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- Indian envoy visits mortuary, injured nationals after Kuwait airport attack kills compatriot
- Rahul Gandhi working against India's stability, spreading fear: BJP
- CJP backed by 'urban naxals', claims Telangana BJP chief

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Assam Cabinet expansion today; new faces to be inducted

## Himanta to retain core team

**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, June 4: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday announced a 12-member expansion of the Assam Cabinet, retaining most of his key ministers from the previous government while inducting four new faces to ensure broader regional and community representation.

The swearing-in ceremony will be held on June 5 at 12.45 pm, taking the strength of the Council of Ministers to 17, including the Chief Minister and the four ministers who were sworn in on May 12.

The cabinet can have a maximum strength of 19 members, leaving two positions vacant for the time being.

The legislators to be inducted as Cabinet ministers are Ashwini Ray Sarkar, Ashok Singhal, Bimal Borah, Biswajit Daimary, Jayanta Malla Baruah, Kaushik Rai, Keshab Mahanta, Krishnendu Paul, Nilima Devi, Pijush Hazarika,



Ranoj Pegu and Susanta Borgohain.

The new entrants to the Council of Ministers are Ashwini Ray Sarkar, Biswajit Daimary, Nilima Devi and Susanta Borgohain.

Daimary served as Speaker of the previous Assam Legislative Assembly, while the induction of the other three is being viewed as an

effort to strengthen representation from different regions and communities.

The expansion reflects a balance between continuity and change, with several senior ministers from Sarma's first government securing another term.

These include Ashok Singhal, Pijush Hazarika, Jayanta Malla

Baruah, Ranoj Pegu, Bimal Borah and AGP leader Keshab Mahanta. Kaushik Rai and Krishnendu Paul, who represent the Barak Valley, have also retained their places in the Cabinet.

The four ministers sworn in earlier are BJP leaders Ajanta Neog and Rameswar Teli, AGP president Atul Bora and BPF legislator Charan Boro.

With the expansion, the Cabinet will comprise 13 BJP ministers, two from the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and one from the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), besides the Chief Minister. Ajanta Neog and Nilima Devi will be the two women ministers in the ministry.

The new Council of Ministers reflects a broad social and regional composition.

Apart from representatives from Upper, Lower, Central and Northern Assam, the Cabinet includes two ministers from Barak Valley and (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Shah, Scindia stress NE's growth potential

### NEC plenary discusses Vision 2047 roadmap

**HT Bureau**  
SHILLONG, June 4: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday chaired the 73rd Plenary Session of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in Shillong, where leaders from the eight northeastern states deliberated on the North East Vision Plan 2047 and reaffirmed their commitment to transforming the region into a major hub of growth, connectivity and opportunity.

The session was attended by governors, chief ministers, deputy chief ministers, senior officials of the Centre and state governments, and representatives of the Ministry for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER).

Addressing the gathering, Shah said the Narendra Modi-led government has transformed the Northeast from a region once affected by conflict into a hub of opportunities and development.

"Chaired the 73rd Plenary Session of the North Eastern Council. The Modi government ended the era of violence in the Northeast and transformed the region from a hotspot of disputes to a hotspot of opportunities," Shah said in a social media post.

He noted that the NEC is playing a key role as a strategic planning institution for the region by fulfilling people's aspirations while promoting the rich cultural heritage of the Northeast.

Union DoNER Minister Jyotiraditya M Scindia said



the Ministry of DoNER and the NEC have played a pivotal role in integrating the Northeast into India's growth story through sustained investments in infrastructure, connectivity and regional development.

He said the vision of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who established the Ministry of DoNER and strengthened institutions such as the NEC, laid the foundation for the region's transformation.

"The Northeast has emerged as a powerful engine of India's development. Together, we are moving from vision to strategic execution to realise the goal of a Viksit Northeast by 2047," Scindia said.

Highlighting the role of technology in governance, Scindia stressed the importance (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## 1,400 Congress, APHLC workers join BJP at Lumbajong; Tuliram cites development push

**HT Bureau**  
DIPHU, June 4: Around 1,400 members of the Congress, Seva Dal and the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC), including youth wing leaders and polling station functionaries, joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during a mass joining programme organised by the BJP Lumbajong Mandal Committee at Sarada School Playground in Birla on Thursday.

The new entrants were from the Dikrenglangso and Hemari Terang polling station areas under the Lumbajong MAC constituency.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and MLA Tuliram Ronghang claimed that the induction of 1,400 members marked a significant boost for the BJP in the hill district.

"People are witnessing the development taking place under the BJP government and more people are coming forward to join the party. Today, 1,400 members from APHLC and Congress have switched to BJP," Ronghang said.

The CEM also responded to recent criticisms by APHLC president JI Kathar regarding the proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC), alleging that attempts were being made to create confusion among tribal communities.

He said Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had already clarified in the Assam Legislative Assembly that the provisions of the UCC would not affect Sixth

Schedule areas and that the customs, traditions and practices of indigenous communities would remain protected.

Referring to remarks made by Kathar on the autonomous statehood issue, Ronghang said the Assam Legislative Assembly remained the appropriate platform for pursuing constitutional and political demands.

"A resolution has to be passed in the Assembly stating that the State government has no objection to granting autonomous statehood to the hill districts. Only then can it be forwarded to the Centre. Such issues require constitutional procedures and serious deliberations," he said.

Highlighting development initiatives in the region, Ronghang said the KAAC would take up infrastructure projects in Lumbajong, including road construction, playground development and drinking water facilities. He assured that steps would be taken to address the demands submitted by local residents before the next KAAC elections in 2027.

Karbi Anglong BJP district president Roland Killing welcomed the new members and urged party workers to remain united and work collectively for the welfare and development of the people.

"With the support of CEM Tuliram Ronghang and MP Amarsing Tisso, all party workers will work together to strengthen the organisation and serve the people," he said. The programme was attended by Lok Sabha MP Amarsing Tisso, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## NE no longer last mile but gateway to Southeast Asia: CM Himanta

**GUWAHATI, June 4:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said the Northeast is no longer India's last mile but has become the country's first gateway to Southeast Asia.

In a series of posts on 'X' after attending the 73rd plenary session of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in Meghalaya's capital Shillong, Sarma said the region is, through the Act East Policy, linking markets, cultures and opportunities across borders.

"Through the Act East Policy, it is becoming Bharat's first gateway to Southeast Asia, linking markets, cultures and opportunities across borders," he said.

The CM said for decades, the Northeast was viewed as India's frontier. "Today, under Adarniya @narendramodi Ji's vision of Ashta Lakshmi, it is increasingly being recognised as Bharat's eastern growth corridor. The North Eastern Council has been central to this transformation," he said.

The NEC was once largely associated with grants and incremental development, but today it is shaping regional strategy, having supported over 10,500 km of roads and 2,500+ km of power transmission infrastructure while driving greater inter-State collaboration, Sarma said.

"One of the greatest achievements of our time is that the discourse on the Northeast has changed from insurgency to investment, remoteness to resilience and geography as a challenge to an opportunity," he added.

Sarma pointed out that one of the clearest signs of change is that insurgency is no longer the defining issue of the Northeast.

"As Adarniya @AmitShah Ji observed at the NEC Plenary, the focus can now shift from law and order to protecting citizens' rights and accelerating development," he added. The CM asserted that for Assam, this vision has been transformative.

"From #AdvantageAssam to semiconductors, inland waterways and emerging industrial corridors, Assam is increasingly serving as the economic anchor of the Northeast," Sarma said.

The NEC's most enduring contribution may be its role in fostering regional thinking. The future of the Northeast will not be built "State by State alone, but through shared infrastructure, integrated markets and common ambition."

He pointed out that the 73rd NEC Plenary reflected the ambitions of a confident region.

"From AI, machine learning and blockchain infrastructure to agri-wood, foreign trade and health tourism, the focus is now on preparing the Northeast for the opportunities of the future," Sarma said. Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressed the NEC's Plenary Session, which was attended by chief ministers, governors, senior officials of the Northeastern states and representatives of the Centre. (PTT)

## APHLC expels senior leader Angtong Engti Kathar for alleged anti-party activities

**HT Bureau**  
DIPHU, June 4: The JI Kathar-led All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) has expelled senior party leader and former spokesperson Angtong Engti Kathar from the primary membership of the party over alleged anti-party activities.

According to an expulsion letter issued on June 3, the party said the decision was taken after reviewing a series of developments and incidents dating back to September 25, 2021.

The APHLC leadership alleged that Kathar had violated provisions of the party constitution and repeatedly engaged in activities detrimental to the party's interests despite several discussions and resolutions adopted by the organisation.

"With effect from 03/06/2026, you are expelled from the primary membership of the All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) because you (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Kuki apex body concerned over ongoing SIR exercise

**IMPHAL, June 4:** The apex body of the Kukis in Manipur on Thursday raised concerns over the ongoing SIR exercise in the state, claiming that nearly 59,000 internally displaced people of the community are unable to return home to participate in the process.

In a statement, Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM) said, "The ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Manipur is unacceptable under the prevailing circumstances and raises serious concerns regarding fairness, inclusivity and administrative responsibility."

KIM said it had expected that the government would first put in place adequate and practical arrangements to address the situation of the approximately 59,000 Kuki-Zo internally displaced persons (IDPs), (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Karbi film 'Kangbo Aloti' showcased at Cannes, marks milestone for indigenous cinema



**HT Bureau**  
DIPHU, June 4: Kangbo Aloti (The Lost Path), a Karbi-language feature film directed by Khanjan Kishore Nath and produced by Ranjit Teron under the banner of Ruru Rara Entertainment (RRE),

was screened at the Indian Pavilion during the recently concluded 79th Cannes Film Festival and Film Market, bringing Karbi storytelling to an international audience.

The 1-hour-49-minute film, which stands apart from main-

stream Indian cinema by not featuring any songs, stars Ranjit Teron, Rajib Kro, Dilip Bey, Harmony Bey, Rangmukrang, Malin Engtipi, Gautom Engti and other artists. Producer Ranjit Teron was invited to attend the Cannes Film Market by the Film Market Accreditation Department of the Cannes Film Festival.

On his return, he was accorded a warm reception at Dimapur Airport by members of Ruru Rara Entertainment and the Karbi Film Society (KFS), led by KFS president Dilip Bey.

Speaking about the achievement, Teron said Kangbo Aloti has become the first Karbi-language film to secure theatrical and distribution rights in the United Kingdom and (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## ED raids multiple locations in Mizoram in ₹ 970-cr Myanmar areca nut smuggling racket

**NEW DELHI/AIZAWL, June 4:** The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday conducted searches at multiple locations along the Myanmar border in Mizoram as part of a ₹ 970-crore money laundering investigation into a cross-border Myanmar areca nut smuggling racket.

Officials of the central agency said nine premises of prominent local facilitators of the alleged smuggling network in the border town of Champhai were raided.

The raids follow the registration of a case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) based on a CBI FIR filed on charges of "large-scale" smuggling of dry areca nuts illegally imported from Myanmar into India through Champhai, the ED said in a statement.

The CBI FIR, it added, was registered on the Gauhati High Court's July 2024 order while hearing a PIL on the said issue.

The ED said proceeds of crime worth Rs 970 crore were generated through this smuggling network over 13 years between 2013-25.

Myanmarese nationals "smuggled" dry areca nuts

(also called Burmese areca nut) across the Tiu river into India without customs clearance at Zokhawthar and Champhai and handed over consignments to local facilitators at the border, it alleged.

"The local facilitators stored the smuggled areca nuts in godowns at Champhai and coordinated their transportation to Vairengte at the Assam-Mizoram border.

"The operations were financed by Silchar (Assam)-based traders and financiers who remitted large sums through banking channels into the accounts of the Mizoram-based facilitators," it said.

Payments to Myanmarese suppliers were made in Indian currency and subsequently converted into the currency of that country through money exchangers operating near the border, according to the agency.

The ED probe found that e-way bills of ₹ 251.19 crore (SGST) and ₹ 86.25 crore (CGST) were "fraudulently" issued in Champhai district during 2021-2024 for the movement of areca nuts, using "forged" plantation certificates and false customs clearance documents, despite the plantation (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Sonowal discusses ₹ 19,209 cr investment plan with Suwendu to boost Bengal maritime sector

**KOLKATA, June 4:** Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Thursday met West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari and discussed a proposed investment of ₹ 19,209 crore aimed at transforming the state into eastern India's maritime, logistics and shipbuilding hub by 2031.

The nearly one-and-a-half-hour meeting was the first formal engagement between the Union ministry of ports, shipping and waterways and the West Bengal government since the BJP assumed power in the state in May.

According to a ministry statement, the proposed projects are expected to generate more than 62,500 direct and indirect employment opportunities while strengthening ports, inland waterways, shipbuilding, logistics and port-led industrialisation in the state.

The investment roadmap, planned under the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, includes development of the Balagarh Multimodal Logistics Hub, expansion and mechanisation of Kolkata and Haldia docks, strengthening of inland waterways, creation of shipbuilding and ship repair facilities, cruise tourism infrastructure, riverfront rede-

velopment and port-led industrial clusters.

The meeting came a day after Adhikari held talks with Adani Ports & SEZ Ltd MD Karan Adani, who is the son of Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani, at Nabanna and is seen as significant amid reduced engagement between the country's largest private port operator and the previous TMC government in recent years.

During Thursday's meeting between Sonowal and Adhikari, both leaders discussed future development of ports, inland waterways, shipbuilding, logistics and connectivity projects in the state.

"West Bengal is central to India's maritime future. Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with an investment pipeline of nearly ₹ 19,209 crore, we aim to transform Bengal's maritime hubs -- Kolkata and Haldia -- into the premier maritime gateway of eastern India while generating more than 62,500 employment opportunities," Sonowal said.

The Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways said the investment programme was designed to attract (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Clean energy sector to add over 44 lakh jobs by 2030: Study

**GUWAHATI, June 4:** More than 44 lakh full-time jobs are likely to be created by 2030 in the clean energy sector, of which almost 43 per cent will come from rooftop solar industry, according to a latest study.

In the study 'Driving Energy Transition: Workforce, Skills, and Gender in India's Renewable Energy Sector', conducted with technical guidance from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), it is stated that India now ranks third globally in renewable energy installed capacity.

