of Sonot Hembraam.

The operation was led by Navneet Prabhakar, Assistant Commandant of the 31 Battalion SSB, along with Sub-Inspector Bimal Chandra Barman of Kachugaon Police Station.

Following the seizure, the accused and the recovered contraband were handed over to Kachugaon Police Station for further investigation and legal proceedings under the relevant provisions of law.

Officials said the operation reflects the continued efforts of the SSB and local police to curb the illegal possession, transportation and trafficking of narcotic substances in the region.

Security agencies have reiterated their commitment to intensifying anti-drug operations and maintaining vigilance against illegal narcotics activities across the district.

Assamese song collection 'Sur Samalay' released in Biswanath Chariali

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, June 14: Sur Samalay, a collection of Assamese songs compiled and composed by noted poet and retired medical and health officer Dr Narayan Chandra Upadhyaya, was released at a literary function held at the conference hall of Basanta Smriti Sangsthan in Biswanath Chariali on Sunday.

The programme was presided over by retired teacher Hari Luital and began with the ceremonial lighting of an earthen lamp before the portrait of late Basanta Nepal by Dr Jagannath Upadhyaya.

The event also featured a classical dance performance by child artiste Yash Raj Powdel.

The book was formally unveiled by Dr Khem Raj Nepal, recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize. Eminent lyricist Dhruvajyoti Rajkhuwa presented a critical review of the publication and highlighted its literary and musical significance.

The function was also addressed by Rana Prasad Hazarika, Dhaneshwar Bora and other distinguished speakers, who appreciated Dr Upadhyaya's contribution to Assamese literature and music.

Among those present were Hari Prasad Sarma, Hem Kumar Gautam, Chitra Powdel, Uma Pokhrel, Jamuna Sarma, Bedadeep Upadhyaya, Pronita Roybhuyan, Kamal Sarma and several other literary and cultural personalities.

Wild Elephant rampage at Tapatjuri in Nagaon district

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 14: The growing menace of human-elephant conflict in Nagaon district continues to spark concern among residents, who allege that the Forest Department has failed to effectively tackle the recurring attacks by wild elephants.

For several months, herds of wild elephants have been causing extensive damage in areas such as Kaliabor, Samaguri, Barhampur, Kandali, Bamuni, Chapanala and Kachua.

The latest incident occurred on Friday night when a herd of wild elephants went on a rampage in Tapatjuri under the Barhampur area.

According to local sources, the elephants descended from the Kandali Chuwang Reserve Forest in search of food

and later split into smaller groups before entering human settlements.

The animals reportedly damaged several houses, destroyed betel nut plantations, and uprooted trees and standing crops, leaving residents terrified. Many villagers narrowly escaped injury during the overnight raid.

Residents attributed the increasing elephant incursions to large-scale destruction of forest cover along the Nagaon-Karbi Anglong border.

With shrinking habitats and dwindling food sources in the hills, elephant herds are frequently venturing into foothill villages in search of sustenance, leading to heightened conflict with humans.

The situation has become increasingly alarming, with five people reportedly losing

their lives in elephant attacks across the district over the past month alone.

Locals from the affected areas have repeatedly appealed to the authorities for stronger measures to ensure their safety.

However, many residents expressed frustration over what they described as the Forest Department's inability to prevent the recurring attacks.

Victims of the latest incident have urged the state government and the Forest Department to provide adequate compensation for the losses suffered and to take immediate steps to drive the elephants back into their natural habitat while ensuring long-term solutions to the escalating human-elephant conflict.

Tezpur Sahitya Sabha inspires young readers through 'Amar Kitap Ami Porhim' initiative

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, June 14: The newly inaugurated Children's Library of the Tezpur Sahitya Sabha witnessed an enthusiastic response from young readers on Saturday as students from several educational institutions participated in the literary programme, Amar Kitap Ami Porhim (Our Books, We Shall Read). The event brought together students of Tezpur Government Higher Secondary School and Tezpur Government Multipurpose Girls' Higher Secondary School for an interactive session with noted retired teacher Lipika Saharia.

The programme aimed to encourage reading habits and strengthen children's engagement with literature.

Spending their extracurricular hours in the library, students explored a wide range of books, including classics such as Burhi Airi Sadhu and Amar Chitra Katha, as well as

contemporary works like Rubul Maut's Moro Eta Sapan Ase and Minal Kalita's Bokul Phulor Dore.

The children's library has been developed under the initiative of Tezpur Sahitya Sabha president Dhruvajyoti Das, vice-president Dwijen Nath and secretary Dr Pallab Bhattacharyya.

Young entrepreneur Sujit Ghosh extended hospitality to the participants by providing fruits and refreshments. The programme was coordinated by Minakshi Sharma of the Sabha's Amar Kitap Ami Porhim committee.

During the interaction, Lipika Saharia encouraged children to cultivate a lifelong love for reading and literature. A major highlight of the event was the overwhelming response to the library's membership drive.

More than 100 students enrolled as members on the very first day of operation, with nearly all of them borrowing books to take home.

Regional conference brings together scientists, researchers and students to promote interdisciplinary collaboration and sustainable development

Bodoland University hosts CTS-2026, showcases scientific innovation and research excellence

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 14: Bodoland University successfully hosted the Regional Conference on Current Trends in Science (CTS-2026) at its Kokrajhar campus on Sunday, bringing together eminent scientists, academicians, researchers, scholars and students for discussions on emerging scientific developments, innovation and sustainable growth.

Jointly organised by the Faculty of Science and Technology of Bodoland University and the Bodoland Science Congress, the conference served as a platform for scientific exchange and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The programme began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by Vice-Chancellor Prof BL Ahuja and other dignitaries.

Welcoming the participants, Dean of the Faculty of Science and Technology and Chairperson of the Organising Committee, Prof Hilloljyoti Singha, highlighted the importance of integrating Indian Knowledge Systems with contem-

porary scientific research and called for innovation-driven solutions to emerging societal challenges.

In his inaugural address, Prof Ahuja emphasised the transformative role of science and technology in addressing global challenges.

He highlighted the growing significance of interdisciplinary fields such as bioinformatics, computer science and biophysics and discussed the applications of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in forestry, wildlife conservation, environmental monitoring and forensic science.

A major highlight of the inaugural session was the release of the Conference Abstract Book by Prof Ahuja, former Scientist-G and Adviser to the Director of CSIR-NEIST, Jorhat; Dr Dinesh Chandra Goswami, and Prof Sumit Chakravarty, Head of the Department of Forestry at Uttar Banga Krishi Vishwavidyalaya, West Bengal.

Addressing the gathering, Rector Prof Jatn Sarma stressed the importance of re-



search, innovation and evidence-based policymaking in achieving sustainable development and national progress.

Delivering the keynote address on "Progress of Science, Emerging Areas of Science and Development of Scientific Temper," Dr Goswami traced the evolution of scientific knowledge from early

communication systems to modern computing technologies.

He highlighted the contributions of pioneering scientists including Galileo Galilei, Nicolaus Copernicus and Max Planck and underlined the importance of rational thinking and scientific temper in combating superstition and misinforma-

tion.

The plenary lecture was delivered by Prof Chakravarty on "Deforestation: Causes, Effects and Mitigation," where he discussed the ecological and socio-economic consequences of deforestation and advocated sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation and community participation in environmental protection.

The conference witnessed extensive academic participation with 216 research contributions, including 71 oral presentations and 145 poster presentations.

Research papers covered diverse themes such as Advanced Materials and Physical Sciences, Green Chemistry and Catalytic Materials, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, Life Sciences and Biodiversity, Environment and Wildlife Conservation, and Medicinal Plants and Natural Products.

During the valedictory session, certificates and awards were presented to outstanding participants. Priyanka Patgiri (Physics), Lankeswar Kumar (Chem-

istry), Beauty Narzary (Zoology), Subesri Dutta (Zoology), Bitumani Chaudhury (Zoology) and Twinkle Basumatary (Botany) were recognised as the best oral and poster presenters in their respective thematic categories.

Prof Ahuja lauded the enthusiastic participation of scientists, academicians, researchers and students and described the conference as a significant step towards strengthening scientific culture and innovation in the region.

The conference concluded with a vote of thanks by Prof. Sanjay Basumatary, who acknowledged the contributions of organisers, speakers, evaluators, volunteers and participants in ensuring the success of CTS-2026.

The event reaffirmed Bodoland University's commitment to fostering scientific excellence, interdisciplinary research, innovation and sustainable development while inspiring young researchers to address contemporary challenges through knowledge-based solutions.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

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

Opp strategy of UP assembly polls

Samajwadi Party national president Akhilesh Yadav wants INDIA alliance should collectively challenge BJP in Uttar Pradesh during 2027 assembly polls to dislodge the saffron party from power. During a recent meeting of INDIA alliance, Akhilesh Yadav made it clear to Congress and other partners of INDIA bloc that it would be difficult to face BJP unless all parties joined hands. Keeping UP elections in mind, the SP President said Congress should also take decisions in consultation with regional parties keeping their strength at the ground. Recently Rahul Gandhi said that the Modi government will go in a year's time. Akhilesh Yadav said if the Samajwadi Party government was formed after assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, then the Modi government will automatically fall. Keeping seat sharing in mind, the former chief minister said that Congress leaders in the state were not serious about the challenge from BJP. Akhilesh Yadav wants Congress Party should be realistic about demanding seats for assembly polls. They should not put up demands without having ground support. The SP leader was also upset that there were attempts to meet BSP national President Mayawati by important dalit leaders of the Congress including one MP recently.

Akhilesh wants Congress to be supportive in UP rather than unnecessary demands. Large number of seats from SP. Congress should realize that in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, it improved its performance and gained in number of seats in alliance with Samajwadi Party. There is a realisation among SP and the Congress leaders of UP that the influential muslim community which accounts for 18 percent in the UP population do not want a split in the votes. This is a great pressure to keep them united. The SP president wants Congress Party to behave like the eldest brother and should keep the INDIA bloc together objectively taking into account the regional parties and their strength in the regions rather than becoming their competitor in demanding seats. Significantly, whatever Akhilesh Yadav may have said at INDIA bloc meeting on June 8, the seat sharing will be the biggest challenge for Congress as well as Samajwadi Party.

Former MP and former chairman of All India Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled has sought a meeting between Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav to start the process for the seat sharing between the two parties which would enable them to start campaigning at the earliest. There is a feeling among SP and Congress leaders in UP that after decimating TMC in West Bengal assembly polls and causing a split in the party, BJP and other members of the Sangh Parivar are in an upbeat mood so unless united it would be very difficult to dislodge BJP in UP.

Balancing energy ambitions and regional concerns: The Assam-Nagaland hydrocarbon MoU

By: Mowsam Hazarika

A significant policy move with far-reaching implications, the Government of India has signed a historic tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Governments of Assam and Nagaland for the exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas. The agreement, formalised in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, and Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, marks a crucial step towards unlocking the hydrocarbon potential of India's Northeast.

The Centre has described the MoU as a "historic moment," highlighting its potential to accelerate oil and gas exploration in a region long known for its untapped natural resources. Speaking on the occasion, Amit Shah underlined that the agreement removes a major bottleneck in realising the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a prosperous and developed Northeast.

Energy security, particularly in the context of ongoing global instability and the West Asia conflict, has become a strategic priority for India. By enhancing domestic exploration and production capacity, the country aims to reduce its dependence on imports and strengthen its self-reliance. The Northeast, with its significant hydrocarbon reserves, is increasingly seen as a key contributor to this national objective.

The MoU has also been projected as a model of cooperative federalism, bringing together the Centre and two neighbouring states to resolve longstanding disputes and administrative hurdles. For decades, boundary disagreements between Assam and Nagaland have complicated resource exploration in overlapping areas. This agreement seeks to create a framework for joint cooperation, thereby facilitating investment and development.

From a developmental standpoint, the initiative promises economic benefits for both states. Increased exploration activities could generate employment, boost infrastructure development, and enhance revenue generation. For Assam, already an established oil-producing state, this could mean expansion and modernization. For Nagaland, it opens a new avenue for economic growth.

However, the MoU has not been universally welcomed. Several organisations and civil society groups in Nagaland have voiced strong opposition to the agreement. Their concerns stem from multiple factors, including issues of land ownership, environmental impact, and the political implications of resource extraction in disputed areas.

A key argument raised by these groups is that the agreement may undermine Nagaland's rights over its natural resources. There is apprehension that oil and gas exploration could proceed without adequately addressing local sentiments or securing informed consent from indigenous communities. The shadow of the unresolved Assam-Nagaland boundary dispute further complicates the matter, as many contested areas are believed to be rich in hydrocarbons.