Climate think tank Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) and environment NGO Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) India in the research paper said that the country's 500 GW non-fossil fuel capacity target and goals under the National Green Hydrogen Mission could generate over 44 lakh full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs.

"Rooftop solar is projected to be the single largest employment engine, accounting for approximately 43 per cent of these estimated jobs," it said.

The two firms said the study is based



on a primary survey of companies conducted in 2024-25 across the solar, wind, bioenergy and hydropower sectors.

"India now ranks third globally in renewable energy installed capacity and achieved its target of meeting 50 per cent of cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil sources in 2025, five years ahead of schedule,"

they said.

Speaking about the prospects of job creation in clean energy sectors, MNRE Secretary Santosh Kumar Sarangi said the element of people's involvement is intrinsic to a successful green transition.

"The positive externalities involved in keeping people as the focus of this green transition is intrinsic, and India has shown that our economic growth trajec-

tory as well as sustainability goals can be pretty well aligned," he added.

Last year, India achieved about 51 gigawatts of solar and wind, and hopefully, this momentum will continue and expand in the subsequent years, Sarangi said.

The CEEW-NRDC study found that of the 6.5 lakh clean energy workers added between FY'23 and FY'26, the largest share came from rooftop solar, which accounted for 62 per cent of the total workforce addition.

This was followed by PM-KUSUM at 16.3 per cent, biomass power at 12.6 per cent and ground-mounted solar at 6 per cent, it added.

CEEW Chief Executive Officer Arunabha Ghosh said, "India's energy transition must also be a workforce transition. The opportunity is about creating livelihoods, building skills, deepening domestic supply chains and ensuring that the benefits of clean energy reach households, farmers, workers and entrepreneurs, while also adding gigawatts."

To convert India's clean-energy ambition into a durable employment engine, India must (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Flipkart launches 'GRWM GRWM' fashion sale targeting Gen Z shoppers

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 4:** Flipkart has launched its latest fashion-led campaign, 'GRWM GRWM', aimed at creating a trend-driven shopping experience for India's digital-first consumers, particularly the Gen Z demographic. Inspired by the globally popular social media trend "GRWM" (Get Ready With Me) and reimagined with an Indian twist as "Garam Garam", the campaign seeks to transform the conventional end-of-season sale into a culturally relevant fashion event focused on emerging trends and contemporary styles. According to the company, the sale features over 10 lakh fashion products from more than 50 international, national and home-grown brands, alongside offerings from direct-to-consumer (D2C) labels and marketplace sellers.

Customers can also avail of shopping rewards, including scratch cards, SuperCoin benefits and bank offers.

The campaign showcases a wide range of fashion categories, including baggy jeans, Korean trousers, floral dresses, palazzo sets and other trending styles catering to diverse consumer preferences and budgets.

### CONSTRUCTION AND ALL OTHER ANCILLARY WORKS

**E-Tender No.:** ENGG-CON-RE-MLG-01-26-27 (Two Packet System). **Dated:** 29-05-2026. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work. **Name of Work:** AT TINGRAI Construction of Staff Qtrs. (4 Nos Type-II and 2 Nos Type-III), 01 Nos OHE & PSI Depot, 01 Nos 8-wheeler TWS, linking of track at TWS siding, RCC Road, Boundary wall, RCC drain, 20000 Litre. Overhead RCC water tank and Iron Removal Plant with all other ancillary works in connection with the Railway Electrification works in Tinsukia Division of N.F. Railway. **Advised Value:** ₹ 71,64,433.32/-. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 19,43,300/-. **Date & time of closing of tender at 14:00 hrs. on 30-06-2026.** For complete information alongwith tender document of e-Tender will be available in website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

**Chief Electrical Engineer-III/CON/Maligaon**  
**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
Construction Organization  
Serving Customers With A Smile

### SUB DIVISIONAL RAILWAY HOSPITAL UPGRADATION

**Tender Notice No. SCL-Engg-39-2026.** Works tenders through "E" Tendering system for and on behalf of the president of India are invited for the works as detailed below:- **Brief Description of Item:** Badarpur- Sub-Divisional Railway Hospital Upgradation of OPD, Dressing Room, minor OT, Consultation Room, Medicine dispensing Room, Toilet complex and main gate circulating area. **Tender Value:** ₹ 86,48,540/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,73,000/-. **Date & time of closing tender:** At 15.00 hrs. on 23-06-2026 & opening at 15.00 hrs. on 24-06-2026. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15.00 hrs. on 23-06-2026 in the website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

**DRM (W), Lumding, Silchar**  
**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
Serving Customers With A Smile

### NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from Mohammed Salman Uddin to Salman Uddin by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sanikardevnagar, Hojai (Assam)Salman Uddin S/O-Kabil Uddin Vill-Pachim Jamunagaon, PO-Koroiguri, PS-Murajhar, Dist-Hojai (Assam)

### NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from Mohammed Kabil Uddin to Kabil Uddin by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sanikardevnagar, Hojai (Assam)Kabil Uddin S/O-Aptab Uddin Vill-Pachim Jamunagaon, PO-Koroiguri, PS-Murajhar, Dist-Hojai (Assam)

### NAME CORRECTION

I, Susila Rongpippi, C/O Larench Terang resident of Deibar Terang (2), PO Deithor, PS.Silonijan, Karbi Anglong would like to mentioned that in my Aadhaar Card No. 953620356812 my name wrongly written as Suchila Rongpippi instead of the Actual Name Susila Rongpippi.

## NOTICE

The District Legal Services Authority, Karbi Anglong is going to organize Special Lok Adalat on **18.07.2026**, from **10 AM** onwards at District Judiciary Campus, Diphu including SDJM Court Camus, Bokajan, Karbi Anglong. Disposal of cases under the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881 will be taken up in the Special Lok Adalat to be held on **18.07.2026**. So, litigants and parties who have received summons/notices are requested to attend the said Special Lok Adalat for availing the opportunity to settle their cases amicably.

Secretary  
District Legal Services Authority,  
Karbi Anglong, Diphu  
Karbi Anglong, Diphu

**DIPR /DL/HT/9/5-Jun-26**

# India fixes jet fuel benchmark at ₹ 115 a litre under new ATF stabilisation plan

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** Domestic airlines will be able to buy aviation turbine fuel (ATF) at a fixed price of ₹ 86.32 per litre for up to three years under a new government-backed price stabilisation scheme aimed at shielding carriers and passengers from a surge in global fuel costs.

Under the voluntary scheme, participating airlines will pay the fixed free-on-board (FOB) benchmark price plus airport charges, oil company margins and applicable taxes, taking the effective selling price to about ₹ 115 per litre in Delhi, ₹ 114.5 in Mumbai and ₹ 139 in Chennai, according to government officials.

The benchmark compares with the current effective ATF price of about ₹ 105 per litre in Delhi, which has remained frozen for more than two months after the government allowed only a partial pass-through of soaring global fuel costs triggered by the outbreak of the West Asia conflict in late February.

While participating airlines will pay the fixed price, those not opting for the scheme will be charged prevailing international rate, which is currently around ₹ 142 a litre.

This is as part of the Union Cabinet-approved ₹ 10,000-crore fuel price stabilisation programme for airlines that provides financial support to state-owned oil retailers to cap ATF prices and shield carriers from soaring fuel costs linked to the ongoing West Asia crisis.

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

Briefing reporters, Rohit Raj, Director in the Ministry of Civil Aviation, said the benchmark has been fixed at ₹ 86.32 per litre at the FOB level for domestic operations and ₹ 104.49 per litre for international operations.

After adding airport charges, margins and applicable taxes, the

effective selling price in Delhi works out to about ₹ 115 per litre for both domestic and international operations.

The rate compares to about ₹ 105 a litre cost of ATF in Delhi currently. The current rate was capped in April when prices were raised by 25 per cent instead of 100 per cent.

Since then oil marketing companies have been supplying jet fuel to airlines at these capped prices, incurring losses.

The new benchmark replaces the temporary fuel-price capping arrangement introduced earlier this year after international ATF prices surged following the West Asia crisis, he said.

International jet fuel prices rose to as high as ₹ 142 per litre in May from ₹ 60.50 per litre, prompting concerns over airline operating costs and the risk of higher airfares.

ATF typically accounts for about 40 per cent of airline operating expenses and can rise to as much as 60 per cent during periods of extreme volatility. He said the support mechanism would provide airlines with greater certainty over fuel costs, helping sustain domestic and international connectivity while limiting the pass-through of fuel-price shocks to passengers.

The ₹ 10,000 crore corpus will be provided as an interest-free advance to OMCs. Any compensation paid during periods of elevated fuel prices will be recovered once international prices moderate, with funds returned to the Consolidated Fund of India through a prescribed mechanism.

The scheme will remain in force for up to 36 months or until the entire amount advanced by the government is recovered, whichever is earlier. Participation by airlines will be voluntary.

Raj said the decision of the Cabinet was taken in a larger public interest to protect air connectivity, ensure stability in air services, and shield passengers from the impact of extraordinary volatility in the global fuel crisis arising out of the ongoing crisis.

"The approved mechanism is designed as a temporary self-correcting arrangement," he said.

"Under the scheme, the government will provide an interest-free advance to all marketing companies, enabling them to supply ATF to participating Indian airlines at a predetermined and stable price for both domestic and international operations whenever international ATF prices rise above the benchmark level. That is the fixed price under this arrangement."

The corpus, he said, will compensate oil marketing companies (OMCs) for the difference.

"Importantly, when the fuel price moderates, the differential amount will be recovered from oil marketing companies and returned to the Consolidated Fund of India through a transparent mechanism. Thus, the arrangement is intended not as a subsidy but a temporary stabilisation method to smoothen the impact of exceptional fuel price volatility while ensuring full accountability, monitoring, and recovery of funds," he said.

The official said ATF constitutes a major component of airline operating cost, and the sharp increase in the international fuel prices, coupled with longer flight paths for Indian carriers on account of the closure of Pakistan airspace, has placed significant pressure on airline operations.

"The approved mechanism will provide greater predictability in the fuel cost through a fixed price arrangement, enabling airlines to plan their operation in a more efficient manner and continue serving passengers across domestic and international sectors," he said.

For passengers, the most important benefit of this decision is that it will help to moderate sudden increases in the airfare that often result from sharp spikes in fuel prices. By reducing the exposure of airlines to extreme fuel price fluctuations, the government aims to minimise the pass-through of such costs to travellers and provide a greater fare stability. (PTI)

## Stock markets end flat ahead of RBI's monetary policy decision

**MUMBAI, June 4:** Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended almost flat in a choppy trade on Thursday, as investors stayed on the sidelines amid uncertainty in West Asia and relentless foreign fund outflows.

Caution also prevailed in the market ahead of the RBI's monetary policy decision on Friday, an expert said. The 30-share BSE Sensex went up marginally by 13.84 points, or 0.02 per cent, to settle at 74,360.01. During the day, it hit a high of 74,544.24 and a low of 73,807.30, gyrating 736.94 points.

The 50-share NSE Nifty eked out a marginal gain of 10.95 points, or 0.05 per cent, to end at 23,416.55.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Titan, Eternal, ITC, Tech Mahindra, State Bank of India and ICICI Bank were among the major gainers.

Infosys, Bajaj Finserv, UltraTech Cement, HCL Tech and Adani Ports were among the laggards.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 5,616.56 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

"Indian equities delivered a decent recovery today, overcoming a weak start to finish largely unchanged. The market opened under pressure as weak global cues, elevated crude oil prices, and persistent geopolitical tensions in the Middle East weighed on sentiment.

"However, the selling failed to sustain, with buyers stepping in near key support levels and helping benchmarks erase most of their intraday losses," Hariprasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said.

Despite the recovery, sentiment remained cautious ahead of tomorrow's RBI monetary policy committee decision, he added.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 1.68 per cent to USD 96.17 per barrel.

"The market oscillated between gains and losses during the session, ultimately closing on a flat note, as persistent tensions in West Asia weighed on investor risk appetite. Despite this, the broader market continued to outperform following the recent correction, indicating underlying resilience in select segments," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Investors remained cautious ahead of the upcoming RBI policy decision and the release of GDP data, both of which are expected to offer greater clarity on the growth outlook, he added.

The BSE SmallCap Select index jumped 1.02 per cent, and the MidCap Select index climbed 0.40 per cent.

Among indices, Consumer Durables climbed 1.94 per cent, Capital Goods (1.01 per cent), Telecommunication (0.82 per cent), Consumer Discretionary (0.72 per cent), Oil & Gas (0.57 per cent) and Power (0.41 per cent). Metal declined 0.85 per cent, Commodities (0.49 per cent), IT (0.48 per cent), MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt (0.44 per cent) and Focused IT (0.02 per cent).

"Markets traded with a cautious tone on Thursday and ended largely unchanged on the weekly expiry day for the Sensex. Weak global cues and caution ahead of the MPC monetary policy announcement kept participants on the sidelines. Elevated crude oil prices and volatile global risk appetite further weighed on sentiment, although buying in select heavyweight stocks helped limit the downside," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

According to Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire improved hopes for a wider diplomatic breakthrough involving Iran, but the continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz and the absence of tangible progress in negotiations kept investors in a wait-and-watch mode.

"The Nifty opened with a gap-down but gradually recovered through the session, managing to close marginally in positive territory," he said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended lower.

Markets in Europe were trading mostly higher.

US markets ended lower on Wednesday.

On Wednesday, the Sensex dropped 303.67 points, or 0.41 per cent, to settle at 74,346.17. The Nifty declined 77.95 points, or 0.33 per cent, to end at 23,405.60. (PTI)

## HDFC Bank Parivartan helps prevent stubble burning

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 4:** HDFC Bank, through its CSR initiative Parivartan, in partnership with the CII Foundation, has reported significant progress in its Crop Residue Management (CRM) programme, with over 3.26 lakh acres of farmland saved from stubble burning across Punjab and Haryana during the 2025 crop season.

The initiative, which covered 3,78,425 acres across more than 380 villages in Ludhiana and Sangrur districts of Punjab and Fatehabad district of Haryana, achieved an 88 per cent success rate in preventing crop residue burning.

The programme directly engaged around 86,000 farmers.