Moreover, critics argue that previous agreements and assurances have not always translated into equitable benefits for local populations. This has led to a trust deficit, making sections of society wary of new initiatives, even if they promise economic gains.

The success of this MoU will depend not only on its economic and strategic outcomes but also on how sensitively it addresses local concerns. Transparent dialogue with stakeholders, respect for customary land rights, and robust environmental safeguards will be essential to build trust and ensure inclusive development.

The Centre's emphasis on cooperative federalism must extend beyond governments to include communities. Only then can the initiative truly become a catalyst for peace and prosperity in the region.

The Assam-Nagaland hydrocarbon MoU represents both opportunity and challenge. It holds the promise of energy security and regional development, while simultaneously highlighting the complexities of governance in a diverse and sensitive region. As India moves forward with its energy ambitions, balancing national priorities with local aspirations will be the key to sustainable progress.

River-Centric Economy and the Potential of the Brahmaputra



DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The mighty Brahmaputra is the lifeblood of Assam's society and economy, and hidden within its vast waters lies the key to the future prosperity of our state. A look at Assam's geographical location and historical background reveals that this enormous river system was the primary foundation upon which our civilization developed. However, with the passage of time and the rapid advance of modernity, we gradually moved away from a river-centric way of life and became accustomed to a land-based civilization. During the post-Independence period, we have largely portrayed the Brahmaputra as a source of floods, erosion, and disasters, resulting in the development of a negative perception of the river within our collective psyche. Yet, when we reassess our resources in the context of the contemporary global economy, it becomes evident that the Brahmaputra's waters, its sediments, and its biodiversity have the potential to establish Assam as one of India's leading states economically. Since our state is surrounded by land on all sides and has only a narrow connection with mainland India, one of the most effective ways to overcome our economic backwardness lies through this waterway. It is no longer sufficient to worship the Brahmaputra merely from an emotional perspective; the time has come to formulate scientific and practical plans to utilize it as an economic resource.

One of the principal reasons behind Assam's economic underdevelopment is the limitation of its transportation and communication infrastructure, a problem whose solution lies within the vast expanse of the Brahmaputra itself. Transporting goods by river is not only expensive but also often risky and uncertain due to hilly terrain and flood-prone roads. In contrast, if the Brahmaputra can be developed into a well-organized waterway, we would be able to transport large quantities of goods safely and at a significantly lower cost. The economies of many developed countries are built upon their waterways; examples include Europe's Rhine River and China's Yangtze River. The Brahmaputra also provides Assam with direct connectivity to the Bay of Bengal through Bangladesh, effectively opening the door to international trade. At present, almost every commodity entering or leaving the region depends upon the narrow "Chicken's Neck" corridor, increasing transportation costs and consequently the prices of goods. However, through the effective utilization of waterways, Assam's tea, crude oil, timber, and agricultural products could reach global markets at substantially lower costs. The construction of modern ports and logistics hubs along both banks of the river would generate thousands of direct and indirect employment opportunities. This would not merely improve freight transportation but would also create opportunities for commercial partnerships between Assam and the wider Southeast Asian region. The development of inland waterways would integrate remote areas of Assam into the mainstream economy while also reducing fuel consumption and contributing to environmental conservation.

In Assam's agriculture-based economy, the contribution of the Brahmaputra is often overshadowed by the destruction caused by floods, but in reality, the river serves as the lifeline of agriculture. Every year during the monsoon season, the Brahmaputra carries enormous quantities of sediment and fertile alluvial soil, which act as a natural fertilizer for cultivation.

The potential of the Brahmaputra in the field of fisheries is so extensive that it could transform the economic landscape of rural Assam. It is ironic that despite being a land of rivers, Assam continues to depend heavily on truckloads of fish imported from other states. To eliminate this dependency, the Brahmaputra and its tributaries must be utilized through scientific methods. Cage culture, a system of fish farming using enclosures placed within the river, can be widely implemented in areas where water currents are relatively slow and depths are suitable



After floodwaters recede, this fresh layer of soil deposited on chars, chaporis, and floodplains provides ideal conditions for agricultural productivity. At present, farming activities in the char areas remain largely traditional and unorganized. If these regions are identified as agricultural economic zones and modern farming techniques are introduced, Assam could potentially supply food grains to the entire northeastern region of India. Particularly during the dry season, the use of river water through solar-powered irrigation systems could make it possible to cultivate crops three or even four times a year. Besides paddy, there exists considerable scope for the commercial cultivation of jute, mustard, pulses, and seasonal vegetables. Greater emphasis on floating gardens and flood-resistant crop varieties would ensure that agricultural activities continue even during periods of flooding. The fertile grasslands along the riverbanks also provide excellent opportunities for livestock rearing and dairy production. Rather than treating agriculture merely as a means of subsistence, the Brahmaputra's water and fertile soil can help transform it into a profitable and sustainable industry.

The potential of the Brahmaputra in the field of fisheries is so extensive that it could transform the economic landscape of rural Assam. It is ironic that despite being a land of rivers, Assam continues to depend heavily on truckloads of fish imported from other states. To eliminate this dependency, the Brahmaputra and its tributaries must be utilized through scientific methods. Cage culture, a system of fish farming using enclosures placed within the river, can be widely implemented in areas where water currents are relatively slow and depths are suitable. Fish raised under such conditions grow rapidly and retain their natural taste due to the environment in which they are nurtured. Declaring selected stretches of the river as sanctuaries for breeding and conservation would facilitate the natural increase of indigenous fish species. Beyond food fish, many small and ornamental fish species found in the Brahmaputra command significant demand in international markets, creating opportunities for foreign exchange earnings through exports. Simultaneously, the establishment of fish feed industries, cold storage facilities, and fish-processing units would improve the economic conditions of fishing communities as well as many others associated with the sector. Maintaining a pollution-free river and protecting its biodiversity are essential components of this economic model, because the fisheries economy can survive only if the river itself re-

mains healthy and vibrant.

Tourism represents another largely untapped goldmine associated with the Brahmaputra. Across the world, cities situated along rivers derive a substantial portion of their economic activity from river tourism. The natural beauty of the Brahmaputra, its vast sandbars, river islands such as Majuli, and the wildlife of Kaziranga together create the ingredients for a unique tourism package capable of attracting visitors from across the globe. Apart from the few expensive cruise services currently available, affordable river tourism options should be developed for middle-class and ordinary travelers. Seasonal riverbank camping on sandbars, adventure water sports, and traditional boat racing events could help transform tourism into a vibrant industry. Integrating tribal villages along the riverbanks into rural tourism initiatives would allow visitors to experience local culture and traditions while creating income-generating opportunities for residents. Local cuisine, handicrafts, and folk arts would further enhance the attractiveness of these experiences. Beautifying river ghats, ensuring visitor safety, and establishing quality hotels and lodges would enable Brahmaputra-based tourism to play a significant role in addressing unemployment. Floating restaurants offering breathtaking views of sunrise and sunset on the river could also emerge as profitable business ventures.

No state can achieve industrial advancement without developing its energy sector, and the Brahmaputra possesses immense potential in this regard. Concerns regarding large dams are understandable because of their environmental impact and the region's seismic vulnerability. However, this does not mean that hydropower development should be abandoned altogether. Small-scale run-of-the-river projects that utilize the river's natural flow can generate electricity with minimal environmental disruption. Modern technology has also introduced turbines capable of being submerged in flowing water, where they generate power simply through the force of the current. Such projects could provide affordable electricity to villages and industries located along the riverbanks. Furthermore, the open landscapes along the Brahmaputra receive abundant sunlight. Solar panels installed on riverbanks and unused sandbars could facilitate large-scale solar energy generation. By combining hydropower and solar power in hybrid systems, Assam could move toward complete energy self-sufficiency. Reliable and affordable electricity would encourage industrial investment, accelerate economic growth, and reduce

dependence on fossil fuels. Prioritizing the perpetual energy of the Brahmaputra would benefit both the economy and the environment.

Another important aspect of a river-centric economy is the management of sediments and sand, which should be viewed as resources rather than problems. The gradual rise of the Brahmaputra's riverbed has contributed to increased flooding. Scientific dredging would enhance the river's carrying capacity while simultaneously yielding valuable sand and soil for construction purposes. As urban expansion continues, demand for construction materials has increased substantially, and the Brahmaputra's sand resources can help meet this demand. Soil extracted through dredging operations could be used to strengthen and widen embankments, creating transportation corridors while simultaneously improving flood management. This approach is widely known around the world as riverfront development. The excavated soil could also be used to fill low-lying areas for industrial or residential development. It may even serve as raw material for brick-making industries, generating additional revenue. Nevertheless, expert guidance is essential to ensure that environmental balance is not disturbed. Industries manufacturing geobags and other erosion-control materials could also emerge along the riverbanks. In this way, what is often considered waste within the river system can be transformed into valuable economic assets through careful planning.

Assam's growing urbanization and industrialization have led to a rapid increase in water demand, and in this respect the Brahmaputra remains our most dependable resource. Beyond Guwahati, large-scale projects are needed to supply treated drinking water to other towns and cities located along the river. As concerns grow worldwide regarding future water scarcity, the significance of this immense reservoir of freshwater becomes increasingly evident. Commercial bottling and marketing of purified water could itself become a major industry. Industries also require substantial quantities of water, making river-side industrial zones particularly advantageous. Through dedicated pipeline systems, water could be supplied to industries while generating revenue for the state. At the same time, strict legal measures and advanced treatment plants must be mandatory to ensure that industrial waste does not pollute the river. The concept of the Blue Economy is not limited to oceans; it is equally applicable to large river systems such as the Brahmaputra. Effective water management and responsible commercialization can play a decisive role in strengthening Assam's economic foundations.

In conclusion, developing a Brahmaputra-centered economy is not merely an option for Assam; it is an essential step toward the state's long-term sustainability and self-reliance. For too long, we have regarded the river primarily as a source of hardship, whereas the real challenge has been our lack of vision and planning. If the immense natural wealth bestowed upon us is utilized scientifically and in an environmentally responsible manner, Assam will have no need to depend excessively on others. Achieving this transformation will require strong government policies, proactive administration, and a change in public perception. Rather than fearing the river, we must respect it, understand its strength, and make it a partner in our development journey. When the younger generation begins to

The growing shadow of inflation

By: Dr Priyanka Saurabh

In a vast and developing country like India, inflation is not just an economic term, but a reality deeply embedded in the daily lives of millions of families, directly impacting their income, savings, food, education, and future plans. Recent reports and market trends indicate that prices of daily necessities have increased by 15 to 20 percent since March. Essential products like edible oil, soap, detergent, coffee, handwash, snacks, shampoo, and pulses are all steadily rising. Additionally, the increase in the prices of petrol, diesel, and gas cylinders has further exacerbated the hardships of the common consumer.

Inflation has the greatest impact on middle- and lower-income groups. These groups have limited incomes, and the bulk of their expenditures are devoted to essential needs such as food, housing, education, and health. When the prices of everyday goods rise, their savings opportunities diminish. As a result, families are forced to cut back on their needs or resort to debt.

According to the report, edible oil prices have seen the largest increase. While they increased by 3 to 5 percent in June, the increase has reached 20 to 25 percent since March. India imports a large portion

of its edible oil needs. Fluctuations in international crude oil and edible oil prices directly impact the Indian market. Geopolitical tensions in West Asia, supply chain disruptions, and increased transportation costs have made edible oils more expensive.

Another significant driver of inflation is rising energy prices. Domestic gas cylinder prices have risen by more than 10 percent, while commercial cylinders, petrol, and diesel have also become more expensive. Energy is the backbone of any economy. When fuel prices rise, transportation costs increase. This impact is felt at every level, from farms to markets, from factories to markets, and from warehouses to consumers. Consequently, the price of almost every commodity increases.

Today, companies are also under pressure from rising costs. Rising costs of raw materials, electricity, transportation, and packaging have increased production costs. In this situation, companies adopt two approaches: either raising product prices or reducing package sizes. Consumers often don't realize that a product available at the same price is now available in smaller quantities. In economic terms, this is called "shrinkflation." This is also a hidden form of inflation. The most obvious impact of infla-

tion is seen in the kitchen. A middle-class family's monthly kitchen budget, which used to be 15,000 rupees, can now reach 17,000 to 18,000 rupees due to rising prices. This increase may seem small, but over a year, this additional expense adds up to thousands of rupees. This situation becomes even more difficult for families with stable incomes.