Launched in October 2023 in Ludhiana and later expanded to

Sangrur and Fatehabad, the three-year initiative aims to address agricultural air pollution by promoting sustainable crop residue management practices.

According to the organisers, eight villages have completely eliminated stubble burning, while 174 villages have achieved more than 90 per cent compliance with non-burning practices.

## Record pulses buffer to act as shield against El Nino

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** The government's record pulses buffer of 43 lakh tonnes will serve as a strategic cushion against any supply disruption or price flare-up triggered by a likely El Nino weather phenomenon, a top government official said on Thursday.

"We don't have to dispose it of now. If there is an El Nino effect and it impacts kharif sowing, this buffer stock of pulses will be used," Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare told PTI on the sidelines of a FICCI event. The current buffer stock of pulses is more than double the 18 lakh tonnes held in May 2025, and significantly higher than the 21 lakh tonnes recorded in May 2024, according to government data. The sharp build-up has been driven by the Centre's assured procurement policy, which was introduced to encourage domestic production, reduce import dependence, and shield consumers from price volatility. The official allayed concerns over storage and disposal, noting that pulses are non-perishable and can be safely stored for two to three years. The India Meteorological Department has forecast a below-normal southwest monsoon (June-September) and flagged the likelihood of El Nino developing in the coming months. The agriculture ministry has already begun drawing up contingency plans to mitigate the phenomenon's impact on kharif (summer) crops. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## CM retains core

leaders representing communities such as Bodo, Mising, Koch-Rajbongshi and Ahom. The formation of the new ministry also marks the exit of several ministers from the previous government, including Chandra Mohan Patowary, Jogen Mohan and Urkhao Gwra Brahma.

Former minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass has been appointed Speaker of the Assembly. The Cabinet expansion comes weeks after Sarma began his second consecutive term as Chief Minister following the NDA's emphatic victory in the 2026 Assembly elections.

The ruling alliance secured 102 seats in the 126-member Assembly, including 82 won by the BJP, while its allies AGP and BPF won 10 seats each. (With inputs from PTI)

## Shah, Scindia stress

of data-driven planning, geospatial mapping and digital infrastructure in identifying development gaps and ensuring efficient allocation of resources.

The plenary session reviewed the progress of Chief Ministers' High-Level Task Forces constituted for critical sectors and discussed major initiatives under the Ministry of DoNER.

Deliberations also covered outcomes of the North East Investment Summit, the Bankers' Conclave, and ongoing efforts to promote tourism, logistics and youth development.

Presentations were made on tourism, agriculture and horticulture, investment promotion, self-reliance in milk, eggs, fish and meat production, sports development, economic corridor projects, infrastructure and connectivity, and promotion of handloom and handicrafts.

Scindia said the Northeast is steadily emerging as India's gateway to Southeast Asia and a key contributor to the country's ambitions in trade, innovation and connectivity.

According to officials, the North East Vision Plan 2047 seeks to provide a long-term roadmap for transforming the region into a vibrant centre of economic growth, sustainability, innovation and cultural prosperity by the centenary year of India's Independence.

Earlier, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma welcomed Shah to Shillong for the plenary session. A pre-plenary meeting involving chief secretaries, planning secretaries and senior officials from all eight north-eastern states was held on Wednesday to prepare the agenda for the discussions.

Established under the North Eastern Council Act, 1971, the NEC serves as the apex regional planning body for the Northeast and plays a central role in promoting coordinated development and cooperative federalism across Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. (With inputs from PTI)

## APHLC expels senior

have been engaging yourself in anti-party activities," the letter stated. The party further claimed that Kathar had failed to adhere to organisational discipline and did not respond positively to repeated warnings and opportunities provided by the leadership to rectify his conduct.

The expulsion marks a significant development within the regional political party, where Kathar had served as a senior leader and spokesperson.

No immediate reaction from Angtong Engti Kathar was available at the time of filing this report.

## Karbi film 'Kangbo

China, including Hong Kong and Macau. The distribution rights have been acquired by the London-based organisation UK-China Film Collab, enabling the film to reach wider international audiences.

The film has also earned recognition at several national and international film festivals.

It received the Special Jury Award in the Indian Language Films category at the 31st Kolkata International Film Festival 2025 and was showcased at the 17th Bengaluru International Film Festival, the 2nd Guwahati International Film Festival, the South Asian Film Festival of Montreal (Canada), the 3rd North East India Film Festival in Imphal, the 9th International Folklore Film Festival in Kerala and the New Jersey Indian & International Film Festival (NIJIFF) in the United States.

Among its accolades, the film won the Best Sound Design award at the North East India Film Festival and the Best Journey award at the New Jersey Indian & International Film Festival.

"This script represents a major step in taking Karbi culture, language and storytelling to international audiences and establishing a global presence for Karbi cinema," Teron said.

He also announced the upcoming Karbi-language independent feature film Love You Mess, which will be directed by Khanjan Kishore Nath and produced by Ranjit Teron. According to Teron, the project has moved closer to the international stage following co-production meetings held during the Cannes Film Market.

As part of the project, UK-based Hong Kong creative professional Hiu Man Chan has joined as Executive Producer and will oversee international festival strategy, sales, distribution and marketing outside India.

"This is not just a film; it is another proud opportunity to showcase Karbi culture, language and storytelling to the world. The encouragement and support of cinema lovers will inspire us to continue this journey and take Karbi cinema to greater heights," Teron said.

On behalf of Ruru Rara Entertainment and the Karbi Film Society, Teron also expressed gratitude to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member and MLA Tulliram Ronghang for his continued support and encouragement towards the growth of Karbi cinema.

He said Ronghang's vision and motivation have played a significant role in helping Karbi cinema gain recognition on national and international platforms.

## 1,400 Congress, APHLC

MLAs Surjya Rongphar, Niso Terang and Habbey Teron, besides BJP district and mandal leaders, Executive Members, Members of Autonomous Council (MACs) and chairpersons of various KAAC development boards.

## Kuki apex body

who continue to remain displaced and are unable to return to their homes to participate in this exercise.

"Proceeding with such a critical electoral and administrative exercise without ensuring the participation of a large and vulnerable section of the population undermines the very principles of democratic representation," it said. The exclusion, whether direct or indirect, of these IDPs from the SIR process renders the exercise incomplete and unacceptable in its present form, it added.

It called on the government, along with the district administrations, to take immediate and concrete steps to establish accessible and inclusive mechanisms that will enable all affected IDPs to be duly enrolled and participate in the revision process.

Meanwhile, state election officials assured that the SIR exercise is currently underway, and all citizens will be covered. They said the final electoral rolls will be published after the notice and verification phase (scheduled from July 5 to September 2) on September 6, 2026, after all claims and objections are considered. (PTI)

## ED raids multiple

owners not being registered under the GST. The ED alleged that local facilitators received commission amounts ranging between ₹ 2-15 per kilogram for procurement, transportation, escorting, and customs release-related activities. It said a "key element" of the modus operandi was using local persons as "fronts" before Customs authorities to secure provisional release of seized consignments, with payments of ₹ 20 lakh to over ₹ 1 crore made towards Customs release proceedings per seizure.

In several seizure cases, the ED found that unrelated bills of entry were "fraudulently" submitted before Customs authorities to project smuggled areca nuts as legally imported goods.

"Analysis of the bank accounts of the accused persons revealed that proceeds of crime aggregating over ₹ 90 crore were routed through multiple accounts between 2013-2025," it said. (PTI)

## Sonowal discusses

private capital, create large-scale employment and establish West Bengal as a preferred destination for maritime and logistics investments.

He said the proposed investments would strengthen logistics efficiency, reduce transportation costs, support exports and create an enabling ecosystem for industries dependent on maritime connectivity.

Adhikari welcomed continued collaboration between the Centre and the state on maritime infrastructure, waterways development, dredging, riverfront projects and connectivity initiatives, while seeking support for priority projects aimed at boosting economic activity and trade.

"We had a productive discussion on several priority maritime and connectivity projects, including Sagarmala 2.0, the proposed tunnel across the Hooghly River, development of jetty infrastructure, dredging of National Waterway-1, protection of the Hooghly embankment, and issues related to land and irrigation infrastructure," the chief minister said.

He said the projects were important for strengthening the state's maritime ecosystem and supporting economic growth, and expressed hope for continued cooperation with the Centre for the state's development.

Highlighting the state's growing maritime potential, Sonowal said cargo throughput at Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port increased from 46.29 million metric tonnes in 2014 to 70.87 million metric tonnes in 2025-26, while inland waterways cargo movement grew nearly five-fold during the period. The ministry said the Centre was seeking to leverage West Bengal's strategic location, extensive river network and industrial base to transform the state into a leading maritime investment destination and a growth engine for the country. (PTI)

## Clean energy sector

continue to invest in high-quality skilling, transparent workforce data and inclusive participation, he added. However, the CEEW-NRDC study found that women account for only 11 per cent of the total workforce in solar and wind deployment, and manufacturing sectors.

"Women's participation is highest in rooftop solar at 15 per cent, followed by solar module manufacturing at 13 per cent, floating solar at 12 per cent and ground-mounted solar at 11 per cent.

"The study also finds that 61 per cent of women in the clean energy workforce are employed in non-technological roles such as human resources, accounting and administration," it added.

The study recommended that MNRE and related establishments institutionalise mandatory workforce reporting through existing processes such as subsidy disbursement, tenders and regulatory frameworks.

It also calls on clean-energy companies to invest in gender inclusion and career advancement programmes, while training institutes should strengthen hands-on learning and keep curricula aligned with changing industry needs.

"As India scales towards its 2030 clean-energy targets and long-term net-zero goal, the CEEW-NRDC report emphasises that workforce planning, skilling, gender inclusion and reliable jobs data will be essential to ensure that the clean-energy transition creates not just capacity, but quality livelihoods," the paper said. (PTI)

# Emergency mobile alert system to warn citizens about impending disasters

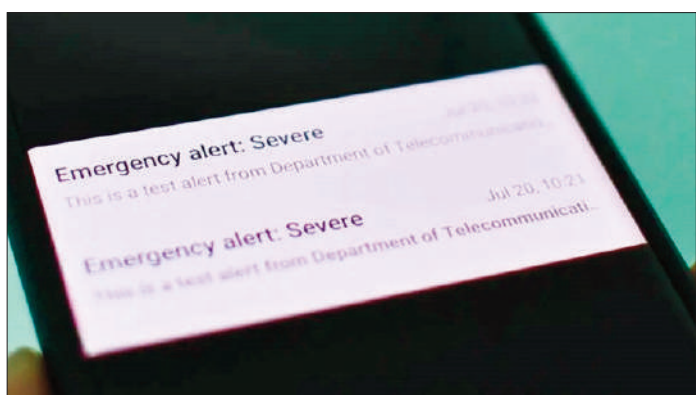
ASDMA to implement Cell Broadcast System ensure instant public alerts during emergencies

**GUWAHATI, June 4:** The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) on Thursday said it will implement the Cell Broadcast System (CBS), a public warning mechanism launched by the central government, across the northeastern state in the coming days.

Developed by C-DOT under the Department of Telecommunications in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Ministry of Home Affairs, the system enables authorities to send instant, geo-targeted emergency alerts directly to all mobile phones in a specific area.

The CBS has been made available for implementation across India, including Assam and a nationwide test was conducted in May. The system has already proven effective during real disasters in several states.

"However, in the states including Assam wherein, Model Code



of Conduct was in force, the test was excluded. Hence now, the Government of Assam is planning to implement the activity across the state as instructed by the Government of India," ASDMA said in a statement.

The CBS involves dissemination of critical and time-sensitive messages for impending disasters to all mobile devices within a designated geographical area, irre-

spective of whether the recipients are residents or visitors.

"During the implementation of the said CBS, the citizens may receive emergency alerts on their mobile devices pertaining to disasters. The CBS alerts are highly sensitive, which trigger a loud audio alarm/notification on mobile handsets for approximately 30 seconds whenever received," the ASDMA said.

Citizens are also requested to share the information with family members, especially the elderly and those living in remote areas, it added. (PTI)

## Assam among top states in snakebite management

HT Correspondent

**DEMOW, June 4:** Snakebite management in Assam has received national recognition for its performance, according to Dr Surajit Giri, an anaesthesiologist and snakebite expert from Demow Model Hospital-cum-CHC.

Dr Giri said that Assam and Karnataka have emerged as the top-performing states in snakebite management, as presented at a national-level review meeting conducted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India on Wednesday. The meeting was chaired by the Additional Secretary, MoHFW and reviewed performance across all states and Union Territories.

He stated that Assam has been ranked among the leading states in snakebite management as per data published by the Union Health Ministry.

## BTC committee discusses reopening of cattle markets

HT Correspondent

**KOKRAJHAR, June 4:** A meeting of the Market Settlement Committee of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was held at the BTC Secretariat in Kokrajhar to discuss key issues related to markets and fairs across the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

The meeting was chaired by BTC Executive Member Fresh Muchahary and attended by MCLA and Committee Chairman Daneswar Goyary, officials of the Markets and Fairs Department, com-

mittee members and all Block Development Officers (BDOs) under the BTC area.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the reopening of existing cattle markets and the establishment of new cattle markets and Go-Hats in different parts of the region.

The committee also deliberated on measures for the effective management, regulation and development of markets and fairs to boost economic activities and provide better facilities for traders, farmers and the general public.

## Target set to vaccinate over 2.78 lakh children across district in Pulse Polio drive

# Cachar steps up preparations for National Immunisation Day



HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 4:** The District Administration, Cachar in collaboration with the District Health Society, Cachar, convened a District Task Force Committee (DTFC) meeting on National Immunisation Day (NID) at the New Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office on Thursday.

The meeting was presided over by Monojyoti Kutum, ACS, Additional District Commissioner (In-charge Health), Cachar. Dr Sumona Naiding, Joint Director of Health Services, Cachar, Rahul Ghose, District Programme Manager, Dr MI Barbhuiya, Additional Chief Medical & Health Officer (FW), Cachar, Dr Arkadeb Kar, Surveillance Medical Officer of the World Health Organization (WHO), Inspector of Schools Cachar Mithun Johari, Deputy DEMO Bappa Deb, representatives of the Social Welfare Department, Rotary Club Silchar, Deshbandhu Club and officials from various health institutions and block-level health offices participated in the meeting.