The situation in rural areas is no less challenging. Rising costs of diesel, fertilizers, seeds, and pesticides have made agricultural production more expensive. Farmers don't receive fair prices for their crops, while consumers have to purchase the same products at higher prices. Thus, the burden of inflation falls on both producers and consumers, while the intermediary supply chain and market structures reap greater profits.

Inflation also has profound social impacts. When essential commodities become more expensive, families first cut back on spending on entertainment, tourism, and luxuries. This then impacts areas such as education, health, and nutrition. Many families are unable to afford nutritious food for their children. This can lead to malnutrition and health problems. On the other hand, reduced spending on education impacts future human capital.

Economically, controlled inflation is considered a sign of development, as it indicates increased demand and production. However, when inflation rises faster than income growth, it creates economic imbalances. This is the concern that is emerging in the current situation. Wage and employment growth rates are not as fast as the rising prices of essential commodities. This is reducing real purchasing power.

The Reserve Bank of India and the government take steps from time to time to control inflation. Measures such as changing interest rates, reducing import duties, monitoring stockpiles of essential commodities, and increasing market supply are taken. However, due to global conditions, international trade, and geopolitical tensions, these efforts are often limited in effectiveness.

The current situation requires the government to adopt a multi-pronged strategy. Domestic production must be promoted to reduce dependence on imports of edible oils and essential commodities. Expanding modern technologies in the agricultural sector, developing storage facilities, and increasing supply chain efficiency are essential. Hoarding and artificial price increases must be closely monitored. A review of the tax structure on petroleum products could also provide

relief to consumers.

Consumers also play an important role. Avoiding unnecessary purchases, budgeting, prioritizing local products, and developing a saving habit are essential. Comparing prices digitally to find the best options can also help reduce expenses.

Inflation isn't just a matter of economic statistics; it's a question of the living standards, nutrition, education, and future prospects of millions of Indian families. If the prices of essential commodities continue to rise at this rate, the impact will not only be limited to household budgets but will also impact the pace of social and economic development. Therefore, the government, industry, and consumers—all three—must work together to find balanced and long-term solutions.

Today, the need is to ensure that the brilliance of development is visible not only in statistics, but also in the common man's plate, kitchen, and pocket. Unless inflation is effectively controlled, the benefits of economic progress will not fully reach the last person in society. The challenge of inflation is not just a government challenge, but a shared challenge for the entire nation, and its solution is possible only through collective efforts. (Dr. Priyanka Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.)

Why India's Sex selection law needs a rethink

By: K. S. Uplabdh Gopal

India's law against sex selection belongs to a specific technological and social moment. Amniocentesis, a prenatal diagnostic procedure that examines amniotic fluid for foetal abnormalities, entered Indian medicine in the 1970s, followed by the wider spread of ultrasonography (USG) in the 1980s and 1990s. These technologies arrived in a deeply entrenched patriarchal society where sons carried lineage, property, ritual duties, and old-age security, while daughters were often treated as economic burdens. Prenatal diagnosis thus gave an old hierarchy a new instrument. The result was part of what demographers came to call the "missing women" phenomenon, first identified by economist Amartya Sen. By the 1990s and early 2000s, estimates placed sex-selective abortions in India at roughly 480,000 female foetuses each year.

The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, or PC&PNDT Act of 1994, emerged from that history. Its moral purpose remains clear. India's commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 2013 Commonwealth Charter require the state to confront practices that deny girls equal worth before birth. Three decades later, the medical terrain has changed. Point-of-care ultrasound (POCUS) now brings USG to the bedside in emergency medicine, anaesthesia, critical care, trauma, vascular access, and rural diagnosis. Indian regulation still approaches ultrasound through the anxieties of foetal sex disclosure, even as clinical literature argues that the framework has restricted access to diagnostic USG and placed a heavier burden on poor and rural patients.

The Act's success in curbing sex selection remains difficult to isolate from broader socio-economic shifts, while its enforcement mechanisms have at times treated clerical errors as serious violations, fostering a climate of fear and defensive medicine.

A law created to prevent the misuse of prenatal diagnosis now deserves review because its administrative design may be narrowing the legitimate future of ultrasound in Indian healthcare. Furthermore, the Act's success in curbing sex selection remains difficult to isolate from broader socio-economic shifts, while its enforcement mechanisms have at times treated clerical errors as serious violations, fostering a climate of fear and defensive medicine. However, a critique of the regulatory framework surrounding ultrasound technology is not, and should not be framed as, an argument for restricting safe abortion access or compromising women's reproductive autonomy, which remains a cornerstone of public health.

Sex Ratios and the Limits of Enforcement Data

The PC&PNDT Act is often discussed as though subsequent improvements in sex ratio at birth (SRB) can be read as evidence of statutory success, but the demographic literature suggests caution. The "pioneer" theory of sex ratio transition describes how wealthier and better-educated groups may be the first to adopt sex-selective technologies, as they have earlier access to private diagnostic services. With further social and economic



change, these same groups may also begin to shift earlier towards a weaker preference for sons. The experience of north-western India, including Sikh communities in Punjab and Haryana, fits this more complex pattern. A Pew Research Center analysis of National Family Health Survey data notes that Sikhs had among the widest sex-ratio gaps in the early 2000s, followed by one of the sharpest corrections in later years. Early access to USG, landholding patrilineal norms, and low fertility were associated with severe distortion. Later improvements occurred alongside education, urbanisation, changing aspirations, and a reduced stated preference for sons.

Table 1: India-level PC&PNDT implementation indicators from available sources

Reporting point	Registered Diagnostic Facilities	Machines Sealed / Seized	Court Cases Filed	Convictions Secured	Medical Licences Suspended / Cancelled	Facility Registrations Suspended / Cancelled	Source
June 2017	58,338	NA	2,636	421	118	NA	RS
September 2017	59,214	1,992	2,695	421	118	NA	MoSPI
December 2017	59,836	2,007	2,713*	449	136	NA	PIB
September 2018	62,666	2,081	2,840	586	138	NA	MoSPI
September 2019	67,084	2,220	3,057	607	142	NA	Blog
June 2020	68,818	2,220	3,116	601	145	NA	PIB
June 2021	72,965	2,589	3,201	617	145	NA	PIB
June 2022	79,231	3,238	3,383	663	151	NA	MoSPI
June 2023	82,281	4,853	3,563	731	145	NA	PIB
June 2024	91,925	3,541	3,839	NA	NA	12,251	MoHFW
September 2024	93,366	3,570	3,839	NA	NA	12,455	PIB
June 2025	98,595	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	PIB

Table 1 presents India-level Quarterly Progress Report (QPR) indicators on PC&PNDT implementation. The underlying QPR portal could not be accessed during compilation, so the table has been reconstructed from Parliamentary answers, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) annual reports, and publicly available Press Information Bureau (PIB) releases. The rapid growth in

registered diagnostic bodies, from 49,544 in March 2014 to 98,595 by June 2025, shows how far the regulatory net around ultrasound has expanded. Yet the enforcement of the PC&PNDT Act is often measured through process indicators such as registration, inspection, machine sealing, and cases filed rather than evidence of sex determination prevented. The inconsistency in the machine-seizure series reinforces this problem. Machines sealed or seized rose from 3,238 in June 2022 to 4,853 in June 2023, before falling to 3,541 in June 2024. If these are cumulative figures, the fall should be explained. If they reflect currently sealed machines, released machines, revised re-

ported or definitional changes, the category should say so. Without that clarity, the data cannot tell us whether the Act is detecting illegal sex selection or penalising procedural non-compliance. Highlighting this disconnect, a recent article by a former health secretary cited a 2020 analysis revealing that 68 percent of violations were purely procedural. The former secretary argued that sealing

machines and pursuing criminal prosecution over minor clerical errors reflects a failure of implementation rather than legislative intent. A 2024 NATHEALTH report also emphasised this figure, noting that current regulatory complexities and prolonged approval processes create widespread apprehension among genuine practitioners.

The low cumulative count of medical licences suspended or cancelled also deserves attention. Recently available QPR figures place it around 145, despite a regulatory universe approaching over three decades. This gap suggests that much of the implementation record could be centred on facility registration, paperwork, inspections and machine control. The human consequences of the law also require evaluation beyond SRB. Studies on sex selection bans indicate that when son preference persists, discrimination can move into postnatal investments. Families with firstborn daughters may continue childbearing until a son is born, thus increasing the family size and diluting resources. Research has associated exposure to the ban with reduced antenatal care, lower vaccination and breastfeeding, higher child mortality among firstborn female families, and later educational disadvantage for girls.

Studies on sex selection bans indicate that when son preference persists, discrimination can move into postnatal investments. Families with firstborn daughters may continue childbearing until a son is born, thus increasing the family size and diluting resources. The **Technological Stranglehold** The PC&PNDT Act has had an unintended constraining effect on the spread of USG beyond obstetrics. In 1994, the ultrasound machine was largely a cart-based, expensive device used for obstetric and abdominal imaging. That world has changed. Today, USG is a portable and versatile modality. In emergency medicine, POCUS is used for the Focused Assessment with Sonography for Trauma (FAST) to detect internal bleeding. In anaesthesiology and pain medicine, USG has replaced blind anatomical

landmarks for guiding peripheral nerve blocks and vascular access.

The Act's regulatory architecture fails to distinguish adequately between obstetric imaging and life-saving non-obstetric POCUS. It assumes that the primary risk lies in the physical mobility of the machine. Handheld and portable USG devices, including those connected to smartphones or tablets, are therefore subjected to stringent restrictions. Movement outside registered premises is generally prohibited. Specialists whose work has no connection with pregnancy must still pass through a registration regime designed for foetal sex determination. Import and licensing requirements for ultrasound scanners add further delay. Fear of machine seizure and excessive documentation may deter hospitals from procuring these devices.

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The restriction has deeper consequences for rural healthcare. Where computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) modalities are scarce or unaffordable, diagnostic USG can be the only realistic radiation-free imaging option. The framework imposes the collateral cost of preventing sex selection on the poorest patients. New technology will intensify this tension. Three-dimensional (3D), four-dimensional (4D), and artificial intelligence (AI)-enhanced 8K imaging can improve anomaly detection but may complicate compliance when sex-related information becomes easier to infer. For example, 8K ultrasound can turn routine foetal imaging into a highly detailed anatomical rendering; however, during a standard measurement, even a slight movement of the probe near the pelvis may make foetal sex visible on screen, forcing radiologists to monitor not only what they see but also what is saved or printed.

Indian Diaspora and International Lessons

Perhaps the most potent evidence that administrative regulation cannot defeat entrenched cultural bias comes from demographic data regarding the Indian diaspora living in Western healthcare systems. In the United Kingdom, where sex-selective abortion is strictly illegal, an official government report examining 3.6 million live births between 2017 and 2021 found a statistically significant imbalance exclusively among children of Indian ethnicity at third or later birth orders. The ratio was 113 boys per 100 girls, prompting official demographic estimates that hundreds of female births were "missing" from the observed distribution.

Similarly, a peer-reviewed 2025 study analysing over two million births in Western Australia and New South Wales found heavily male-biased ratios among Indian-born and Chinese-born mothers. For Indian-born mothers, third births following two girls resulted in a ratio of 131 boys per 100 girls (SRB 1.31). This suggests that regulation alone is unlikely to eliminate the practice where son preference remains strong, and it may instead

shift the route through which sex selection is pursued. Banning the technology locally merely drives the practice underground, overseas, or into parallel technological avenues (such as blood-based non-invasive prenatal testing/NIPT), reinforcing the argument that long-term solutions depend on sustained shifts in social norms.

Asian comparisons add another lesson. China and Vietnam prohibit non-medical foetal sex identification and sex selection; their models focus more directly on the prohibited act than on the continuous supervision of every legal ultrasound machine. South Korea offers a different history. After decades of son preference and skewed birth ratios, social change has helped to normalise the sex ratio at birth. In 2024, its Constitutional Court struck down the remaining ban on foetal sex disclosure before 32 weeks, declaring it unconstitutional. The lesson is not that India should emulate any one model. Perhaps laws on sex selection should be revisited from time to time as social norms and technologies change.

Reform Architecture

The reform India needs is not a retreat from the ban on sex selection. It is a re-design of the machinery through which that ban is enforced. The first step should be a national evaluation of the PC&PNDT Act. India needs to understand how much of the change in SRB can be attributed to the law and how much reflects fertility decline, education, urbanisation, and changing son preference. QPR indicators should be rebuilt into a public dashboard that separates cases filed, convictions, acquittals, appeals, offence type, machines ever seized, machines currently sealed, machines released, registration suspensions and trial duration.

Portable and handheld POCUS devices should be regulated through training standards, device registration, digital logs, and random inspections, rather than rules that treat mobility as the risk.

The second reform should separate obstetric from non-obstetric ultrasound. Facilities using USG exclusively for emergency medicine, anaesthesia, critical care, pain medicine, orthopaedics, vascular access, and rural diagnosis should have a lighter, faster pathway. Portable and handheld POCUS devices should be regulated through training standards, device registration, digital logs, and random inspections, rather than rules that treat mobility as the risk.

The third reform lies in technology. India should move from paper-heavy compliance to auditable systems. Encrypted image logs, machine-use records, geotagged scans and tamper-resistant storage would give regulators a better basis for detecting misuse than clerical documents alone.

The stabilisation of India's SRB owes as much to rising socio-economic factors as it does to the punitive measures of the PC&PNDT Act. Continuing to police the ultrasound machine as a blunt proxy for policing human behaviour ignores the realities of modern medicine. By evolving the law from a rigid, machine-centric dragnet into a risk-stratified regulatory structure, India can maintain its vital guardrails because stopping the misuse of ultrasound should not ultimately prevent a nation from using ultrasound well. (Courtesy: ORF)

High-fat diet may disrupt gut bacteria, fuel anxiety

By: Kelsey Costa

Individuals with obesity are more likely to experience anxiety and other mental health disorders.

Among various overlapping factors, high-fat diets have been identified as a possible contributor to both obesity and anxiety. These diets can also change the composition of our gut microbiome.

The gut microbiome might be the key link, as it may influence obesity-related metabolic factors. Trusted Source and affect anxiety-like behavior through the microbiota-gut-brain axis.

These connections could help explain, in part, why obesity and anxiety can often occur together.

To delve deeper into the intricate relationships between high-fat diets, obesity, anxiety, and the gut microbiome, a new study investigated the effects of a high-fat diet over 9 weeks on rats.

The study analyzed shifts in the gut microbiome, microbiome-gut-brain axis, and serotonin (serotonergic) systems in the brain. These systems are known to influence both anxiety and metabolism.

The results suggest that high-fat-diet-induced obesity may be associated with altered signaling along the microbiome-gut-serotonergic brain axis, leading to increased anxiety-related behaviors in rats.

In other words, obesity caused by a high-fat diet may disrupt gut bacteria and their signaling pathways to the brain. This may ultimately impact brain chemicals associated with anxiety.

High-fat diets induce obesity and anxiety-like behavior in rats

Researchers from the University of Colorado Boulder explored how high-fat diets affect gut microbiome composition and diversity, brain serotonin systems, and anxiety-like behaviors.

For 9 weeks, they studied two groups of rats:

- 12 rats fed a control diet containing 11% of their daily calories from fat
- 12 rats fed a high-fat diet containing 45% of their daily calories from fat

Weekly fecal samples were collected to analyze gut microbiome changes, and behavioral tests were conducted at the end of the study.

The researchers also measured changes in body composition related to the diets, including final body weight, weight gain, and adiposity (body fat).

Results showed that the rats fed a high-fat diet

gained more weight and body fat. They also had significantly lower gut microbiome diversity, which is generally linked to poorer health.

These rats also had a higher Firmicutes to Bacteroidetes bacteria ratio. Trusted Source, a marker of dysbiosis often associated with obesity and the Western diet.

Additionally, the high-fat diet group exhibited increased expression of genes related to serotonin production and signaling within the brainstem's dorsal raphe nucleus. This area of the brain is linked to stress and anxiety.

Although serotonin is often regarded as a "happy chemical," certain serotonin neurons can trigger temporary fear or anxiety-like behavioral responses when activated, the study authors explained.

The findings suggest that high-fat diets alter gut microbiome composition in ways associated with increased body fat and weight and changes in brain serotonin systems related to anxiety.

How a high-fat diet might impact gut microbiome and mental health

Medical News Today spoke with Thomas M. Holland, MD, MS, a physician-scientist and assistant professor at the RUSH Institute for Healthy Aging, RUSH University, College of Health Sciences, who was not involved in the study.

He noted that a high-fat diet "tends to reduce the overall diversity of the gut microbiome, leading to a less complex microbial community [which] can impair the gut's ability to maintain a balanced environment."

MNT also spoke with Timothy Frie, MS, a nutritional neuroscientist and doctor of health science candidate with a certificate in nutritional psychology from the Center for Nutritional Psychology, who was not involved in the study.

He further explained, "[t]he microbiome-gut-serotonergic brain axis represents a critical communication pathway between the gut microbiota and the brain, particularly focusing on serotonin, a neurotransmitter essential for mood regulation."

"Serotonin is primarily produced in the gut, with about 95% of the body's serotonin. Trusted Source found in the gastrointestinal tract. The gut microbiota influence the production and function of serotonin through the synthesis of its precursor, tryptophan, and modulation of serotonergic receptors and transporters."

— Timothy Frie, MS



"The significance of this axis in mental health is profound. Alterations in the gut microbiome can lead to dysregulation of serotonin levels, impacting mood, anxiety, and overall mental health," Frie said.

For example, he said, an imbalance in the microbial community (gut dysbiosis) can result in increased intestinal permeability, systemic inflammation, and altered serotonin signaling.

According to Frie, this can trigger or worsen mental health conditions such as anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and depression.

"Understanding this axis opens up new avenues for therapeutic interventions targeting the gut microbiome to modulate brain function and improve mental health outcomes," he said.

Could these findings in rats be applicable to humans?

"A diet high in saturated fats and low in fiber can reduce bacterial diversity and alter the balance of gut bacteria, similar to the effects seen in rats," Holland said.

Additionally, he said, "[h]uman studies have shown that diets high in saturated fats and low in healthy nutrients are associated with higher rates of anxiety and depression."

"The behavioral changes observed in rats pro-

vide a potential mechanistic explanation for these associations in humans," Holland explained.

Frie added that "[w]hile there are inherent differences between rats and humans, many physiological and biochemical pathways are conserved across species."

"The basic principles of the microbiome-gut-brain axis, as observed in rat studies, provide valuable insights applicable to human health. In both rats and humans, diet-induced changes in the gut microbiome can significantly influence brain function and behavior through similar mechanisms."

— Timothy Frie, MS

"Human studies have corroborated findings from rodent models, showing that dietary interventions can modulate the gut microbiome, affect serotonin levels, and impact mental health," he said.

While the study's findings offer insight into potential therapeutic interventions for mental health, the mechanisms underlying the observed changes were not directly investigated.

The present study also has other notable limitations, such as exclusively including male rats of certain ages, which raises questions about the findings' applicability to females or other life stages.

The study authors suggest future research should address these factors, particularly given the higher incidence of anxiety and other mental health disorders in females.

Overall, more research is needed to fully understand the microbiome-gut-serotonergic brain axis and its implications for human health.

Foods to improve gut microbiome, gut-brain signaling, and anxiety

"[This study's] findings underscore the importance of dietary interventions in the treatment of anxiety disorders, particularly for individuals with obesity," Holland said.

He emphasized, "By improving dietary habits, such as increasing the intake of healthy fats and reducing unhealthy fats, individuals can support better gut-brain signaling, reduce inflammation, and enhance overall mental health."

Holland specifically recommends increasing the intake of:

- Omega-3-rich foods: fatty fish, flaxseeds, chia seeds, hemp seeds, and walnuts
- Fermented foods: yogurt with live cultures, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, miso, and tempeh
- Prebiotic foods: garlic, onions, leeks, asparagus, bananas, and oats
- Dark leafy greens: spinach, kale, Swiss chard, arugula, and collard greens
- Berries: blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries

Frie similarly advises consuming a diet rich in omega-3s, fermented foods, and fiber from fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to promote the growth of beneficial gut bacteria, enhancing microbial diversity and gut health.

Additionally, both experts highlighted the importance of hydration for overall and digestive health and recommended meeting daily water needs.

"Ensuring adequate fiber intake, including probiotic and prebiotic foods, and maintaining proper hydration will promote a healthy gut microbiome, reduce inflammation, support overall brain health, and improve mood and anxiety levels," Holland said.

Holland also suggested reducing the intake of high-trans and saturated-fat foods, fast and fried foods, dark red meat, and high-fat dairy products.

"Limiting the intake of high-fat and processed foods helps prevent gut dysbiosis and reduces inflammation, supporting better gut-brain communication," Frie agreed. (Courtesy: MNT)

Rahul 'undermining' achievements of India, its people: FM Sitharaman

BENGALURU, June 14: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday slammed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, accusing him of "undermining" the achievements of India and its people while targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Centre.

She said Rahul was "ignoring" India's achievements even in the face of major crises like COVID and the conflict in West Asia.

Sitharaman clarified that there is no crisis awaiting in the country as is being portrayed by Rahul Gandhi.

"Every time the Congress's leader of opposition speaks in the Lok Sabha, it is only to decry everything, undermine the achievements of the people of India, thinking that he is undermining Prime Minister Modi or the central government," she said.

She was addressing the party functionaries during the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Samavesh in the city to celebrate the 12 years of the BJP rule in the country under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi.

According to her, Rahul Gandhi constantly says that everything is going to crumble in the next few weeks.

The LoP keeps saying that there

is a big disaster awaiting, but there is no disaster awaiting India.

"On the contrary, quarter after quarter, year after year India is the fastest growing economy," she underlined.

She said it is not the central government, which is claiming that India is the fastest-growing economy, but the GDP numbers were indicative of this. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also said India was growing, she added.

The Union minister alleged that repeated criticism by the Congress leader could create a false perception among citizens about the country's economic condition.

"Yet the Leader of the Opposition and his party continue to undermine India. They try to make people believe that India is in trouble. Even amidst crises in West Asia and disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz, India continues to move forward."

Explaining the impact of geopolitical tensions on fuel supplies and global trade, Sitharaman said the challenges extended beyond fluctuations in crude oil and LPG prices.

"These challenges affect not only crude oil prices and LPG prices but also global shipping.



Shipping companies hesitate to send vessels through conflict zones. Insurance premiums increase because ships risk being attacked. Whether a vessel is empty or carrying crude oil, insurance costs rise significantly, and those costs ultimately have to be paid to ensure supplies reach the country."

Despite these global headwinds, she emphasised that the Narendra Modi government had ensured uninterrupted supplies despite such challenges.

"Unfortunately, none of this seems to matter to the Leader of the Opposition," Sitharaman said. Calling on BJP workers to take

marked by both development and welfare, citing reductions in multi-dimensional poverty, expansion of tap water connections, sanitation coverage, free LPG connections and food security programmes.

"Twenty-five crore Indians have come out of multidimensional poverty. Extreme poverty has declined from 29.17 per cent in 2013-14 to about 11.28 per cent. Twelve crore household toilets have been built under rural sanitation programmes, achieving near-universal coverage," she claimed.

Highlighting what she described as transformative changes in governance, Sitharaman pointed to the digital public infrastructure ecosystem built around Jan Dhan accounts, Aadhaar and mobile connectivity.

She noted that India now has 58 crore Jan Dhan accounts, 144 crore Aadhaar identities and 125 crore mobile connections.

UPI had become a global model for digital transactions.

Sitharaman rejected allegations that the Centre had neglected Karnataka and cited tax devolution, grants and infrastructure investments.

"The Karnataka government frequently claims that the Centre is

not giving the state its due share. Let us look at the facts. Tax devolution to Karnataka between 2014 and 2026 amounted to about ₹ four lakh crore—five times more than the ₹ 82,000 crore received in the comparable pre-2014 period," Sitharaman, who is a Rajya Sabha member from Karnataka, said.

She added that grants-in-aid to Karnataka between 2014 and 2026 stood at about ₹ 2.71 lakh crore and that the state had also received more than ₹ 18,000 crore under the Centre's 50-year interest-free loan scheme.

Referring to the vision for 2047, Sitharaman said the responsibility of building a developed India could not be left to the government alone.

"We have only 21 years left until 2047. It may sound distant, but it is not. India needs greater innovation. Karnataka is India's innovation capital. It has led aerospace development, defence manufacturing and biotechnology. Therefore, the responsibility cannot be left to the government alone."