Welcoming the participants, ADC (Health In-charge) Monojyoti Kutum underscored the impor-

tance of National Immunisation Day as a key public health initiative aimed at protecting every child from poliomyelitis. He stressed coordinated efforts among all stakeholder departments to ensure that no eligible child is left out of the Pulse Polio campaign.

A detailed PowerPoint presentation on the global status of polio eradication and vaccination was delivered by Dr Arkadeb Kar, Surveillance Medical Officer of WHO, who highlighted global progress, emerging challenges and the importance of maintaining high immunisation coverage to prevent resurgence of the disease.

Discussions were held on planning, preparedness, interdepartmental coordination, community mobilisation and implementation strategies for the upcoming National Immunisation Day, with emphasis on micro-planning and ICDS involvement for maximum outreach.

President of Rotary Club Silchar, Debasish Shome, highlighted Rotary International's long-standing role in polio eradication efforts and noted that Rotary continues to support immunisation initiatives globally. He added that Rotary Club Silchar, through its

Permanent Immunisation Centre at Trunk Road, will continue to support routine immunisation and child health programmes in coordination with the district administration and health society.

To achieve the target of vaccinating 2,78,073 children in the 0-5 years age group, Cachar district has planned 1,335 vaccination booths, including 1,208 general booths, 59 difficult booths, 28 institutional booths, 38 transit booths and 2 mobile teams. A total of 5,280 frontline workers, 267 supervisors and medical officers have been deployed for the exercise.

As per the action plan, Pulse Polio booths will be operational on June 28, 2026 from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, where teams will administer two drops of bivalent oral polio vaccine (bOPV) to eligible children. This will be followed by house-to-house visits over the next two days to ensure full coverage.

Dr Sumona Naiding directed officials to ensure that all children below five years, including those visiting or temporarily residing in the district are covered under the campaign. She stressed the need for meticulous planning, vigilant supervision and effective field-level execution to achieve universal immunisation coverage.

Dr MI Barbhuiya urged all line departments, especially ICDS and health personnel to extend full cooperation and ensure that every eligible child receives the vaccine.

The meeting concluded with a collective resolve among all stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of National Immunisation Day across Cachar district.

## Tezpur hosts training for Census 2027 preparations

HT Correspondent

**TEZPUR, June 4:** A three-day district-level training programme on the Houselisting and Housing Census (HLO) under Census 2027 (Phase-I), Assam, commenced on Thursday at Conference Hall-II of the District Commissioner's Office, Sonitpur.

Addressing the inaugural session, Principal Census Officer-cum-District Commissioner, Sonitpur, Ananda Kumar Das urged all officers and officials to actively participate in the training and thoroughly acquaint themselves with the procedures and technological tools being introduced. He emphasised that Census

District Census Officers, Circle Officers, Executive Officers of Municipal Boards, Charge Census Officers, Additional Charge Officers, Special Charge Officers, Charge Census Clerks, Technical Assistants and other officials associated with Census operations, Representatives from the Armed Forces and the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) are also participating.

The training is being conducted by resource persons from the Directorate of Census Operations, Assam, Pratap Chandra Sahoo, Assistant Director and SK Mandal, Statistical Investigator Grade-I. The programme will continue till June 6, 2026 and aims to

Houselisting and Housing Census (HLO) modules.

The second day will cover House Listing Block (HLB) carving, layout map preparation, training management through CMMS, generation of appointment letters and identity cards, logistics and printing management, data entry modules, preparation of village, town and charge registers, CMMS dashboards, self-enumeration and the roles of informants, enumerators and supervisors.

The final day will focus on the HLO mobile application, data collection and verification methods, supervisory mechanisms, data ethics, privacy and security protocols, troubleshooting of applications, field challenges, data quality monitoring and the District Census Handbook (DCHB) process. The programme will conclude with a valedictory session.

Officials highlighted that Census 2027 will be the first fully digital census in India, conducted through mobile applications and the CMMS platform. For the first time, households will also have the option of self-enumeration through an online portal at <https://se.census.gov.in/>, followed by field verification by enumerators.

The resource persons informed that Phase-I (HLO) will be conducted in Assam from August 17 to September 15, 2026, with self-enumeration available from August 2 to 16, 2026. Phase-II, Population Enumeration is scheduled for February 2027.

Special emphasis was laid on data confidentiality, privacy and security, with participants sensitised on legal provisions and protocols governing the protection of census information during digital data handling.

## New branch of Asam Sahitya Sabha takes root at Tezpur University



HT Correspondent

**TEZPUR, June 4:** In a significant step towards fostering Assamese language, literature and culture within an academic setting, a branch of the prestigious Asam Sahitya Sabha was formally established at Tezpur University. The general meeting, held at the Seminar Hall of the Department of Chemistry was attended by faculty members, students and staff of the university. The gathering was presided over by Prof Dhruba Kumar Bhattacharyya, then Acting Vice-Chancellor of the university and Professor in the Department of Computer Science. Representing the central committee of Asam Sahitya Sabha, Dulal Nath, Organising Secretary of the Mangaldai Regional Office, Mahendra Kumar Nath, working president of the Publicity Subcommittee and Dr Binita Bora Dev Choudhury of the Publication Sub-Committee graced the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, Prof Bhattacharyya underscored the vital role of the Asam Sahitya Sabha in the development of language, literature and culture of Assam. He stressed the urgent need for the Sabha to publish a comprehensive, error-free dictionary of the Assamese language. He further advocated the use of technologies such as Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to digitally preserve selected literary works, journals and ancient manuscripts, ensuring their accessibility to readers across generations. Dulal Nath elaborated on the constitutional procedures governing the formation of a Sabha branch. Mahendra Kumar Nath warmly welcomed the nearly two hundred individuals from various levels of the university who enrolled as permanent members, describing it as a remarkable milestone. He expressed hope that the branch would serve as a conduit through which the intellectual community and youth of the university could contribute fresh ideas and direction to the cause of Assamese language, literature, art and culture.

In a stirring appeal, Nath urged parents and guardians to make conscious efforts to pass on the mother tongue to the next generation, calling it "an urgent demand of our times."

Senior Professor Robin Kumar Dutta lamented that many children of Assamese writers today are unable to read their own mother tongue and called for greater emphasis on

the publication of quality literature. Kusum Kumar Bania, President of the Tezpur University Teachers' Association, declared that those who cannot protect their own mother tongue have no right to call themselves Assamese. Several other academicians, including Dr Bhim Prasad Sharma, Dr Vivek Mehta, Nipu Baruah, Dr Rupam Kataki, Sapon Goswami, Uddipan Hazarika and Dr Mridul Dutta, participated in the discussion, highlighting the role a university branch of the Sabha could play in the development and research of language and literature. Echoing artist Zubeen Garg, speakers reminded that "a gamosa cannot save a nation that does not read." Speakers also expressed heartfelt gratitude to the current leadership of Asam Sahitya Sabha president Dr Basanta Kumar Goswami and Chief Secretary Debajit Bora for their steadfast support during the university's period of crisis.

The meeting culminated in the formation of a 21-member executive committee headed by Dr Rupam Kataki as president, Dr Rajib Goswami as vice-president and research scholar Uddipan Hazarika as secretary. Several sub-committees were also constituted in accordance with the Asam Sahitya Sabha's constitution, including those for Publication, Youth Parliament (Yuva Sansad), Ramdhenu, Akash, Kihni and Translation Project, among others.

The meeting, anchored by Uddipan Hazarika, concluded with the vote of thanks delivered by the newly elected secretary and the performance of Assam's Jatiya Sangeet.



data forms the foundation for evidence-based governance, developmental planning, infrastructure creation and welfare initiatives making accuracy and integrity of the exercise critically important.

The training programme is being attended by District Census Officer-cum-DDC, Sonitpur, Sanjeev Kumar Sharma, Additional District Census Officers, Deputy

strengthen preparedness for the successful conduct of Census 2027.

The first day focused on an introduction to Census 2027, roles and responsibilities of functionaries, legal provisions, fund management, publicity activities and practical demonstrations of the Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS), including user registration and

## KKHSOU hosts workshop on graduate employability

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 4:** Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU) with support from the Commonwealth of Learning-Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (COL-CEMCA), inaugurated a three-day regional workshop-cum-capacity building programme on "Strengthening Graduate Employability and Career Readiness in Higher Education" at its City Campus in Khanapara, Guwahati.

The workshop, scheduled from June 4 to 6, 2026 has brought together around 40 participants from higher education institutions across Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Mizoram.

Welcoming the participants, Prof Pranab Saikia, Registrar of KKHSOU and Programme Director, highlighted the importance of graduate employability in the Northeast region. He emphasised the need for higher education institutions to equip learners with skills, competencies and attitudes required for employment, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning.

In his inaugural address, Prof Nripendra Narayan Sarma, Director of Maniram Dewan School of Management, stressed the need for establishing benchmarks and institutional models to help higher education institutions redesign curricula and adopt innovative practices to improve graduate outcomes.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr Basheerhamad Shadrach, Director of CEMCA, highlighted the COL-CEMCA Graduate Employability Model and explained its implementation phases in higher educational institutions. He encouraged participants to develop draft institutional employability frameworks based on the model and implement them in their respective institutions.

Presenting an overview of the programme, Prof Anirban Ghosh, resource person of COL-CEMCA, outlined the aims and objectives of the workshop and highlighted the activities planned over the three days.

## Nearly 400 residents cross into India to avail free healthcare services at Pangsau Pass

# Medical, eye care camp benefits Myanmar border villagers

HT Correspondent

**DIBRUGARH, June 4:** In a humanitarian outreach initiative along the India-Myanmar border, a comprehensive medical camp and mega eye check-up camp were organised at Pangsau Pass in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district. The programme was jointly conducted by the Assam Rifles with support from Dibrugarh-based NGO Bright Vision NE and the Arunachal Pradesh Police.

Pangsau Pass, a strategically important border point between India and Myanmar, witnessed an overwhelming response from residents of neighbouring Myanmar villages. According to the organisers, nearly 400 villagers crossed into India to avail themselves of the free healthcare services offered during the day-long camp.

A team of doctors and paramedical staff from the Assam Rifles, along with eye specialists from Bright Vision NE, conducted general health examinations and comprehensive eye screenings for the beneficiaries. Patients diagnosed with various ailments were provided with medicines, while those suffering from vision-



related problems received spectacles at highly subsidised rates.

One of the most notable moments of the camp was the participation of a 104-year-old woman from Myanmar, who travelled to attend the eye check-up programme. Her presence un-

derscored the urgent need for accessible healthcare services in remote border regions and highlighted the impact of such humanitarian initiatives. Residents from Myanmar expressed gratitude for the medical assistance, noting that healthcare facilities and trained medical personnel remain limited in many parts of the country. Many beneficiaries said access to quality healthcare is often difficult due to inadequate infrastructure and a shortage of medical professionals.

The camp not only addressed immediate healthcare needs but also served as a symbol of goodwill and people-to-people connectivity across the international border. Beneficiaries thanked the Government of India, the Assam Rifles, the Arunachal Pradesh Police and Bright Vision NE for bringing essential medical services to the region.

The initiative reflects the continued commitment of security forces and civil society organisations towards fostering humanitarian cooperation and extending healthcare support to underserved populations living in remote frontier areas.

## Injured sanitation worker stranded without healthcare support

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, June 4:** Karan Basfor, a 50-year-old sanitation worker employed by the Howrahhat Municipal Board has been left in severe financial distress and physical helplessness following a road accident.

The incident occurred in September last year, leaving Basfor with a severely broken leg. He initially sought treatment at Diphu Medical College and Hospital (DMCH), where doctors reportedly advised major surgery for him to regain mobility.

Despite government healthcare initiatives, Basfor has been unable to access free treatment. He said that due to the absence of a ration card, he has been denied an Ayushman Card, effectively blocking him from availing free medical benefits.

Basfor, who was once recognised as a "Real Hero" in the 50th-anniversary souvenir of the Howrahhat Municipal Board for his service is now bedridden and facing acute financial hardship.

"I have no way left to afford this surgery. Without a ration card, I cannot get the Ayushman Card. I am just a cleaner who kept this town clean and now I am left to suffer in a corner," Basfor said, appealing for help.

He has urged Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang and MLA Lunsing Teron to intervene and provide urgent financial assistance for his treatment.

## Goalpara launches 'Clean Jinjiram, Green Jinjiram' campaign

HT Correspondent

**GOALPARA, June 4:** Marking World Environment Day, the Goalpara District Administration and the Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department on Thursday launched the "Clean Jinjiram, Green Jinjiram" campaign to restore and protect the Jinjiram River from pollution and waste accumulation.

The campaign was formally inaugurated at Rongsai Bazaar under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin).

The initiative aims to prevent the dumping of waste into the river, address the growing threat of environmental degradation and revive the river's natural beauty through community participation and effective waste management practices.

Speaking on the occasion, officials emphasised that rivers are invaluable gifts of nature and that preserving their cleanliness and uninterrupted flow is a collective responsibility.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*The only abnormality is the incapacity to love.*  
- Anaïs Nin

## SIR orders in Bihar

The Supreme Court's order in connection with petitions against Election Commission's SIR orders in Bihar states that "the commission is empowered in the exercise of its constitutional mandate to undertake a limited enquiry into citizenship for the purpose of satisfying itself as to eligibility for inclusion in the electoral roll." This came from a bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalaya Bagchi. The apex court held that ECI's power flows from its constitutional responsibility to maintain accurate electoral rolls and ensure that only eligible persons are entitled to exercise their franchise. Obviously, the apex court has handed the ECI a broad, sweeping mandate. The court has not taken the trouble of even examining the contentions of the ECI in the course of the proceedings. The Commission had maintained that the SIR is not unique and it is based on the broad principles which had prompted the drawing up of the rolls during the election in 2002-03 in Bihar and later, elsewhere in the country. On close questioning by the petitioners, the ECI had also conceded that the Commission is not in a position to furnish the original orders of 2002-03 and the procedures adopted therein.

But the broad mandate of the Supreme Court has removed any accountability of the poll body; neither does it insist on the imperative of maintaining a degree of transparency. The basic jurisprudence that judicial and quasi-judicial processes should not only be fair but appear to be fair has been given a go by. That the ECI did not care two hoots for such transparency has been clear from the outset. The Commission had not been providing the list of deletions, not to speak of any grounds. More importantly, the Commission refused to provide the list of deletions in digital or machine-readable format for exercising public scrutiny. Neither did the Commission respond to this vital question. It is safe to presume that this was a testimony for lack of any concern about being accountable before any public scrutiny.

However, the highest judiciary was aware that the ECI cannot be constitutionally assigned a final role in citizenship adjudication, and directed that where the Commission is not satisfied that a person fulfils the statutory conditions for inclusion in the electoral roll, on citizenship grounds, it must refer the matter to the competent authority within the Union government for adjudication in accordance with law. Buttressing this direction, the Court observed that "the Commission's determination, being confined to electoral purposes, cannot assume finality on the question of citizenship."

## Market experts discount return to Pre-War Oil prices is unlikely

By: Nigel Green

Oil prices are unlikely to return to pre-war levels in the short to medium term at least, a shift that could keep inflation elevated, delay interest-rate cuts, and reshape investment returns across global markets.

Oil prices rose on Monday after Israel ordered troops to push deeper into Lebanon, renewing concerns that clashes with the Iran-backed Hezbollah group could threaten a fragile ceasefire between Washington and Tehran. Brent crude traded around \$93 a barrel before the latest escalation in the Middle East and has previously in this crisis surged above \$112 as traders priced in the growing risk of supply disruptions.

Although prices have eased from peak levels, markets are underestimating the lasting impact of geopolitical tensions on energy costs. Around 20% of global oil consumption passes through the Strait of Hormuz, making it one of the world's most important energy arteries. Many investors are assuming oil could quickly fall back toward pre-war levels when tensions do ease. But that assumption is becoming increasingly difficult to justify. Energy markets are pricing a new reality in which supply security carries a significant premium. The implications stretch far beyond oil producers. Global oil demand remains close to record highs at more than 103 million barrels per day, while spare production capacity remains limited relative to historical averages. A tighter supply-demand balance means relatively small disruptions can have an outsized impact on prices. Higher oil prices also feed directly into inflation. Economists estimate that every sustained \$10 increase in crude prices can add between 0.2 and 0.4 percentage points to inflation in advanced economies.

Fuel costs affect transportation, manufacturing, logistics, food production and consumer goods, making oil one of the most influential inputs across the global economy. This raises the prospect for investors that central banks may be slower to cut interest rates than markets anticipate. Higher-for-longer borrowing costs would have implications for government bonds, growth stocks and other assets that benefit from lower rates. Energy equities are among the clearest beneficiaries of a prolonged period of elevated crude prices.

History teaches us that energy stocks have outperformed broader equity markets during major oil rallies as higher commodity prices boost revenues, margins and cash generation. Commodity-exporting economies could also benefit. Countries with significant energy exports often experience stronger fiscal revenues, improved trade balances and support for local equity markets during periods of sustained oil strength. At the same time, several sectors face increasing pressure. Fuel typically accounts for between 25% and 35% of airline operating costs, making the industry particularly vulnerable to higher crude prices.

Transportation companies, logistics operators and energy-intensive manufacturers also face margin compression as operating expenses rise. Consumer-facing businesses could encounter additional headwinds if households devote a larger share of disposable income to fuel and utility bills, reducing spending elsewhere.

Emerging markets are likely to experience a growing divergence. Energy-exporting nations stand to benefit from higher revenues and stronger external balances, while oil-importing economies could face rising inflation, weaker currencies and slower economic growth. Currency markets are already reflecting some of these pressures.

Historically, oil-producing economies, such as the US, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait, have seen their currencies supported during periods of elevated crude prices, while countries dependent on imported energy, including Japan, China, India and South Korea, often experience deterioration in their trade positions. Investors should view oil as one of the defining macroeconomic forces shaping markets over the coming years.

Oil influences inflation, interest rates, currencies, corporate earnings and consumer spending simultaneously. Investors who treat rising oil prices as a temporary headline risk may be underestimating the scale of the challenge. Energy has become a central driver of market performance, and portfolios should be positioned accordingly. A return to pre-war oil prices appears increasingly unlikely in the foreseeable future. Adapting to that reality could become one of the most important portfolio decisions for investors for the next few years. (IPA Service)

## Impact of Iran - America war on India: A Deeper probe

The prospect of an Iran-America war has long been a subject of geopolitical anxiety, but for India the implications of such a conflict would be uniquely complex, deeply layered, and far reaching across economic, strategic, social, and diplomatic dimensions. India's position in the global system—situated between its energy dependence on West Asia, its strategic partnership with the United States, its historical ties with Iran, and its own internal demographic and political dynamics—means that any direct confrontation between Washington and Tehran would reverberate through New Delhi's domestic and foreign policy architecture in ways few other countries would experience. To understand the effect of an Iran-America war on India, one must probe deeper into the interconnected systems that bind India to both nations and to the broader region.

At the heart of India's vulnerability lies its heavy dependence on West Asian energy supplies. Iran has historically been one of India's major crude oil suppliers, at times accounting for more than 10 percent of India's total imports. Even after U.S. sanctions forced India to cut Iranian oil purchases to zero, Iran remained a potential alternative supplier that India hoped to reengage with once sanctions eased. A war would eliminate that possibility entirely, tightening global oil markets and driving prices upward. For a country that imports more than 85 percent of its crude oil, even a \$10-\$20 per barrel increase would ripple through India's economy, raising transportation costs, increasing inflation, widening the fiscal deficit, and weakening the rupee. The Indian government would face pressure to increase subsidies or cut taxes on fuel, both of which would strain public finances. Industries dependent on petroleum products—fertilizers, chemicals, aviation, logistics—would experience cost shocks, potentially slowing economic growth.

A prolonged conflict could push oil prices above \$120 or even \$150 per barrel, levels that historically have triggered economic slowdowns in India. The economic shock would not be limited to oil alone. The Persian Gulf is a major trade corridor for India, and any disruption to shipping lanes—particularly through the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly a third of global oil passes—would affect not only energy shipments but also general cargo. Insurance premiums for shipping would rise, freight costs would increase, and delays would become routine. Indian exporters, especially those dealing in textiles, pharmaceuticals, and food products, would face uncertainty in delivery sched-

ules and payment cycles. The Gulf region is also home to more than nine million Indian expatriates, whose remittances contribute tens of billions of dollars annually to India's economy.

A war would put these workers at risk, particularly in countries like the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman, which lie close to Iran and could be targeted in retaliatory strikes. India would need to prepare for large scale evacuations similar to the 1990 Gulf War airlift, but on a potentially larger scale. The logistical, financial, and humanitarian challenges of such an operation would be immense. Remittances would decline sharply as businesses in the Gulf contracted, affecting millions of families in states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana. Beyond economics, the strategic implications for India would be equally profound. India's relationship with the United States has strengthened significantly over the past two decades, encompassing defense cooperation, intelligence sharing, technology transfers, and diplomatic alignment on issues like the Indo Pacific. At the same time, India has maintained a delicate but important relationship with Iran, which serves as a gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia. The Chabahar port project, jointly developed by India and Iran, is a cornerstone of India's strategy to bypass Pakistan and access landlocked Central Asian markets. A war would jeopardize this project, potentially allowing China to expand its influence in Iran and the region.

If Iran were destabilized or its government weakened, China could step in with financial and military support, integrating Iran more deeply into the Belt and Road Initiative. This would undermine India's regional connectivity ambitions and reduce its strategic autonomy. India would also face diplomatic pressure from the United States to align more closely with Washington's position. Historically, India has resisted taking sides in conflicts involving major powers, preferring a policy of strategic autonomy. But a full scale war would force India to navigate a narrow diplomatic path. Supporting the U.S. too openly could alienate Iran and provoke backlash from domestic constituencies, including India's large Shia population. Remaining neutral could strain ties with Washington at a time when India relies on the U.S. for defense technology, intelligence cooperation, and support against China. The balancing act would be delicate and fraught with political risk. Domestically, the conflict could inflame sectarian tensions. India is home to one of the world's largest



## DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee

Muslim populations, including a significant Shia minority with cultural and religious ties to Iran. A war involving Iran could trigger protests, political mobilization, and social polarization. Political parties might exploit the situation to appeal to specific communities, potentially deepening existing divides. Social media misinformation and foreign influence campaigns could further destabilize the domestic environment.

The Indian government would need to manage public sentiment carefully to prevent communal tensions from escalating. Security concerns would also rise. Iran has influence over various non state actors in the region, and a conflict could lead to asymmetric retaliation affecting Indian interests. Indian assets in the Gulf—businesses, shipping vessels—could become targets. Cyberattacks originating from actors aligned with Iran could disrupt Indian infrastructure, financial systems, or government networks. India would need to enhance its security posture across multiple domains, stretching its resources.

Another dimension of the conflict's impact on India involves food security. India imports significant quantities of fertilizers from the Gulf region, particularly urea and ammonia. A war would disrupt supply chains, leading to shortages and price increases. This would affect agricultural productivity and food prices, with political consequences for a government that must manage the expectations of millions of farmers. The broader geopolitical landscape would also shift in ways that challenge India's long term interests. A weakened Iran could lead to greater instability in West Asia, empowering extremist groups and creating power vacuums. India has suffered from terrorism linked to West Asian networks in the past, and renewed instability could increase the risk of radicalization and cross border terrorism.

Conversely, if Iran emerged from the conflict with greater regional influence—perhaps through asymmetric victories or increased domestic support—

India would need to recalibrate its diplomatic approach. The conflict would also affect India's relations with other regional powers. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, both close partners of India, would expect diplomatic support against Iran. Israel, another key partner, would likely be directly involved or at least deeply affected by the conflict. Balancing these relationships while maintaining ties with Iran would be extraordinarily difficult.

India's multi vector foreign policy, which relies on maintaining good relations with mutually hostile states, would be tested as never before. The war could also accelerate global realignments. Russia, which has close ties with both India and Iran, might intervene diplomatically or militarily. China could use the conflict to expand its influence in West Asia, offering economic and military support to Iran in exchange for strategic concessions. This would complicate India's efforts to counter China's rise in the Indo Pacific. India might find itself caught between competing great power blocs, forced to make choices that limit its strategic flexibility.

On the technological front, India's defense preparedness would come under scrutiny. The Indian military relies heavily on imported equipment, including from the U.S., Russia, and Israel. A major conflict in West Asia could disrupt global supply chains for critical components, affecting India's defense modernization programs. At the same time, India might face increased pressure to contribute to maritime security operations in the Indian Ocean, stretching its naval resources. The Indian Navy would need to protect shipping lanes, escort merchant vessels, and monitor potential threats from hostile actors. This would require coordination with the U.S. Navy and other partners, raising questions about India's role in regional security architectures. The humanitarian dimension of the conflict would also affect India. A large scale war could trigger refugee flows from Iran or neighboring countries. While most refugees would likely head toward Europe or Turkey, some could attempt to reach South Asia. India would need to coordinate with international organizations to manage any spillover effects. Additionally, India's own citizens in the region would require consular support, evacuation assistance, and reintegration programs upon return. The political leadership would face pressure to demonstrate competence and compassion in handling these challenges. Economically, India might explore alternative energy strategies to mitigate the impact of the conflict. This could accelerate

investments in renewable energy, strategic petroleum reserves, and diversification of oil suppliers. Countries like the U.S., Brazil, Nigeria, and Guyana could become more important sources of crude oil. However, such diversification would take time and might not fully offset the immediate shock. India could also deepen its engagement with Central Asian states for energy cooperation, but this too would be complicated by instability in Afghanistan and increased Chinese influence in the region.

The conflict could also reshape India's domestic political landscape. Rising fuel prices, inflation, and economic uncertainty could become major electoral issues. Opposition parties might criticize the government's foreign policy decisions, arguing that India failed to anticipate or mitigate the crisis. The government, in turn, might emphasize national security, diplomatic skill, and economic resilience. Public opinion could shift depending on how effectively the government manages the crisis. In the long term, the Iran-America war could force India to rethink its grand strategy. India has long sought to maintain autonomy in its foreign policy, avoiding entanglement in great power conflicts.

But a war that directly affects India's economic stability, energy security, and regional influence might push New Delhi toward deeper alignment with one bloc or another. India might strengthen its partnership with the U.S. as a hedge against China, or it might pursue a more independent path by engaging with multiple powers, including Russia and the EU, to create a more balanced international environment. The conflict could also accelerate India's push for self reliance in defense, energy, and technology. The government might invest more heavily in domestic manufacturing, renewable energy, and strategic infrastructure. India could also seek to play a more active diplomatic role, positioning itself as a mediator or peace advocate in global conflicts. Such a role would enhance India's international standing but would require significant diplomatic resources and political will. Ultimately, the effect of an Iran-America war on India would be profound and multifaceted.

It would test India's economic resilience, diplomatic agility, social cohesion, and strategic foresight. The deeper one probes into the potential consequences, the clearer it becomes that India cannot afford to view an Iran-America war as a distant conflict. It would be a defining moment for India's foreign policy and national strategy, shaping the country's trajectory for years to come.

## How Iran fought back and forced a recalculation in the Gulf

The geopolitical chessboard of the Middle East has rarely witnessed a miscalculation as stark as the recent conflict initiated by Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu against Iran.

Launched with high-flying rhetoric and a laundry list of maximalist demands, the military campaign aimed at nothing less than engineered regime change in Tehran, the total dismantling of Iran's ballistic missile and nuclear infrastructure, and the severing of its ties with regional non-state allies. In the heady opening days of the operation, the White House confidently dismissed any possibility of a negotiated settlement, famously demanding Iran's unconditional surrender. This posture reflected a familiar historical hubris, the belief that overwhelming aerial bombardment and economic strangulation can bend a deeply nationalistic sovereign state to its knees.

Instead of a swift capitulation, Washington ran into a geopolitical brick wall. Three months into a conflict that was supposed to showcase American dominance, the narrative has flipped entirely. The United States finds itself quietly negotiating a temporary ceasefire extension and the restoration of maritime traffic through the critical Strait of Hormuz, using Pakistan as a diplomatic go-between. The proposed memorandum of understanding, leaked extensively to American media, reveals a reality that would have been unthinkable to administration planners a few months ago. Under the terms of this draft, Iran will allow commercial shipping to return to pre-war levels, while the United States will systematically dismantle its naval blockade of Iranian ports and grant Tehran access to billions of dollars in frozen foreign reserves. The ceasefire is slated to extend across all active fronts, notably including Lebanon.