"All of us must commit ourselves so that 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' helps India achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047," she added. (PTI)

US-based Christian missionary org, others booked under UAPA

BENGALURU, June 14: A case has been registered against a US-based organisation and six others after the ED lodged a complaint alleging illegal utilisation of foreign funds through a network of foreign debit cards, including in Left Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected areas of the country.

Based on the complaint filed by ED Assistant Director Sunil Kumar Sinhar, Kothanur Police in Bengaluru registered on June 11 under various provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

The FIR names Jonathan S Rajan, Micah Mark, Ajit Verghese Mathai, Varghese Chacko, Bablu Kurmi, Supreme Joy, US-based The Timothy Initiative and others as accused.

In the complaint, the ED alleged that searches conducted on April 18 and 19 under provisions of the Income Tax Act and the Foreign Exchange Management Act revealed that the accused, in association with TTI, used foreign-origin debit cards issued by a US bank to withdraw and utilise foreign funds across India.

The agency alleged that approximately ₹ 92.55 crore (USD 99,95,240) was utilised illegally during the six-month period from November 2025 to April 2026 in violation of FEMA and FCRA provisions. According to the FIR, Micah Mark was detained at Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport on April 18 and was allegedly found in possession of 24 foreign debit cards.

More than 1,000 such cards had been distributed across India, many carrying the common name 'Santosh Kumar' while using regional identifiers such as "NE-1", "NE-2" and "Southern Region-1".

The ED further alleged that suspicious cash withdrawals were detected in LWE-affected regions of Chhattisgarh. The FIR states that approximately ₹ 6.34 crore is estimated to have been withdrawn in areas including Dhamtari and Bastar over the past few years.

The complaint alleged that the use of foreign debit cards for large-scale cash withdrawals indicated the involvement of an organised network and that the funds were allegedly channelled into Naxalite-influenced regions. It stated that such activities constituted an unlawful activity under the UAPA and posed a threat to India's security and economic integrity.

The FIR also refers to alleged destruction of electronic evidence, claiming that Mica Mark admitted to deleting his account from the backend system, citing a report and video recording attached to the complaint.

According to the ED, Ajit Verghese Mathai acted as the overall financial head of TTI's India operations, while Jonathan Rajan oversaw the organisation's activities in the country. The complaint further alleged that funds withdrawn through the debit cards were used for TTI programmes and activities across India.

The FIR seeks legal action against the accused for offences including criminal conspiracy, cheating, forgery, use of forged documents and electronic records, engaging in unlawful activities, promoting unlawful activities, and conspiracy to commit terrorist acts under the UAPA.

The allegations contained in the FIR represent the claims of the complainant agency and are subject to investigation and judicial scrutiny. (PTI)

Four, including minor girl, held for planned Govindpuri fire that killed three

NEW DELHI, June 14: A 17-year-old girl and three others were apprehended for their alleged involvement in the Govindpuri fire tragedy that killed three family members, police said on Sunday. They allegedly set a scooter parked in the building ablaze to "teach a lesson" to a resident over a monetary dispute of around ₹ 80,000, police said. The fire broke out around 2:20 am on June 12 in a multi-storey residential building in Tughlakabad Extension, southeast Delhi, killing Pankaj Pandey (28), his sister Sonia (20) and his maternal grandmother Sushila Devi (70), while injuring eight others.

Police said Deepak, who lived on the fifth floor of the fire-wrecked building, allegedly took the money from the accused and refused to return it despite repeated demands, and the accused were allegedly upset with him.

"When their efforts failed, they conspired to teach him a lesson by setting his scooter, parked on the ground floor, on fire. However, the fire spread rapidly to other parked vehicles and engulfed the building, resulting in multiple casualties," police said.

After the fire incident, police examined CCTV footage of the locality and noticed a masked woman entering the building around 2:23

am, shortly before the fire broke out. Moments later, a bright glow was visible from inside the premises before the woman was seen leaving. Police said the footage became a crucial lead in the investigation, prompting them to examine the incident as an act of arson instead of an accidental fire.

"During the probe, teams examined CCTV footage from the area and noticed a woman entering the premises shortly before the fire broke out. Based on the evidence collected, police concluded that the blaze was a deliberate act of arson," the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) Hemant Tiwari said.

The investigators identified and apprehended the minor.

During questioning, she allegedly disclosed the involvement of Sarita and the role played by the other accused in planning the incident. The accused allegedly believed that damaging Deepak's vehicle would compel him to settle the dispute, police said.

"Investigation revealed that Niranjan (33) and his brother Rajkumar (27), both residents of Navjeevan Camp, allegedly hatched the plan because they wanted to pressure Deepak to return money," the DCP said.

Police said Sarita, Niranjan and Rajkumar were also arrested.

Police initially registered a case under Sections 287 (negligent conduct with respect to fire) and 106(1) (causing death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) after the incident and launched a probe.

Following the findings, police added sections of criminal conspiracy, culpable homicide not amounting to murder, attempt to commit culpable homicide, mischief by fire and lurking house-trespass by night under the BNS.

On June 12, police received a PCR call regarding the fire at 2:31 am and immediately rushed teams to the spot. Firefighters, police and residents launched a rescue operation and evacuated residents trapped inside the smoke-filled building.

Eight people sustained injuries and were shifted to AIIMS Trauma Centre and Safdarjung Hospital for treatment. Among those critically injured were Pankaj's mother Guddi Devi (50), who is speech-impaired, and his younger sister Moni (18), police had said earlier.

Police said the investigation established that a short circuit did not cause the fire, as initially suspected, and that evidence pointed to a pre-planned act intended to target a specific person. Police said further investigation is underway. (PTI)

Constitutional expert questions plan of TMC rebel MPs to seek 'real TMC' status from Speaker

NEW DELHI, June 14: A constitutional expert has questioned the move of the rebel Trinamool Congress MPs to seek "real TMC" status for the party's breakaway group from the Lok Sabha Speaker, saying such an authority lies with the Election Commission.

A group of dissident MPs on Friday claimed the support of 19 Lok Sabha members and announced they would meet Speaker Om Birla on Monday to seek recognition as the "real TMC" parliamentary group.

Former Lok Sabha secretary general and constitutional expert P D T Achary told PTI on Sunday that under the present circumstances in the TMC case, the Lok Sabha Speaker has no role.

"The power to decide on the real TMC lies with the Election Commission. In the Subhash Desai case, then chief justice of India D Y Chandrachud had made it clear that the speaker can decide in such a case while settling a case under the anti-defection law matter when there are two or more factions claiming to be the actual or real party," he opined.

He said the rebel group has to approach the EC with a plea that they have the largest number of MPs and MLAs and that they have control over the party's organisational wing.

The poll authority, he said, will then examine the case by listening to both the factions and decide on the case which has to withstand judicial scrutiny.

Citing anti-defection law and the 10th Schedule of the Constitution, Achary said as of now, they cannot be treated as a separate group and allocated different seats as the TMC led by Mamata Banerjee has already been allotted seats in the Lok Sabha.

He said as of now, the rebels have not been given the status of a recognised separate group, hence no separate sitting arrangements can be made for them at present.



The TMC has been rocked by a rebellion by a large section of its lawmakers in the state and at the Centre following its defeat in the West Bengal Assembly elections.

The party has 28 members in the Lok Sabha, and 13 in the Rajya Sabha, of whom three have resigned so far.

In a fresh jolt to the beleaguered Trinamool Congress chief, one of her closest political aides Sudip Bandyopadhyay on Saturday joined the rebel camp that is preparing to approach Birla to seek recognition as the "real TMC" parliamentary group.

Bandyopadhyay, a veteran parliamentarian who has long been regarded as one of Banerjee's trusted lieutenants in Parliament, had met Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav along with rebel TMC MP Satabdi Roy, as the dissident faction stepped up its challenge to the party leadership. He also met Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Sources in the dissident camp had said they want Bandyopadhyay to lead the group in the Lok Sabha.

The rebels have announced that they will meet Birla on Monday and seek recognition as the "real TMC" parliamentary group. (PTI)

Abhishek Banerjee, Kunal Ghosh at CID headquarters

KOLKATA, June 14: TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee reached the CID headquarters in Kolkata on Sunday for a second round of questioning in connection with the alleged forgery of signatures of MLAs for appointment of the leader of opposition in the West Bengal Assembly.

Later in the afternoon, TMC leader and MLA Kunal Ghosh, who the state probe agency summoned in the same matter, reached the Bengal Police Headquarters at Bhavani Bhawan.

The sleuths were not satisfied with the replies of the Diamond Harbour MP during his interrogation last week, and hence have been summoned again.

There is a probability that the two leaders may be made to sit face-to-face for interrogation, an officer said.

According to him, Banerjee was repeatedly asked about the details of the meeting where the "resolution was signed".

"Banerjee has been asked to provide some specific documents in connection with the case," the officer said, adding that the replies of both the TMC leaders would be cross-checked.

On May 6, TMC legislators met at Mamata Banerjee's Kalighat residence and proposed the name of Sovandeb Chattopadhyay for the post of Leader of the Opposition. Legislators present at the meeting reportedly expressed support by a show of hands.

The formal proposal, however, was not immediately submitted to the Assembly. Following the swearing-in of TMC MLAs on May 13 and 14, the Assembly Secretariat sought a resolution from the party naming its nominee for the post.

A fresh meeting was held on May 19, following which a document carrying signatures of 70 legislators in support of Chattopadhyay was submitted to the Assembly.

Questions were subsequently raised after discrepancies were allegedly noticed between signatures appearing on different documents submitted by TMC MLAs.

The matter eventually led to the registration of an FIR and a CID probe. The state probe has already questioned several legislators in connection with the case. (PTI)

Economic strength of small businesses, traders will lead to prosperity: Akhilesh

AGRA, June 14: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday said India cannot achieve prosperity unless small traders and businesses become economically strong, stressing the need to understand and address the challenges faced by the sector.

Addressing a "Vision India (PDA)" seminar in Agra, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said the initiative would focus on identifying why small businesses are declining and finding solutions through dialogue with entrepreneurs and stakeholders.

"I have come to Agra to seek your suggestions on why small businesses are being ruined. If we want to see India in a new form, we must begin by understanding the reasons behind the decline of small businesses," Yadav said. He said prosperity cannot be

achieved without the economic wellbeing of traders and entrepreneurs.

"Unless our business community becomes prosperous, we cannot move towards prosperity. We need to think on a larger scale about small businesses and those engaged in them," he said.

Yadav said the problems, expectations and aspirations of small traders could not be understood or resolved unless they were properly classified according to their nature and requirements. Referring to the Samajwadi Party government's tenure from 2012 to 2017, he said development works carried out during that period were visible to the public.

"You have seen development work taking place during the Samajwadi government. Through Vision India and

PDA dialogue, we want to connect entrepreneurs, professionals and intellectuals and engage in a progressive dialogue," he said.

Highlighting projects undertaken during his tenure, Yadav cited the Agra-Lucknow Expressway, metro rail projects and museums, claiming the expressway was the first state-funded expressway built in Uttar Pradesh and was completed in record time despite difficulties in securing financial support. He also referred to an earlier Vision India programme held in Ghaziabad that focused on farmers and agriculture.

"We had said that when the fields smile, the country smiles. That is where the wheels of small businesses and industries begin to move and where our economy starts," he said. (PTI)

Frozen shoulder, musculoskeletal disorders emerge as hidden complications of diabetes: Experts

NEW DELHI, June 14: As India grapples with one of the world's largest diabetes burdens, doctors are reporting a less-recognised consequence of the disease -- a rise in orthopaedic conditions ranging from frozen shoulder and trigger finger to nerve compression disorders and accelerated wear-and-tear of joints.

Experts said persistently high blood sugar can damage collagen, tendons, ligaments and nerves, increasing the risk of pain, stiffness and mobility problems that can significantly affect quality of life.

"We are increasingly seeing people in their 40s presenting with frozen shoulder, tendon problems and joint stiffness, conditions that were traditionally more common in older age groups. A major reason is the rising prevalence of diabetes and pre-diabetes at younger ages in India," Dr Skand Sinha, professor, Sports Injury Centre, VMMC and Safdarjung Hospital said.

The formation of advanced glycation end products accumulate in tendons and capsules, making tendons less elastic, prone to degeneration and tearing. The smallest blood vessels are narrowed, reducing the blood flow needed to maintain healthy rotator cuff, he explained.

According to doctors, greater awareness among physicians and routine screening for

metabolic disorders have also led to earlier detection of diabetes-related musculoskeletal complications.