This dramatic shift from demanding total surrender to bartering for a maritime trade demonstrates that military force cannot eas-

ily extract political concessions from an adversary prepared to push back in kind.

The unraveling of the American military strategy can be traced to a fundamental misunderstanding of Iran's asymmetric warfare capabilities. When the first bombs fell, the architects of the war expected Tehran to retreat into isolation or sue for peace under pressure. Iran chose to expand the theater of conflict both geographically and economically. By launching precise retaliatory strikes against American military facilities scattered across the Persian Gulf and asserting tight physical control over the Strait of Hormuz, Tehran effectively put a chokehold on global energy markets.

The immediate spike in oil prices and the skyrocketing costs of international shipping sent shockwaves through a fragile global economy, putting intense pressure on Washington from its own allies.

Realizing that air strikes were yielding diminishing returns and generating massive economic blowbacks, the administration attempted to pivot. A formal pause in major offensive operations was announced, followed by the implementation of a strict naval blockade designed to starve the Iranian economy into submission. This economic warfare met the exact same wall of resistance. Rather than returning to the negotiating table in a position of weakness, Tehran responded by freezing all backchannel communications and aggressively advancing its nuclear enrichment activities, pushing the nuclear file down its list of diplomatic priorities until Washington altered its behavior.

This hardline response effectively checked the American strategy. The fact that the United States is now actively working through Pakistani intermediaries to secure a memorandum of understanding indicates that Iran's refusal to blink has forced a major recalculation in Washington. The administration's focus has narrowed significantly. The sweeping demands regarding

Iran's domestic political structure, its regional alliance networks, and its conventional missile development have largely vanished from the current diplomatic discourse. The conversation has been reduced almost entirely to the nuclear issue, a pragmatic narrowing of scope that mirrors the exact path taken by the international community over a decade ago.

This brings a sense of historical irony to the current situation. The policy framework the administration is drifting toward is almost identical to the approach adopted by the Obama administration in 2013, which ultimately produced the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2015. That landmark international agreement successfully capped Iran's nuclear ambitions in exchange for structured sanctions relief. It was a deal that was systematically dismantled by the subsequent administration in 2018 under the assumption that a campaign of maximum pressure could yield a much better bargain. After years of economic warfare and a disastrous three-month military campaign, the United States has arrived back at the exact same starting point, having spent immense blood, treasure, and international credibility only to find that the original diplomatic parameters were the only viable options available.

For any new diplomatic framework to succeed, the United States must confront a massive trust deficit that it created through its own past actions. Iran did not walk away from the original nuclear deal; it was complying fully with its obligations when Washington unilaterally withdrew and reimposed sweeping sanctions. Even after that breach of faith, Tehran showed a willingness to engage, participating in constructive dialogues in early 2025 and again in February 2026. This history means that Iranian negotiators are unlikely to accept vague promises of future sanctions relief in exchange for immediate, irreversible concessions. A sustainable agreement cannot be built on unilateral demands disguised as diplomacy. It requires a framework of verifiable, mutual compromises where both sides receive tangible benefits simultaneously.

The coming weeks will determine whether Washington has genuinely learned

the lessons of this failed campaign or if it is merely looking for a temporary breathing room before renewing its aggressive posture. If the administration enters the upcoming direct negotiations with a sincere desire to establish a stable, balanced framework for nuclear non-proliferation, a durable settlement is entirely achievable. Iran has repeatedly demonstrated that it responds to respectful, peer-to-peer diplomacy that acknowledges its regional security concerns and economic rights. Such an outcome would stabilize global energy markets, reduce tensions across the Persian Gulf, and provide a rare off-ramp from a cycle of violence that has threatened to consume the entire region.

The alternative path carries catastrophic risks. If the administration intends to use these upcoming talks as a deceptive maneuver, attempting to achieve through diplomatic pressure the exact concessions it failed to secure through military force, the negotiations will inevitably collapse. A failure to build a genuine diplomatic bridge will send both nations back to the battlefield, but with much higher stakes. Iran will have every incentive to accelerate its nuclear capabilities as a final deterrent, while Washington will find itself facing a choice between a humiliating retreat or a massive, open-ended ground invasion to enforce its will.

Stepping into that trap would entangle the United States in another exhausting, multi-decade conflict in the Middle East. The lessons of recent history in Iraq and Afghanistan have demonstrated that entering a conflict with vague goals and an incomplete understanding of local realities leads to stagnation and strategic exhaustion. A war with Iran, a nation with a much larger population, more sophisticated defensive capabilities, and a deeply integrated network of regional allies, would dwarf those previous conflicts in scale and cost. It would drain American resources, alienate critical international partners, and permanently destabilize the global economy. The current pause in hostilities offers a brief window to choose a different future, a chance to replace the hollow promises of military adventurism with the hard, necessary work of realistic diplomacy.



## DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Satyabrata Borah

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# World Environment Day 2026

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Human civilization today stands at a critical crossroads. The planet that has nurtured life for millions of years is facing unprecedented environmental challenges, many of which are the direct result of human activities. Rising global temperatures, shrinking forests, declining biodiversity, polluted oceans, and increasingly frequent natural disasters are no longer distant warnings from scientists; they have become visible realities affecting communities across continents. Against this backdrop, World Environment Day, observed every year on June 5, assumes far greater significance than a symbolic annual event. It has evolved into a global platform for reflection, accountability, and collective action. The theme of World Environment Day 2026, "Inspired by Nature. For Climate. For Our Future," captures the essence of what humanity must embrace if it hopes to overcome the climate crisis and ensure a sustainable future for generations yet to come.

For decades, economic development has been pursued with little regard for environmental consequences. Industrial expansion, urbanization, and increasing consumption have undoubtedly improved living standards for many, yet these achievements have often come at a tremendous ecological cost. Forests have been cleared to make way for industries and infrastructure. Rivers have been polluted by industrial waste and plastic debris. Fossil fuels have powered economic growth while simultaneously releasing billions of tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The cumulative impact of these actions has pushed the Earth's natural systems to the brink. Scientific evidence now confirms that global warming is accelerating, threatening ecosystems, economies, and human well-being on an unprecedented scale. The challenge facing humanity is no longer whether climate change is real; the challenge is whether societies can respond quickly enough to prevent irreversible damage.

The central message of the 2026 theme is both simple and profound. Nature itself offers many of the solutions needed to address climate change and environmental degradation. For generations, human societies have tended to view nature primarily as a resource to be exploited. Forests were seen as timber reserves, rivers as water supplies, and land as a commodity for development. Such a narrow perspective ignored the countless ecological services that natural systems provide. Forests regulate rainfall, absorb carbon dioxide, and support biodiversity. Wetlands reduce flood risks and recharge groundwater. Oceans absorb vast quantities of carbon and help stabilize global temperatures. Healthy ecosystems perform functions that no technological innovation can fully replicate. Recognizing this reality is fundamental to building a sustainable future.

Nature-based solutions are increasingly being



recognized by scientists and policymakers as some of the most effective tools available in the fight against climate change. Restoring degraded forests, protecting wetlands, conserving mangroves, and preserving biodiversity not only help mitigate environmental damage but also strengthen resilience against future climate impacts. Wetlands, for example, act as natural sponges during periods of heavy rainfall, reducing flood risks while replenishing groundwater supplies. Mangrove forests provide critical protection to coastal communities by reducing the destructive impact of cyclones, storm surges, and coastal erosion. These natural systems perform valuable functions that would otherwise require enormous financial investments in artificial infrastructure. In many cases, nature-based solutions are not only more sustainable but also more economical.

The importance of preserving forests cannot be overstated. Forest ecosystems play a central role in regulating the Earth's climate by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. As deforestation continues in many parts of the world, the planet loses one of its most effective natural mechanisms for controlling greenhouse gas concentrations. The consequences are already visible through rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, and increasingly severe weather events. Reforestation and afforestation initiatives therefore represent more than environmental projects; they are investments in climate stability and human survival. However, planting trees alone is not enough. Conservation efforts must focus on restoring entire ecosystems and protecting the complex relationships that exist among plants, animals, microorganisms, and natural resources.

One of the most important lessons humanity

can learn from nature is the principle of interconnectedness. Every component of an ecosystem is linked to countless others through intricate relationships. A disturbance in one part of the system often triggers consequences throughout the entire network. The disappearance of a single species can affect food chains, pollination processes, and ecosystem stability. Similarly, the destruction of forests can alter rainfall patterns and increase vulnerability to natural disasters. Human societies are deeply dependent on these ecological systems, whether they recognize it or not. Economic prosperity, food security, public health, and social stability are all ultimately tied to environmental well-being. Ignoring these connections has contributed significantly to the crises now confronting the world.

The selection of Azerbaijan as the host country for World Environment Day 2026 carries important symbolic significance. Historically, Azerbaijan's economy has relied heavily on oil and natural gas production. Yet the country has increasingly embraced renewable energy development and environmental sustainability as part of its long-term vision. This transformation demonstrates that even nations with strong fossil-fuel-based economies can move towards cleaner and more sustainable pathways. Azerbaijan's efforts to expand solar and wind energy projects reflect a growing recognition that future economic growth must be compatible with environmental protection. The country's role as host reinforces the message that climate action is a shared responsibility requiring participation from all nations regardless of their historical development paths.

Climate change remains one of the defining challenges of the twenty-first century. Scientific

reports continue to warn that global temperatures are approaching dangerous thresholds that could trigger irreversible environmental changes. Melting glaciers and polar ice sheets contribute to rising sea levels, threatening coastal communities and island nations. Heatwaves are becoming more intense and frequent, affecting human health and agricultural productivity. Extreme weather events, including floods, droughts, and storms, are causing billions of dollars in economic losses while displacing millions of people. These impacts are not distributed equally. Developing countries, despite contributing relatively little to historical greenhouse gas emissions, often bear the greatest burden of climate-related disasters. This imbalance highlights the importance of climate justice as a guiding principle for international cooperation.

Addressing climate change requires more than technological innovation. It demands political courage, economic transformation, and social commitment. Governments must adopt policies that accelerate the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and green hydrogen. Investments in sustainable transportation, energy-efficient infrastructure, and circular economies must become priorities rather than optional initiatives. At the same time, developed countries must honor their commitments to provide financial and technological support to developing nations. Effective climate action depends on international solidarity and recognition of shared responsibilities. Without such cooperation, global efforts to limit warming and adapt to changing conditions will remain insufficient.

Environmental sustainability is also inseparable from questions of social and economic justice. The impacts of environmental degradation often fall most heavily on vulnerable populations. Poor communities frequently live in areas more exposed to pollution, floods, droughts, and other environmental hazards. Farmers face increasing uncertainty due to unpredictable weather patterns and declining agricultural productivity. Fisheries suffer from ocean pollution and changing marine ecosystems. Water scarcity threatens livelihoods and public health in many regions. As climate impacts intensify, existing social inequalities may become even more pronounced. Therefore, environmental policies must be designed in ways that protect vulnerable groups and ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities.

The global plastic pollution crisis illustrates the scale of contemporary environmental challenges. Plastic waste has infiltrated rivers, oceans, forests, and even remote ecosystems once considered untouched by human activity. Microplastics have been detected in drinking water, food supplies, and human bodies. The long-term consequences of this widespread contamination remain uncertain, but the risks are increasingly apparent. Reducing plastic pollution

requires coordinated action involving governments, industries, and consumers. Sustainable alternatives, improved waste management systems, and responsible consumption patterns are essential components of the solution. Individual choices matter, but meaningful progress also requires systemic changes that address the root causes of excessive waste generation.

World Environment Day 2026 serves as a reminder that environmental protection is not solely the responsibility of governments or international organizations. Every individual has a role to play. Daily decisions regarding energy use, transportation, consumption, and waste management collectively influence environmental outcomes. Choosing sustainable products, reducing unnecessary consumption, conserving water and energy, supporting environmental initiatives, and participating in community conservation efforts are practical ways individuals can contribute. While individual actions alone cannot solve global environmental problems, they create cultural and social momentum that encourages broader institutional change.

Perhaps the most important message of this year's theme is that humanity's future is inseparable from the future of nature. Economic systems, technological innovations, and political institutions ultimately depend upon the stability of the natural world. No level of scientific advancement can substitute for clean air, fertile soil, freshwater resources, healthy oceans, and functioning ecosystems. Protecting nature is therefore not merely an environmental objective; it is a fundamental requirement for human survival and prosperity. The choices made today will shape the world inherited by future generations. Continuing along the current path of environmental destruction risks creating a future marked by scarcity, instability, and conflict. Choosing a different path—one inspired by nature and guided by sustainability—offers the possibility of resilience, prosperity, and long-term security.

World Environment Day 2026 is therefore far more than an annual observance. It is a call to action, a reminder of shared responsibilities, and an opportunity to redefine humanity's relationship with the natural world. The environmental challenges confronting the planet are immense, but they are not insurmountable. Solutions exist, knowledge exists, and the capacity for change exists. What remains essential is the collective determination to act decisively and without delay. By learning from nature, respecting ecological limits, and embracing sustainable development, humanity can still secure a future that is both prosperous and environmentally responsible. The true success of World Environment Day will not be measured by speeches or ceremonies but by the actions that follow. The future of the planet depends upon those actions, and the time to act is now. (The author is the recipient of the 'Yuba Lekhak Sanman - 2025' from the Government of Assam)

## On occasion of World Environment Day

By: Satvabrat Borah

We often celebrate victories in war, writing the names of conquerors in golden letters in history books and building grand monuments to remember their triumphs. But if we pause for a moment and look past the parades, what do we actually see? While we busy ourselves counting wins and losses or drawing new borders on a map, someone else carries the true, silent burden of the devastation. This burden is not borne by governments or generals, it is carried by our earth. Wars do not just break nations and wound humanity, they tear apart the very fabric of nature that keeps us alive. The raw wounds inflicted on the environment last far longer than political arguments or fights over territory. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki showed us this grim reality, where ecosystems vanished in a flash, toxic radioactive fallout poisoned the soil, and black rain fell from disturbed skies, leaving scars that refuse to heal even after generations.