Dr Abhimanyu Kumar, senior consultant, orthopaedics, at the Sitaram Bhartiya Institute of Science and Research, said doctors are increasingly finding musculoskeletal complaints to be an early indicator of diabetes in some patients.

"We often see patients coming with frozen shoulder, trigger finger, chronic tendon pain or unexplained joint stiffness, and subsequent investigations reveal previously undiagnosed or poorly controlled diabetes. In many cases, the orthopaedic complaint becomes the first warning sign of an underlying metabolic disorder," Kumar said.

He noted that diabetes-related musculoskeletal disorders are now being diagnosed at younger ages because Type 2 diabetes itself is occurring earlier in life.

"Chronic hyperglycaemia accelerates ageing of connective tissues. Excess glucose leads to the formation of advanced glycation end products that make collagen fibres thick, stiff and brittle, reducing flexibility of tendons and ligaments.

"Diabetes also impairs blood supply to these tissues and promotes low-grade inflammation, increasing the risk of frozen shoulder, trigger finger and tendon disorders," he said.



According to Kumar, poor glycaemic control significantly worsens the severity and progression of orthopaedic conditions. "Uncontrolled blood sugar accelerates cartilage degeneration, impairs tissue healing and increases the risk of complications

after fractures or orthopaedic surgery. Patients with diabetes are more likely to experience delayed bone healing, infections and prolonged recovery," he said.

Dr Sinha said injured tendons in people with diabetes generally heal more slowly and less effectively after injury.

Dr Sarvesh Pandey, joint replacement and arthroscopic surgeon, Indraprastha Apollo hospital, Delhi, said frozen shoulder affects an estimated 10-30 per cent of people with diabetes, compared with only 2-3 per cent of the general population, while trigger finger is also several times more common among diabetics.

Stressing the importance of early detection, he said timely screening can help identify musculoskeletal complications before they lead to significant disability.

"Many patients ignore mild shoulder stiffness, finger locking or joint pain, assuming these are age-related problems. However, early evaluation can help detect underlying diabetes or poor glycaemic control and allow treatment before permanent tissue damage occurs," he said.

Dr Pandey said diabetes is associated with a range of orthopaedic complications beyond frozen shoulder and trigger finger. These include diabetic hand syndrome, which causes thickening of the skin and restricted finger movement; Dupuytren's contracture, where scar tissue in the palm gradually pulls the fingers into a bent position; and Charcot arthropathy, a serious condition in which nerve damage leads to progressive destruction of joints, particularly in the feet and ankles.

He added that diabetes is also linked to osteoporosis, especially in people with Type 1 diabetes, and can accelerate osteoarthritis in those with Type 2 diabetes through metabolic and inflammatory changes.

"Good blood sugar control, regular foot examinations, maintaining a healthy weight and early physiotherapy or range-of-motion exercises are key to preventing disability and preserving mobility in people with diabetes," he said.

"People with diabetes should not ignore persistent shoulder pain, stiffness or weakness. Medical attention should be sought if shoulder pain lasts for more than six weeks, causes night-time discomfort, results in loss of strength, or is accompanied by swelling or redness," Dr Sinha said.

Most of these conditions can be managed effectively if diagnosed early. Treatment options range from physiotherapy and targeted exercise programmes to ultrasound-guided hydro-dissection, growth factor concentrate (GFC) injections and, in selected cases, arthroscopic surgery, he said.

"Advances in orthopaedic care have significantly improved outcomes for patients with diabetes-related shoulder disorders," Dr Sinha added. (PTI)

People's Party of Arunachal opposes AP Freedom of Religion Act

Act aims to regulate religious conversion

ITANAGAR, June 14: The People's Party of Arunachal (PPA) has strongly opposed the implementation of the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act (APFRA), demanding that the state government immediately convene a special assembly session to discuss its relevance.

PPA president Nabam Vivek on Saturday disclosed that the party passed a formal resolution against the law during its state executive meeting on June 11, which was attended by state office bearers and heads of various frontal wings.

A high-powered committee headed by retired justice BP Katakey submitted the draft rules to the state government on June 8, nearly 48 years after the legislation was enacted.

The Act, passed in 1978, prohibits religious conversion through force, fraud, or inducement, but remained unimplemented due to the absence of operational rules.

Vivek questioned the government's intent behind collecting religious demographic data under the

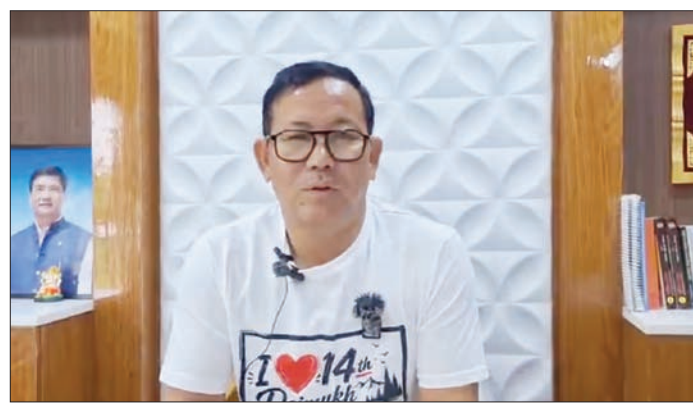
draft rules of the act.

"What will the government do with data regarding a citizen's religion? Whether an individual chooses to practice Sikhism, Buddhism, Christianity, or Hinduism, keeping a record of this information serves no governance purpose," Vivek said.

The act aims to regulate religious conversions. However, the PPA chief argued that the law has lost all relevance in 2026 and warned that its enforcement could severely disrupt the long-standing communal harmony, tribal identity, and peace in the state.

"This law will not save tribal identity, nor will it successfully stop anyone from choosing their faith. Instead, enforcing it creates a high risk of communal disharmony, leading to potential conflicts within families and tribes on religious lines," he said.

Highlighting Arunachal Pradesh's historic reputation as a peaceful state, Vivek drew a contrast with the rest of the Northeast region, noting that while other



states historically battled terrorism, Arunachal Pradesh remained largely peaceful.

"Arunachal has always been a peace-loving state, and we intend to keep it that way. The PPA opposes this act from the bottom of our hearts and will challenge it through every democratic and legislative process available," Vivek added, while urging the state government to halt the implementation of the act in the wider public interest.

Meanwhile, the Human Rights of

Arunachal (HRA) has urged the state government and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to reconsider and reject the recommendations of the High-Power Committee concerning the implementation of the APFRA, 1978.

In a memorandum submitted to Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Sunday, HRA expressed deep concern about the potential fallout if the Act is enforced and explicitly urged the state government not to implement APFRA in Arunachal

Pradesh.

Highlighting the state's long-standing tradition of peaceful coexistence among various faiths and communities, the rights body cautioned that enforcing the decades-old Act could severely disrupt the prevailing peace, brotherhood, and communal harmony.

It further contended that the implementation of APFRA yields limited public or administrative benefit.

"In our view, the implementation of APFRA is unlikely to bring any significant benefit either to the people of Arunachal Pradesh or to the state government. Instead, it may create misunderstanding and division among communities," it said in the memorandum.

Critiquing the High-Power Committee's recent findings, the organisation claimed that the recommendations fail to adequately represent the true aspirations and concerns of a vast section of the state's population, warning of unintended consequences for Arunachal's social fabric. (PTI)

Peace unlikely in Manipur unless people possessing illegal arms are disarmed: CM



IMPHAL, June 14: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Sunday said that peace is unlikely in the state unless all the people who are in possession of illegal weapons are disarmed.

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

"Until and unless those in possession of illegal arms are disarmed, peace is unlikely in the state. Be it Meitei, Kuki or Naga, we are calling for disarming everyone. Several meetings with security forces have been conducted," the chief minister told reporters.

Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla had in February 2025 urged warring groups to voluntarily surrender weapons robbed from security forces and other illegally held arms. The state was then under President's Rule, which was lifted a year later.

The chief minister said that Imphal valley is just 10 pc of the total state area, so more effective operations are needed in the hills.

Imphal valley is home to the Meitei community, while the Kuki and Naga communities live in the hills.

At least 260 people were killed and thousands became homeless in the conflict between the Meitei and Kuki people since May 3, 2023.

"The total number of CoBRA battalions to be deployed in Manipur would be increased from two

to three. Their operations would start after the necessary 45 days of training in the terrains and environment suitable to the state," the CM said.

CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) is an elite, specialised unit of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

"Law is above all of us. The particular case involving the death of six Nagas has been handed over to the NIA and all culprits -- whether a minister, an MLA or anybody -- would be punished," he said.

Singh was referring to the June 10 recovery of the bodies of six Naga men, believed to be of those held hostage for around a month following the killing of three church leaders in Kangpokpi district.

Their mortal remains were found a day after 14 Kuki individuals who were abducted at the same time by armed groups in Senapati district were released.

"To develop Manipur into an ideal state, the involvement of all communities is required. As for illegal immigrants, that would be detected through the SIR, and the government is also considering the demand for NRC implementation in the state," Singh said.

The chief minister also said that proper fencing and patrolling are equally needed.

On the Suspension of Operations (SoO) ceasefire pact among the Kuki Zo militant groups, the Centre and Manipur government, he said the state cabinet had previously sought abrogation of the pact. (PTI)

Wild elephants destroy house, family escapes unhurt in Meghalaya's South West Garo Hills

SHILLONG, June 14: A herd of wild elephants damaged a house in Meghalaya's South West Garo Hills district, but the family of six escaped unhurt, officials said on Sunday.

The incident took place on Saturday night in Joyfar village under the Betasing C&RD block, close to the India-Bangladesh border, where the elephants entered the property and caused extensive damage to the residence of Ketaki Hajong.

According to reports, the herd destroyed the kitchen, smashed cooking utensils and ransacked the room where food grains and other essential supplies were stored. However, the family, including four young children, managed to flee in time and escaped without injuries. In a separate incident, a wild elephant was electrocuted in the Bordu area under the Mawsynram C&RD Block on June 11, officials said. Authorities said a herd of elephants has been moving through parts of the Mawsynram Block after reportedly migrating from the Ranikor region and is currently believed to be in the Sonatola area.

The animals are suspected to have originated either from neighbouring Bangladesh or from South Garo Hills, a senior district official told. (PTI)

Election Training Sessions held in Balijan and Sagalee for SIR 2026

HT Correspondent

YUPIA, June 14: In a strategic move to streamline the forthcoming Special Intensive Revision (SIR) 2026, Papum Pare district conducted comprehensive offline training programs for Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and BLO Supervisors on Friday. The sessions, held at Balijan and Sagalee, focused on technological integration and procedural accuracy to ensure a robust electoral framework.

At the Balijan session, which hosted election functionaries from the 14-Doimukh Assembly Constituency, ADC-cum-ERO Shri Takar Rava emphasized the critical nature of the electoral roll's integrity. He directed officials to prioritize the enrollment of eligible voters while rigorously vetting and removing ineligible entries

through meticulous field verification. "Accuracy and transparency are the cornerstones of our electoral process," Rava stated, urging participants to maintain high standards throughout the revision exercise.

The technical training was led by Dr. Sandeep Banerjee, APO (Nirvachan), who provided hands-on instruction on the BLO App. The workshop covered digital data entry and the specific protocols required for the 2026 intensive revision.

Simultaneously, at Sagalee, BLOs from the 15-Sagalee Assembly Constituency gathered for a similar capacity-building exercise. ADC Sagalee Shri Kipa Raja underscored the vital role of field-level verification, noting that an error-free electoral roll is essential for a healthy democracy.

The session included the full participation of the Sagalee Sub-Division BLOs and the ERO's IT support team, ensuring that all logistical and technical queries were addressed.

Technical Expert APO Shri Saugata Maity demonstrated advanced methods for locating electors and managing family data through the Election Commission's digital platforms. Practical scenarios involving data management and verification were the focal points of his presentation.

These coordinated training initiatives mark a significant step in the district's preparation for SIR 2026, aiming to empower field functionaries with the tools and knowledge necessary for an effective and inclusive electoral update across Papum Pare.

15 kg opium seized in Manipur's Senapati

IMPHAL, June 14: Security forces seized 15 kg of opium from a vehicle in Manipur's Senapati district on Sunday, a police statement said.

It said while checking at T Khullen post by a joint team of Special Operations Team, Senapati district police, CRPF and Assam Rifles, a one car with a VIP flag post but without any escort was stopped for verification at around 9 am.

On verification, the driver was identified as Tarkeshwar Singh (45) of Tinsukia Margherita in Assam and was driving a vehicle which bore the insignia of an Army Brigadier (VIP flag post and one star), it said.