The ancient Indic worldview offers a beautifully different way of looking at our relationship with the world around us. In this tradition, nature is never treated as a mere storehouse of resources to be looted for human greed. Instead, the universe is seen as a sacred manifestation of the divine, where every single element possesses a living spirit. Rivers like the Ganga, Yamuna, and Narmada are not just bodies of water used for transport or industry, they are revered as mothers who nourish life. The sun is not viewed as a distant ball of burning gas, it is worshipped as a deity that gives life and energises everything on earth. This philosophy encourages us to meditate on the five great elements of existence, which are earth, water, fire, air, and space. We understand that if even one of these elements is harmed, the balance of our own lives falls apart. Trees like the Peepal, Banyan, Neem, and Tulsi are cared for as protectors of life, standing as symbols of continuity, purity, and healing.

This deep reverence for ecology is woven naturally into daily cultural and spiritual practices. Even birds and animals are given

a sacred place in this worldview as the trusted companions and vehicles of different deities. The bull named Nandi, who stays by Shiva, teaches us about strength and quiet patience. The majestic eagle, Garuda, who carries Vishnu, represents a higher vision and courage. The lion belonging to Goddess Durga shows us that power should always be guided by righteousness. Even the tiny mouse at the feet of Ganesh reminds us that the smallest creature has a significant role to play in cosmic harmony. This symbolism does not teach humans to conquer or dominate the wild, it inspires us to coexist beautifully with every living thing.

The heart of this ancient wisdom is beautifully captured in the peace mantra from the Yajurveda, which wishes peace for the skies, the atmosphere, the earth, the waters, the herbs, and the trees. The beauty of this prayer lies in the fact that it does not ask for prosperity or safety for human beings alone. It recognizes that true peace cannot exist for humans if the world around them is suffering. In this understanding, peace is not just the absence of a loud conflict between two armies. Peace is the perfect, quiet equilibrium of all existence. We learn that harming nature is ultimately an act of self destruction because our breath is tied to the breath of the forest.

Modern warfare acts as the exact opposite of this sacred balance. The weapons used today carry a destructive power that shatters the environment on a scale never seen before. When missiles and bombs explode, they release massive amounts of greenhouse gases and toxic chemicals into the atmosphere, speeding up climate change and turning clean air into poison. These explosions do not just destroy buildings, they burn down ancient forests and wipe out wildlife corridors that animals use to survive. Landscapes that nature took thousands of years to build turn into barren wastelands in a single second. Cleaning up this debris and waiting for the first green shoots of life to reappear can take centuries.

The oceans are another major victim of human conflict, though their suffering happens away from our eyes. We fight our bat-

les on the surface, but the toxic consequences sink deep into the blue waters. Naval warfare, underwater detonations, oil spills, and chemical leaks turn marine habitats into living hells. When thousands of tons of oil spill from damaged ships, a thick suffocating layer forms on the water, blocking sunlight and oxygen, which leads to the painful death of marine life. Coral reefs, which act as the rainforests of the ocean, are smashed and ruined. The intense acoustic disturbances caused by explosions under the water disrupt the natural rhythms, communication, and navigation skills of intelligent creatures like whales and dolphins, leaving them lost and stranded.

The air pollution caused during these conflicts reaches terrifying levels. When industrial zones, oil wells, and ammunition storehouses are set on fire, they release carcinogenic particles and hazardous gases that do not stay trapped within a border. The wind carries this poison across thousands of miles, affecting people who have nothing to do with the war. The result is a long lasting ecological trauma that stays in the soil, the water, and the air. Children are born with health defects and communities suffer from rare illnesses long after the peace treaties are signed, showing that the environment remembers the violence inflicted upon it.

Every conflict running in our world today places the planet in extreme danger. In every war, no matter which country claims victory, it is mother earth that loses. The green grass is stained, the rivers run thick with chemicals, and the skies lose their clarity. We are standing at a very critical crossroad in human history. On one hand, we have developed highly advanced technological tools capable of wiping out entire ecosystems. On the other hand, we have the gentle wisdom of ancient seers who reminded us that living in harmony is the only way forward. We need to realize that choosing peace is not a sign of weakness or cowardice. Choosing peace is the highest form of collective intelligence that our species can display. Protecting the earth is the only way we protect ourselves, because without the generosity of nature, humanity has no place to stand.

## World Environment Day 2026: AI, Green Hydrogen, and Circularity to Rescue

By: Dipak Kurmi

The institutionalization of World Environment Day, observed annually on the fifth of June since its inception in 1973, stands as the preeminent diplomatic instrument of the United Nations for engineering global environmental literacy and mobilizing systemic ecological action. Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 to commemorate the opening plenary of the historic Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, this platform has evolved into the largest international outreach vehicle for advancing climate objectives, maritime conservation, ecological restoration, and responsible consumption. The celebration provides a democratic, transnational forum designed to broaden the foundations of enlightened public opinion and enforce standard rules of responsible conduct among individuals, industrial enterprises, and sovereign communities. As the global biosphere confronts a critical confluence of a breached 1.5 degrees Celsius warming threshold, rapid urban expansion, and escalating biodiversity loss, the 2026 cycle marks a profound paradigm shift. International environmental governance is rapidly transitioning away from the historical phase of mere problem identification and moving decisively toward the structural deployment of scalable, high-technology solution implementation.

The international center for this localized and macro-economic mobilization on Friday, June 5, 2026, is the city of Baku, Azerbaijan, which serves as the official global host country and administrative anchor for the United Nations Environment Programme. Positioned at the axis of contemporary climate diplomacy, the host nation is leveraging this platform to introduce an ambitious technological blueprint tailored specifically to assist fossil-fuel-producing states in navigating the complex macroeconomic transition toward low-carbon resilience. The central strategic framework under discussion focuses on the dual deployment of artificial intelligence for climate action and the aggressive scaling of green hydrogen infrastructure. This dual focus is anticipated to culminate in the formal drafting of the Baku Declaration 2026, a multilateral diplomatic instrument designed to enforce more stringent national carbon reduction commitments, optimize regional energy grids via machine learning, and establish standardized regulatory pathways for clean energy integration within conventional industrial portfolios.

The integration of artificial intelligence into the 2026 climate action discourse represents a critical evolution in environmental management, moving from retrospective data analysis to predictive, real-time ecosystem mitigation. Advanced AI frameworks are currently being deployed to forecast severe climate variations, simulate complex disaster scenarios, and stabilize electrical grids that experience supply fluctuations from variable renewable energy

sources. This computational infrastructure is closely aligned with the global optimization of green hydrogen production and distribution networks, which provide an essential zero-emission chemical substitute for heavy industries that cannot be easily electrified. By presenting a mathematically validated template for transitioning fossil-fuel-reliant economies into green energy hubs, the proceedings in Baku demonstrate that balancing industrial development with strict ecological protection requires a total technological restructuring of the global energy architecture rather than voluntary carbon offsets.

This top-down geopolitical shift is mirrored by shifting consumer dynamics and localized public events across over one hundred and fifty participating nations, with major developing economies like India showcasing deep transformations in civic behavior. A primary indicator of this grassroots alignment is the rise of green buying consumer behavior, a market trend where citizen populations prioritize environmental transparency, zero-waste packaging, and verifiable circularity in their commercial transactions. This behavioral shift extends into global agricultural practices through the mainstreaming of climate-resilient crops, most notably the systematic inclusion of millets, historically recognized as Shree Anna, into daily human diets. Because millets possess high water-use efficiency and can withstand extreme thermal stress, their widespread agricultural revitalization acts as a vital mechanism for drought adaptation and sustainable agriculture, providing vulnerable farming communities with a reliable baseline of food security amid erratic monsoon patterns and soil degradation.

On a broader civic scale, the public events of World Environment Day 2026 utilize modern digital architecture and unified global campaigns to bridge the gap between high-level diplomatic mandates and bottom-up environmental activism. Digital outreach strategies exploit high-reach hashtags, including the historic Only One Earth slogan commemorating the fifty-fourth anniversary of the initial Stockholm summit, to connect disparate regional networks into a singular, cohesive advocacy front. This digital connectivity translates into direct physical action through community-led ecosystem clean-up drives, municipal tree-planting initiatives designed to combat the intense effects of urban heat islands, and the implementation of resilient urbanism strategies. These urban interventions include the structural development of sponge cities, which utilize permeable infrastructure, artificial wetlands, and urban green spaces to absorb hazardous runoff, replenish depleted aquifers, and protect growing metropolitan centers from severe flash floods and climate-induced storm surges.

The structural urgency underlying the 2026 summit is further illuminated by rigorous environmental accounting concerning the economic and ecological liabilities of global synthetic pollution. Scientific data compiled by the United Nations indicates that an estimated eleven mil-

lion tonnes of mismanaged plastic waste leak into marine and aquatic ecosystems annually, while non-biodegradable microplastics continue to accumulate within agricultural soil matrices due to the widespread utilization of synthetic polymers in commercial agricultural products. The annual social, environmental, and economic cost of this plastic pollution is evaluated between three hundred billion and six hundred billion US dollars, presenting a massive economic liability to maritime commerce, public health systems, and localized tourism economies. To neutralize this long-life threat, international ministries are using the momentum of the 2026 cycle to advance negotiations for the Global Plastic Treaty, an enforceable legal instrument designed to establish mandatory caps on virgin plastic production and standardize traceable post-consumer recycling frameworks.

Furthermore, the 2026 environmental paradigm places a heavy emphasis on the rapid deployment of electric vehicle infrastructure as a fundamental requirement for building climate-resilient cities. The transition toward clean transportation networks requires not only the mass manufacturing of zero-emission vehicles but also the structural establishment of synchronized charging grids powered by renewable energy. This infrastructure development is designed to systematically lower the high concentrations of atmospheric particulate matter that currently compromise urban public health while simultaneously reducing urban reliance on imported petrochemical derivatives. By integrating clean transport networks with AI-driven municipal transit algorithms, contemporary city planners can successfully minimize urban carbon intensities, proving that localized infrastructure adjustments are directly linked to the achievement of global temperature stabilization objectives.

Ultimately, the overriding analysis of World Environment Day 2026 confirms that environmental preservation has ceased to be an optional philanthropic pursuit and has instead become an absolute requirement for macroeconomic and civilizational survival. The historic reliance on linear extraction systems, where natural resources are depleted without regard for planetary boundaries, is being replaced by an intentional infrastructure of restoration driven by green hydrogen scaling, artificial intelligence, and circular market mechanisms. The collective regulatory commitments, capital allocations, and community actions executed during this global milestone will inevitably dictate the long-term stability of the global biosphere. By transforming abstract scientific metrics into binding legislative policy and scalable technological systems, global society possesses a unique opportunity to decouple industrial growth from ecological degradation, ensuring a sustainable, balanced future where human progress operates in harmony with the natural boundaries of the planet. (The writer can be reached at dipakurmi@pltd@gmail.com)

## Police warn families of Tiananmen crackdown dead not to visit graves on 37th anniversary

**BELJING, June 4:** Chinese authorities are snuffing out any remembrance of the deadly 1989 military crackdown on student-led pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square, which happened 37 years ago Thursday, in a further tightening of a yearslong campaign to erase what happened from public memory.

Police told relatives of the victims they would not be allowed to visit a cemetery in Beijing on the anniversary of the crackdown, a person with knowledge of the matter said. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because of fear of retribution.

Relatives of the victims visited the cemetery on the anniversary for more than 30 years to read memorial statements with police keeping watch, Amnesty International said. They belong to a group called Tiananmen Mothers.

Hundreds of people, and possibly thousands, were killed in 1989 as troops advanced through crowds that were trying to stop the military from reaching the protesters in Tiananmen Square, a vast plaza in the centre of the Chinese capital.

The decision by the Communist Party leadership to send in the military was a pivotal moment in China's modern history, determining that the market reform that transformed the country into the world's second largest economy would not be coupled with politi-



cal liberalisation.

**Rubio says censorship can't erase the past**

In Hong Kong, police stepped up security Thursday to prevent any commemoration at or near a park where a massive candlelight vigil lit up the night every year until a clampdown following major anti-government protests in 2019.

On Wednesday, they stopped two performance artists from making symbolic gestures in separate incidents. One briefly held up a question-mark-shaped balloon outside a department store.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who recently accompanied

President Donald Trump on a state visit to Beijing, issued a statement marking the anniversary. "No amount of censorship can erase the past," it said. "Those who sacrificed to uphold their unalienable rights of free expression and peaceful assembly will be vindicated someday."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning dismissed the statement as a smear on her nation's political system. "We urge the US side to ... stop using so-called democracy and human rights as a pretext to interfere in China's internal affairs," she said.

**Tiananmen Mothers calls crackdown a crime**

Tiananmen Mothers issued an annual appeal for justice ahead of this year's anniversary. The statement, signed by 107 people, demanded full disclosure of what happened, compensation for the victims and their families and the pursuit of legal accountability for those responsible.

"The sacrifice of our family members is an indelible pain etched in our hearts. Our tears have run dry, grief is buried deep within, what remains is eternal remembrance of our family members and hatred for the crime of massacring the people," Zhang Xianling, a member of the group, said in a video message posted on Facebook — which is blocked in China.

Amnesty said it is deeply troubling that China's suppression of the commemoration appears to be escalating. "Banning the relatives of people killed in the Tiananmen crackdown from visiting their loved ones' graves is a heartless act by the Chinese authorities," Sarah Brooks, the organisation's deputy director for Asia, said in a statement.

The Beijing Public Security Bureau did not respond to a faxed request for comment.

**Hong Kong has banned an annual vigil**

Authorities in Hong Kong have banned the vigil since 2020, at first citing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Simon Ng, a past participant, walked around the nearby Causeway Bay shopping district to mark the anniversary. "There are some things I can neither forget nor let go, so I have to come and take a walk," he said.

Three of the organisers of the vigil have been charged under a 2020 national security law. One pleaded guilty, which may result in a lesser sentence. The other two have been tried and are awaiting a verdict.

One of them, lawyer Chow Hang-tung, said in an online post published last weekend that she would go on a 37-hour hunger strike in prison. "Behind the glitter of power and dictatorship lies the blood and broken dreams of ordinary people. For in amnesia lies the demise of democracy," she wrote.