A nameplate with 'Army' on one side and 'Ministry of Defence' on the other side was also found inside the vehicle.

Checking of the vehicle led to the recovery of 17 packets of opium weighing 15.350 kg concealed in a compartment under the rear right door of the vehicle, it said.

On spot verification, it was established that the vehicle as well as the driver didn't belong to the army, and he had used the insignia of the army and the nameplate only for evading police checkings, it said.

A case has been registered at the Senapati police station under relevant sections of the ND & PA Act and BNS for further necessary legal action.

In another development, Churachandpur Police arrested a man and seized 3.127 kg of suspected brown sugar, in 77 soap cases, worth several lakhs in the market during a vehicle check-post operation at S Paukhozam Road. The accused was identified as Thongkhosei Haokip, of Molnoi Pallel in Tengnoupal district, presently residing at Deilhenphai village in Churachandpur. (PTI)

GNF lauds release of 14 Kuki detainees, calls for political engagement on Naga issues

Forum urges Centre and Manipur government to respond positively to Naga aspirations following release of 14 Kuki detainees



KOHIMA, June 14: The Global Naga Forum (GNF) has expressed appreciation to the United Naga Council (UNC) and Naga civil society organisations in Manipur for their decision to release 14 Kuki detainees on June 9, describing the move as a humane and commendable gesture.

In a statement, the GNF said the safe release of the detainees had been one of its key concerns. It noted that a GNF delegation met leaders of Naga civil society organisations in Senapati on May 23 and appealed for the release of the detainees.

The forum said that although it was convinced that six missing

Naga men were no longer alive, it believed innocent individuals should not suffer for crimes they did not commit. Instead of seeking revenge, the delegation had urged Naga leaders to facilitate the release of the detainees in a dignified and organised manner.

According to the GNF, the decision to release the detainees conveyed a message that the Naga people are guided by principles of humanity, justice and restraint rather than vengeance.

The forum also acknowledged the role played by various authorities and organisations, including the World Baptist Alliance, whose appeals and interventions contributed to the de-

cision taken by the UNC and other Naga civil society groups.

At the same time, the GNF urged these organisations and all stakeholders committed to peace and justice to engage with the Government of India and the Government of Manipur to ensure that the genuine aspirations and demands of the Naga people are addressed.

The forum maintained that justice, fairness and sincere political engagement are essential for lasting peace and reconciliation in the region.

Describing the release of the detainees as a significant gesture of goodwill and reconciliation, the GNF called upon the Government of India to earnestly address the legitimate demands of the Naga people at the earliest opportunity, stating that such a response would contribute to long-term peace, stability and justice.

The GNF also extended its gratitude to the UNC, Naga civil society organisations and other stakeholders for choosing what it described as the path of humanity, restraint and peace during a difficult and emotionally charged period. (NNN)

NFR transforms Northeast rail network with major infrastructure push over 12 years

Budget allocation rises five-fold as railway modernisation, electrification and connectivity projects reshape transportation



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 14: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has emerged as a major catalyst for socio-economic development in the Northeast over the past 12 years, recording significant progress in railway infrastructure, connectivity, electrification and passenger services.

According to NFR, railway development in the region has accelerated substantially with enhanced budgetary support.

Annual allocations have increased nearly five-fold, rising from an average of Rs 2,122 crore during 2009-14 to Rs 11,486 crore for 2026-27.

One of the most notable achievements during the period has been the completion of the metre gauge to broad gauge conversion programme across the Northeast.

Railway electrification, which was negligible before 2014, has now covered more than 95 per cent of the network, with over 4,170 route kilometres electrified, enabling faster, more efficient and environmentally sustainable train operations.

NFR has also laid more than 2,000 kilometres of new railway tracks through new line and doubling projects. Rail connectivity has been extended to the capitals

of Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Mizoram, while strategic railway projects in Sikkim, Nagaland and Manipur are progressing steadily.

Passenger amenities have witnessed substantial improvement through station redevelopment works under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. Modern train services such as Vande Bharat, Amrit Bharat and Vande Bharat Sleeper trains have been introduced, while facilities including lifts, escalators, digital ticketing systems and upgraded station infrastructure have enhanced the travel experience.

Among the major ongoing projects is the construction of a new rail-cum-road bridge alongside the historic Saraihat Bridge in Guwahati.

NFR is also developing a Wagon Periodic Overhauling Workshop at Basbari in Kokrajhar to strengthen freight operations and railway maintenance infrastructure.

International rail connectivity projects are also being pursued, including the proposed Banarhat-Samtse and Kokrajhar-Gelephu rail links with Bhutan, which are expected to boost cross-border trade and regional economic growth.

In the area of safety and environmental conservation, NFR has constructed more than 500 Road Over Bridges and Road Under Bridges to improve rail-road connectivity and reduce accidents.

Innovative measures such as AI-based elephant intrusion detection systems and canopy bridges for hooleck gibbons have also been introduced to minimise wildlife-related incidents and protect biodiversity.

With several large-scale projects currently under implementation, NFR said it remains committed to strengthening connectivity, modernising infrastructure and supporting the long-term economic growth of the Northeast.

Arunachal govt orders release of wage for excess workers

ITANAGAR, June 14: The Arunachal Pradesh government has ordered the immediate release of the monthly wages of 4,745 excess casual, contingency, and work-charged employees of various departments as an interim relief, according to an official notification.

The order came after an inquiry panel's report highlighted massive unauthorised engagements beyond the state's sanctioned strength.

According to the official document, an inquiry headed by the Public Works Department's principal secretary discovered 4,745 excess personnel, which includes 4,427 casual or contingency workers and 318 work-charged employees.

The probe highlighted that these appointments violated established protocols and were not cleared against government-sanctioned posts. While the state government continues to evaluate the inquiry's structural findings through inter-departmental consultations, it decided to lift the wage freeze that had been in place since February 24 this year.



Officials said the decision to resume payments was made on compassionate grounds to provide relief to the affected workforce until a final policy decision is reached.

To prevent future irregular appointments, the state government is processing the PIO's recommendations, which include implementing a strict Division and Drawing and Disbursing Officer-wise distribution of posts, alongside placing tight restric-

tions on shifting personnel across different zones, circles, and divisions. The notification clarified that funds will be released by district treasuries and sub-treasuries only after receiving a joint, signed notification detailing the formal distribution of these posts.

The verification must be validated under the joint signatures of both the respective head of department and the head of office. (PTI)

World Blood Donor Day observed in Ziro; 15 units collected at GTZGH

HT Correspondent

ZIRO, June 14: Gyati Takka Zonal General Hospital (GTZGH) in collaboration with the CRC Hapoli Youth (26th Youth Foundation) organised a voluntary blood donation camp today to commemorate World Blood Donor Day.

Under the global theme "One Drop of Humanity, Give Blood, Save Life!", the event successfully collected 15 units of blood to bolster the hospital's emergency reserves.

The donation drive secured 09 units of O+, 03 units of A+, 02 units of B+, and 01 unit of AB+ blood.

These units are designated for critical medical needs, including surgeries and trauma cases within the region.

The initiative aimed to raise public awareness regarding the constant demand for safe blood and to acknowledge the contribution of voluntary donors.

Capt Chirag Singhal of the 756 BRTF (GREF) Project Arunank at-



tended as the Chief Guest.

In his address, Capt Singhal emphasised the importance of grassroots healthcare initiatives and praised the volunteers for their commitment to community welfare. Organizers noted that the drive also sought to reduce social stigma associated with blood do-

nation among local youth.

The event included a felicitation ceremony honoring prominent donors and organizers.

Notable awardees included Ajit Kumar Pegu (ITBP), Pastor Dani Tadu (ABA), Hage Duyu (HYO), Jiren Teron (CRC Hapoli), and faculty from St. Clare College and

MTMC.

Additionally, Pyagang Tapu received special recognition for his consistent contributions of rare Negative (-ve) blood during medical emergencies.

The room gave a special, resounding applause for the second category, which recognized lifeline donors who step up during terrifying, race-against-the-clock emergencies.

Pyagang Tapu was honored as the sole recipient this year for his selflessness in consistently answering the call to donate rare Negative (-ve) blood, a lifeline that is incredibly difficult to secure when an emergency strikes.

GTZGH administration expressed appreciation for the CRC Hapoli Youth and the volunteers for the successful coordination of the camp.

The hospital reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining a 24/7 blood centre to ensure the availability of safe blood for the Lower Subansiri district.

Brazil rallies for 1-1 draw against Morocco in its World Cup opener behind Vinicius Junior goal

EAST RUTHERFORD, June 14: Facing pressure to win its first World Cup title since 2002, five-time champion Brazil was outplayed early and needed Vinicius Junior's 32nd-minute goal to gain a 1-1 draw against Morocco on Saturday in a pulsating, high-profile group match.

"We started on a really bad note," Vinicius said through a translator. "For certain, we got to hold on to the ball. We have to move better."

A semifinalist four years ago, Morocco had 12 shots in the first 30 minutes and went ahead on Ismael Saibari's 21st-minute goal, a chip over goalkeeper Alisson Becker.

"The team was a bit anxious at the beginning. Nerves were all over the place," Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti said through a translator. "A very imbalanced team."

Brazil evened the score 11 minutes later. Vinicius exchanged passes with Bruno Guimaraes on the left flank, took a few touches to cut around Neil El Aynaoui and rifled a right-footed shot past the out-



stretched arm of Yassine Bounou for his 10th international goal.

"We are satisfied with the draw," Morocco coach Mohamed Ouahbi said. "We are not euphoric."

Fans in Brazil's canary yellow dominated the crowd of 80,663 at MetLife Stadium — only about five sections near the south goal had fans

to Spain. No. 6 Brazil and seventh-ranked Morocco are the only top 10 teams to meet in the first round of the expanded 48-nation World Cup tournament.

"We cannot lose heart," Ancelotti said. "You don't win a World Cup based on your first match."

Brazil plays Haiti on Friday in Philadelphia, then closes Group C against Scotland in Miami Gardens, Florida. Morocco faces Scotland in Foxborough, Massachusetts, on Friday, then meets Haiti in Atlanta.

Brazil star Neymar, recovering from a torn right calf, didn't dress for the game.

One hour before the match, an Uber from Times Square to the stadium, site of next month's final, was \$126.95 — up from \$83.95 for advance booking for the same time Sunday.

Ancelotti, the Italian who became Brazil's first foreign World Cup coach, wore a three-piece suit with a necktie on a sunny afternoon with a 88-degree Fahrenheit (31-degree

Celsius) temperature for the 6 p.m. start.

Morocco went ahead after Lucas Paqueta lost control of a short pass from Roger Ibanez and knocked it off Bilal El Khannouss. It bounced to Noussair Mazraoui, who sent the ball to Brahim Diaz in the center circle.

His through pass split Gabriel Magalhães and Marquinho, and Saibari ran onto the ball at the top of the arc. Alisson was slow to come off his line as Saibari scored his 10th international goal.

Morocco nearly went back ahead in the ninth of 10 minutes of stoppage time. Alisson spilled Aynaoui's long-range shot, which was headed wide, then while on the grass leaned back toward the goal and used his right hand to block Ayoub Amamouni's follow-up effort.

"We still have to improve," Morocco captain Achraf Hakimi said. "We have to keep the positive things. We're going to learn from the mistakes, for sure." (AP)

Australia spoils Turkey's return to the World Cup with a 2-0 victory



VANCOUVER (CANADA), June 14: Nestory Irankunda and Connor Metcalfe scored and Australia spoiled Turkey's return to the World Cup for the first time in 24 years with a 2-0 victory on Saturday night.

Goalkeeper Patrick Beach made eight saves for the Socceroos in their group opener as FIFA President Gianni Infantino looked on. Australia was playing in its sixth straight World Cup and seventh overall.

Turkey reached the semifinals of the 2002 World Cup but then missed five straight tournaments before qualifying this year by beating Kosovo in a playoff.

Irakunda broke through for the Socceroos in the 27th minute with a low shot while pursued by three defenders. It came less than a minute after the first-half hydration break.

Irakunda celebrated by punching the corner flag in a tribute to Australian soccer legend Tim Cahill. The 20-year-old who plays for Watford is the Socceroos' youngest-ever goal scorer at a World Cup.

Minutes later Beach stopped Abdulkemir Bardakci's blast from distance. Beach started in goal for the Socceroos rather than experienced counterpart Matthew Ryan in a surprise decision from coach Tony Popovic.

Irakunda said the Socceroos took issue with comments Turkey captain Hakan Calhanoglu made a day before the match, proclaiming that his side had "more qualities and a more talented team."

"Yeah, it was extra motivation," Irakunda said. "Obviously we don't

like people to talk bad about us because we're a great team. People underestimate us."

Kenan Yildiz, a 21-year-old who plays for Juventus, was not in the starting lineup but subbed in for Turkey at half-time.

Turkey had a dangerous free kick in the 57th minute, but Arda Güler's attempt was saved by Beach. Güler, a talented 21-year-old attacking midfielder who plays for Real Madrid, was not yet born the last time Turkey played in the World Cup.

Connor Metcalfe capitalized on Ismail Yiksek's turnover in the 75th minute to double the Socceroos' lead. The Socceroos fell to France in the opener in Qatar but then beat Tunisia and Denmark in their group before getting knocked out by eventual champion Argentina in the round of 16.

Turkey maintained 72% of possession during the match and outshot the Socceroos 30-9, but couldn't manage to score. "I respect Australia very much. I was expecting that they would play in this way," said Turkey coach Vincenzo Montella, who took the team to the quarterfinals of the European championships in 2024. "This is football. As for the critics, nobody has underestimated Australia, actually."

It is the third World Cup appearance for the Turks, who reached the tournament for the first time in 1954.

The teams are in Group D with the United States and Paraguay. The Americans downed Paraguay 4-1 in their group opener on Friday in Los Angeles. (AP)

Australia thumps South Africa and NZ fumbles West Indies in Women's T20 World Cup

MANCHESTER, June 14: Australia won the first heavyweight clash of the Women's Twenty20 World Cup after routing South Africa for 107 in Manchester on Saturday.

Going for a seventh title in the 10th World Cup, Australia battled to put up 172-8 then won by 65 runs at Old Trafford.

South Africa was runner-up in the last two tournaments and beat Australia when they previously met in the 2024 semifinals. But the Proteas now must top the other group rival India on June 21 to stay in semifinal contention.

Another title favorite suffered a setback when titleholder New Zealand lost to the West Indies — in another 2024 semifinals rematch — by seven wickets on the second-to-last ball in Southampton.

Earlier in a blustery, overcast Manchester, Scotland earned its first World Cup win at Ireland's expense by a comfortable 40 runs. Ireland, chasing a first win for 12 years, dropped its win-loss record to 0-18.

Litchfield and spinners thump South Africa

Phoebe Litchfield missed Australia's last warmup due to a quad strain but passed fit in time for their opening match. She was needed in the first over.

Georgia Voll was out for a duck in her World Cup debut and fellow opener Beth Mooney was gone in the fourth over. But Litchfield, undaunted, charged at Marizanne Kapp, pulled Shabnim Ismail for six, and scooped and swept Ayabonga Khaka to raise a 23-ball 50.

Litchfield was out next ball at 61-3 and Australia wobbled again, but Ellyse Perry and Georgia Wareham revived the charge with 30s in a 58-run stand.

Ismail retired after the 2023 World Cup and unretired at 37. The pacer took a wicket but didn't complete her overs because of a finger injury. Ismail batted, though, when the result was already settled.

South Africa recovered from 7-2 through captain Laura Wolvaardt and Nadine de Klerk. Then de Klerk was bowled by leg-spinner Georgia Wareham, who helped to run out a slow Kapp. Wolvaardt still made the Proteas a threat, even with the run rate required up to 11.

But after hitting opposite skipper Sophie Molineux for six over long off, Wolvaardt was out for 44 from 39 balls next ball, hitting to Wareham in the covers. South Africa folded from there, the last five wickets adding just 11 runs. Australia's four spinners took eight wickets, the pick of them Wareham with 3-13, a catch and a run out. Wareham was named player of the match and shared the praise.

"(Captain) Soph's been awesome, instilling a lot of freedom within the group and making the group believe we are a good team and can take on this tournament, and that's pretty awesome," she said.

Campbell, Matthews take apart New Zealand

All the drama was in West Indies' chase of 163 without injured big hitters Chinelle Henry and Stafanie Taylor.

Captain Hayley Matthews ran out opening partner Qiana Joseph in the second over but survived drops on 9, 42 and 43 to score 48.

Shemaine Campbell went on to make 90 not out off 62 balls. She'd never touched 50 in her previous 122 innings since her 2009 debut. Campbell started out as a bowler who could bat, developed her batting and started this match at No. 3 in the order and playing wicketkeeper.

She was given out on 25 but reversed it on review and was dropped on 44. Her second six got her to maiden fifty off 39 balls. Campbell shared 74 with Matthews, 40 with Deandra Dottin and an unbeaten 37 with Jahzara Claxton. They made 163-3. "I just backed my skills," Campbell said after hitting seven boundaries and three sixes. "I know I'm the calibre of player I can go and change the situation."

The New Zealanders had a game to forget in the field. They dropped six chances, were poor behind the stumps, and threw badly. Captain Melie Kerr, on the occasion of her 100th T20, scored 5 and her bowling was pummeled.

New Zealand didn't start Suzie Bates for the first time in a World Cup match but someone always picked up the baton to reach 162-6. Izzy Gaze was first with 39, followed by Brooke Halliday's 40 with support from Sophie Devine's 22, and ending with Maddy Green's unbeaten 35. Medium-pacer Aaliyah Alleyne had 3-8 off two overs and finished with 4-27. (AP)

Karbi and Nagaland shuttlers strengthen sporting ties through friendly championship

HT Bureau
DIPHU, June 14: The Friendly Badminton Championship 2026, featuring a friendly encounter between KASA Shuttlers and Ace Shuttlers of Nagaland, was held at the KASA Indoor Stadium Badminton Court in Diphu.

The championship brought together badminton enthusiasts from Karbi Anglong and Nagaland in a spirit of sportsmanship and friendship, aimed at promoting sporting excellence and strengthening ties between players of the two neighbouring regions.

Among the participants was Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member and MLA Tuliram Ronghang, who competed in the doubles category and emerged as the runner-up. His wife, Kache Teronpi, secured the championship title in the doubles event.

The closing ceremony and prize distribution programme was at-



tended by Lok Sabha MP Amarsing Tisso, KAAC Executive Member and MLA Lunsing Teron, KASA General Secretary Pankaj Teron, Joint Secretary Bishnu Ram Nunisa and Badminton Secretary Kensing Ingti, among other officials and sports enthusiasts. Organisers said the championship provided a valuable platform for interaction among players while encouraging greater participation in badminton and promoting healthy sporting competition in the region.

Bhullar shoots 4-under to move up to tied 27th in Morocco

RABAT (MOROCCO), June 14: Indian golfer Gaganjeet Bhullar dropped a bogey on his closing hole, the ninth, but still made a significant upward movement in the third round of the USD 2 million International Series Morocco here.

The four-time AM Green IGPL winner and 11-time Asian Tour champion added an impressive card of 4-under 69 to his first two rounds of 70-74, and ended the round at T-27, 20 spots up from his overnight T-47.

Karandeep Kochar, also a 10th tee starter, had a tough second nine in his round of 2-under 71 and at a total of 4-under for three rounds he was T-43, while Ajeetesh Sandhu (74) had an up-and-down ride and finally slipped to T-47 from his previous T-25 place.

Two-time Masters champion Bubba Watson managed to keep his nose ahead despite two late bogeys as he carded 4-under 69. He is now 15-under and one shot ahead of the Thailand's 2022 champion Jazz Janewattananond (67) and Hong Kong's in-form Taichi Kho (68).

While Watson, seeking his first win since 2018 Travelers Championship on the PGA Tour, had a late stumble, Jazz, meanwhile, rose with a birdie-eagle finish

With Pro League berth at stake, Indian women eye positive start against USA

AUCKLAND, June 14: With goals firmly set on returning to the elite FIH Pro League next season, the Indian women's hockey team is determined to make a positive start to its campaign in the FIH Nations Cup against a tricky USA here on Monday.

The India women's team was relegated from the elite FIH Pro League to the second-tier Women's FIH Hockey Nations Cup, following its last-place finish in the 2024-25 season, where it managed only 10 points from 16 matches.

The winner of the eight-nation FIH Nations Cup will be promoted to the Pro League next year. Captained by Salima Tete, India will open their Pool A campaign against the United States before facing Japan on June 16 and Uruguay on June 18. Pool B includes hosts New Zealand, Chile, Korea and France.

India will look to make a strong start in the pool stage and build momentum heading into the knockout rounds, scheduled to take place on June 20 and 21.

Going by world rankings, India will head into the match as favourites. India are placed ninth in the FIH rankings as against USA's 12th place.

The tournament also offers valuable international exposure against quality opposition as the Indian team continues its preparations for major events this year, including the 2026 FIH Hockey World Cup and the Asian Games.

Notably, India head into the tournament on the back of a competitive four-match tour of Australia, where they showcased impressive character against one of the world's strongest teams on their home turf.

People naturally start looking for your successor: Swann on Rohit's challenge ahead of England ODIs

DHARAMSALA, June 14: India may still have two ODIs remaining against Afghanistan, but conversations about the future are never far away when it comes to Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

Former England spinner Graeme Swann believes that is simply the reality facing every great player in the latter stages of their career, arguing that even the most accomplished cricketers cannot escape questions about who comes next.

With India set to travel to England in July for a three-match ODI series following the Afghanistan assignment, Swann observed that scrutiny surrounding Rohit and Kohli is only natural as a younger generation begins to emerge.

"Absolutely. I think it's inevitable with any player when you come to the latter stage of your career, if you like, that people naturally start looking for your successor, no matter how well you do," Swann told PTI Videos in an exclusive interview.

"And even if you're at the top of your game, they're still looking like, who will be the next Virat? Who will be the next Rohit when they go? That's very natural."

"And the second you have one or two low scores, everyone starts looking over your shoulder and seeing who's next in line."

"And obviously, with Sooryavanshi coming through and some of the youngsters, it puts even more onus on the guys, especially at the top of the order for India."

Swann believes the coming weeks could prove significant for Rohit as India continue balancing established stars with emerging talent. "So I think it's a huge six weeks for Rohit. But like I said, in the IPL, he looks in great touch and he's still one of the best players going, let's face it."

"So if I was an English bowler, I wouldn't really want to bowl against a Rohit Sharma who's desperate to prove a point and keep his place."

While discussions around India's veterans continue, Swann believes both Rohit and Kohli remain formidable propositions for opposition

bowlers.

Asked about India's upcoming ODI assignment in England, the former off-spinner said the series would once again bring the spotlight onto two of the game's biggest names.

"Yeah, it's going to be huge. Anytime England play India, it's a massive series, especially recently."

"And with all the nonsense going on in England as well, I think they'll really appreciate a bit of spotlight going on the actual cricketer rather than off the field stuff."

Asked which of the two veterans would attract greater attention heading into the series in light of the ODI World Cup next year in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia, Swann pointed to Kohli's remarkable 2026 IPL campaign as the 37-year-old scored 675 runs from 16 matches.

Swann also stopped short of describing the England series as a make-or-break assignment for India's senior batters ahead of the next ODI World Cup.

"From an English point of view,

England will hope that Virat and Rohit are sidetracked by a World Cup coming and not thinking about that because that will affect performance. "India have got to make sure they're not sidetracked by that. But this is Rohit and Virat. They know what they're doing and they'll go out there. "It should be, touch wood, should be dry and the ball shouldn't do too much at that time."

"The white ball tends to be easier to bat against than the red ball in England. So it could be very good batting conditions for both of them, which doesn't augur very well for England."

The conversation inevitably returned to the next generation, with 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi primed for an India debut after receiving a national call-up for the Ire-

land and England T20I series. "Yes, he's a special talent. Like I said earlier, I wouldn't want to bowl him. "He's at that age that he's completely fearless because he's not had failure."

"But, you know, having done well before and big runs in the under-19s, going into the IPL and people saying, you know, after he got a couple of starts and then you remember people bowled yorkers and said, 'Oh, we've found him out. "You can't do it time and time and time again against world-class bowlers. "But he got better and better as the IPL went on."

"And those couple of 90s in the playoffs, they were ridiculous. "I was there for one of them, the one in Chandigarh. It was the most audacious knock from a 15-year-old kid. "He is world-class and I'm glad I'm not playing anymore."

Swann also admitted he was surprised by India's decision to move on from Suryakumar Yadav as T20I captain despite the batter leading the team to World Cup success.

"You know, I didn't see it coming,