Derek Chu, a former district councillor, said on Instagram that he visited Chow on Thursday and told her he would also stop eating for 37 hours to show his support. He added that a shop he runs is giving out LED candles that can be used to remember the victims.

An annual vigil was held in Taiwan, but a driving thunderstorm reduced turnout to about 150 people. China claims the self-governing island as its territory and sanctioned four New Zealand lawmakers on Thursday to protest their recent visit. (AP)

## Indian envoy visits mortuary, injured nationals after Kuwait airport attack kills compatriot



**DUBAI, June 4:** India's Ambassador to Kuwait Paramita Tripathi visited the mortuary where the mortal remains of an Indian national killed in an attack on Kuwait International Airport were kept and met injured compatriots undergoing treatment at hospitals, as the embassy coordinated repatriation and assistance efforts.

The Indian national was killed, and several others were injured when the airport came under attack on Wednesday amid escalating hostilities between Iran and the US.

In a social media post late Wednesday night, the Embassy of India in Kuwait said Tripathi visited Kuwait's Central Mortuary, where the mortal remains of the deceased were brought.

The ambassador also met Brigadier Abdulrahim Al-Awadhi, General Manager of the General Department of Criminal Evidence, and conveyed appreciation for the "prompt and sensitive support" extended by the Kuwaiti authorities.

"The Embassy is in touch with the family of the deceased Indian national and is coordinating with Kuwaiti authorities for expeditious transportation of mortal remains," the mission said.

Tripathi also visited the Indian nationals injured in the attack and being treated at various hospitals in Kuwait, it said.

"She interacted with those injured and assured them of all possible assistance and close monitoring and follow-up by the embassy with the hospitals and their families," the mission said.

The embassy had earlier expressed its deepest condolences over the death and said it was closely coordinating with the Kuwaiti authorities to extend all possible support and assistance to the bereaved family and the injured.

North Korea has not conducted a nuclear test since 2017, but in recent years it has expanded its arsenal of nuclear-capable missiles that can fly far enough to reach both US allies in Asia and the American mainland, while Kim has also pushed to increase the country's stockpile of nuclear weapons.

A senior South Korean official told lawmakers in 2018 that North Korea was estimated to have manufactured between 20 and 60 nuclear weapons, but some experts now put the size of the North's arsenal at more than 100 warheads. Estimates of how many additional weapons the country can produce each year vary from about six to as many as 18.

Last September, South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-young said that North Korea was operating a total of four uranium enrichment facilities including the Yongbyon complex, and that they were running everyday.

Nuclear weapons can be built using either highly enriched uranium or plutonium, and North Korea has facilities to produce both at Yongbyon.

North Korea has focused on enlarging and modernizing its nuclear arsenal since Kim's high-stakes diplomacy with US President Donald Trump collapsed in 2019. Kim has since rebuffed US and South Korean offers to restart diplomacy. (AP)

jured. In a statement, the Kuwait Army said the Iranian strikes resulted in the death of an Indian expatriate and injuries to several individuals.

"We extend our sincere condolences and sympathies to the family of the deceased and his relatives, and we wish a speedy recovery to all the injured," said Colonel Saud Abdulaziz Al-Otaibi, official spokesperson of Kuwait's Ministry of Defence.

Kuwaiti Interior Ministry spokesperson Brigadier General Nasser Bousleeb said Terminal 1 of Kuwait International Airport was targeted by several hostile drones, resulting in the "death of one traveller and injuries to several workers and travellers".

The latest death has taken the number of reported Indian fatalities linked to the regional conflict to at least 10 since hostilities between Iran and the US began on February 28.

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

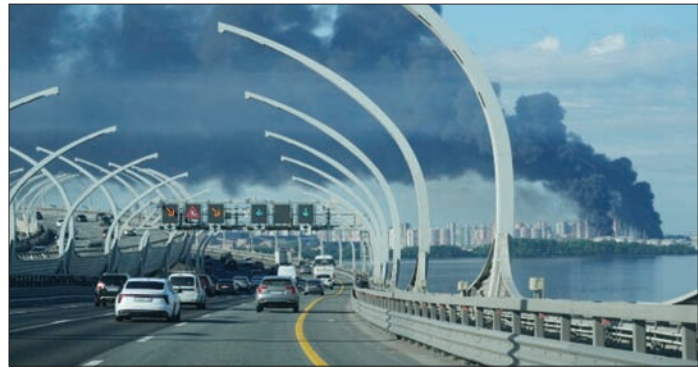
Last month, an Indian sailor was killed, and several others were injured after their wooden dhow caught fire near the Strait of Hormuz.

In March, an Indian national died, and another was injured by debris from the interception of a missile in the UAE capital of Abu Dhabi. Another Indian national was killed in missile and drone attacks on the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh on March 18.

Two more Indians died in an attack on an industrial area in Oman on March 13, and three seafarers died in attacks on merchant vessels in the early days of the conflict.

One Indian citizen has also been reported missing. (PTI)

## Ukraine's drone strikes set gloomy tone for Putin's economic showcase



**ST PETERSBURG, June 4:** A massive black cloud rising above the St Petersburg skyline from a Ukrainian drone strike set a gloomy tone for the opening of President Vladimir Putin's annual showcase of Russia's economic achievements.

With Putin set to arrive Thursday in his hometown that is hosting the St Petersburg International Economic Forum, the Ukrainian attack a day earlier that set an oil terminal ablaze was another embarrassing blow to his efforts to minimise the impact of the 4-year-old conflict and cast it as a distant event with no effect on Russian daily life.

The attack, which also targeted a naval base near Russia's second-largest city on the Gulf of Finland, underlined Ukraine's growing capability to hit deep inside its neighbour and demonstrated that even the heavily protected city where Putin was born is increasingly vulnerable.

Scores of flights were delayed or diverted at St Petersburg's airport and authorities cut cellphone internet service to try to prevent drone attacks.

Putin had scaled down Russia's annual Victory Day parade on May 9, fearing Ukrainian drone strikes. Days later, a massive drone attack on Moscow's suburbs killed three and showed the capital's vulnerability.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia's forces were pressing inside Ukraine "in order to prevent such attacks" like the one on St Petersburg. He noted that "systemic" strikes on Kyiv that Russia threatened last week are underway.

On Tuesday, Russia hit Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities with hundreds

of drones and dozens of missiles, killing 23 and wounding 151 others. Putin has used the forum to showcase his country's economic advances and encourage foreign investment. Often styled as the Russian version of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, it usually draws tens of thousands of delegates from around the world.

While Western officials and business people have stayed away from the forum after Putin sent troops into Ukraine in 2022, Russia has sought to attract more guests from other regions to underline its declared goal of promoting a "multipolar world".

Saudi Arabia, which is a special guest this year, has sent a large delegation. The presidents of Uzbekistan and Tanzania and China's vice president also are attending. A US official, Rodney Mims Cook Jr, head of the US Commission of Fine Arts, will attend the event for the first time in years.

Russia's economic outlook has clouded as the initial boost from massive military spending has fizzled. The government has raised taxes and increased domestic borrowing to keep its budget deficit under control.

Putin is expected to minimize Russia's economic problems during his forum appearance, but the Ukrainian attack on St Petersburg's port about 15 km from the forum's venue have underlined the growing challenges posed by the conflict.

Hours before the forum opened Wednesday, Ukrainian drones also hit the Kronstadt naval base on an island in the Gulf of Finland, the home of Russia's Baltic Fleet since Peter the Great founded St Petersburg. (AP)

## Pakistan plans new security policy to curb terror financing, improve intel sharing

**ISLAMABAD, June 4:** Pakistan is working on a new internal security policy aimed at curbing terror financing by integrating criminal databases and improving intelligence-sharing among provinces.

The proposed National Internal Security Policy 2026-30 will be discussed at an "extraordinary meeting" of the National Police Management Board (NPMB) later this month and will incorporate recommendations from all provincial police chiefs. It will also include inputs from the heads of police in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, the Dawn newspaper reported on Thursday.

According to the report, the proposals include the establishment of a Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in Gilgit-Baltistan, integration of police data at the national level, improved interprovincial intelligence-sharing mechanisms and measures to curb terror financing.

The policy envisages a greater role for the National Police Bureau (NPB) in formulating nationwide police reforms and security strategies. The bureau is currently headed by Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Director General Usman Anwar.

Speaking to Dawn, Anwar said there was a "serious disconnect" among various civilian law enforcement agen-

cies and stressed the need for a uniform policing mechanism across provinces.

"It is a dire need of the time to establish a uniform mechanism across provinces and collaborate with international and domestic intelligence agencies to fight terrorism and choke terrorist financing," he said.

Anwar said the upcoming meeting would also discuss functional specialisation, police welfare, transnational crimes, criminal data integration, training requirements, women police networking, interprovincial intelligence-sharing and development of the CTD in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The proposed policy assumes significance against the backdrop of efforts by Pakistan's security establishment to strengthen internal security amid a surge in militant attacks in several parts of the country.

The move to formulate the new security policy came months after the Chief of Defence Force Field Marshal Asim Munir visited the National Police Academy in January, where he advocated for "a strong, professional, and people-centric police force". A retired senior police officer quoted by the newspaper said structural weaknesses had long hampered police performance and described the force's capacity to tackle terrorism, insurgency and emerging crimes as inadequate. (PTI)

## North Korea unveils a new plant to produce fuel for nuclear weapons

**SEOUL, June 4:** North Korea on Thursday unveiled a new facility to produce nuclear bomb fuels, with leader Kim Jong Un announcing plans to bolster the country's nuclear forces "at an exponential rate".

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff assessed the site as a uranium enrichment plant and said it was closely coordinating with the United States to monitor North Korean nuclear activities. The South's military did not immediately release further details.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said the facility used "more sophisticated technology" but didn't provide further details. It's not clear where the plant is or when it began operations.

State media photos showed what appeared to be a large hall housing centrifuges, which are needed to enrich weapons-grade uranium.

The disclosure of the new factory is in line with Kim's repeated vows to expand his nuclear weapons program to cope with what he called escalating US-led military threats.

KCNA said Kim visited the nuclear facility on Wednesday to learn about its operations and its long-term production plan.

KCNA quoted Kim as saying the urgency for bolstering up the country's nuclear war deterrent, both in quality and quantity, has grown because of confrontations with "the most ferocious enemies," an apparent reference to the United States and South Korea. Kim cited other unspecified

threats and crises as a need to boost North Korea's nuclear capability, it said.

Kim claimed that North Korea's weapons-grade nuclear materials production capacity has more than doubled compared with five years ago, according to KCNA. It wasn't possible to independently verify his claim.

After a meeting at the facility, Kim said he and other top officials "confirmed the order of priority for implementing the ambitious future plan designed to beef up our state's nuclear forces at an exponential rate," KCNA said.

KCNA photos showed Kim walking through narrow aisles lined with dense rows of silver tubes and pipes, in what appeared to be a centrifuge hall. Another image showed him speaking with senior officials in a meeting room, where a blurred graphic depicting a cone-shaped object was spread across a table. It wasn't immediately clear whether the graphic showed a warhead design.

The facility's revelation came less than two years after North Korea unveiled another covert uranium-enrichment plant in September 2024, in its first public disclosure of such a facility since showing one at the country's main Yongbyon nuclear complex to visiting American scholars in 2010.

Kim delivered a similar message during his visit to that facility in 2024, calling for an increase in the number of centrifuges to "exponentially" expand the country's nuclear arsenal and

urging the development of more advanced centrifuge systems.

North Korea has not conducted a nuclear test since 2017, but in recent years it has expanded its arsenal of nuclear-capable missiles that can fly far enough to reach both US allies in Asia and the American mainland, while Kim has also pushed to increase the country's stockpile of nuclear weapons.

A senior South Korean official told lawmakers in 2018 that North Korea was estimated to have manufactured between 20 and 60 nuclear weapons, but some experts now put the size of the North's arsenal at more than 100 warheads. Estimates of how many additional weapons the country can produce each year vary from about six to as many as 18.

Last September, South Korean Unification Minister Chung Dong-young said that North Korea was operating a total of four uranium enrichment facilities including the Yongbyon complex, and that they were running everyday.

Nuclear weapons can be built using either highly enriched uranium or plutonium, and North Korea has facilities to produce both at Yongbyon.

North Korea has focused on enlarging and modernizing its nuclear arsenal since Kim's high-stakes diplomacy with US President Donald Trump collapsed in 2019. Kim has since rebuffed US and South Korean offers to restart diplomacy. (AP)

## Nepal foreign minister to visit India from June 5 to 7

**KATHMANDU, June 4:** Nepal's Minister for Foreign Affairs Shisir Khanal will visit India from June 5 to 7 at the invitation of his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar, the government said on Thursday.

Khanal's visit comes amid a controversy triggered by Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah's remarks in the parliament. Shah said on May 31 that apart from discussions with India on a long-standing border dispute, Kathmandu was in touch with China and the UK as well. Two days later, New Delhi categorically rejected any role for third parties to resolve its boundary dispute with Nepal.

Announcing the dates of Khanal's India visit, the Nepal government on Thursday said in a statement that he will hold a formal meeting with Jaishankar in New Delhi. "The two sides will discuss matters of mutual interest, with a view to enhancing cooperation across key areas including trade, investment, connectivity, energy and people-to-people ties," it said.

As part of regular exchange of high-level visits, this one will further consolidate the enduring and multifaceted bilateral relations between Nepal and India, said the foreign ministry statement.

The visit will be the first to India by a minister from PM Shah's government since it assumed office in March.

Nepal's leaders have traditionally attached importance to early engagement with New Delhi, reflecting the close political, economic and people-to-people ties between the neighbours.

Earlier this week, the chairman of Nepal's ruling Rastriya Swatantra Party Rabi Lamichhane arrived in New Delhi and met Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"I welcome and fully share his desire to work closely together for a shared and prosperous future. Nepal is a priority partner under our Neighbourhood First policy and we look forward to collaborating with the new government to elevate the special and multifaceted relationship between our two countries to greater heights," Modi said on X after the meeting on Wednesday. (PTI)

## Canada, UAE condole Delhi fire that killed 21

**TORONTO, June 4:** Canada and the UAE have condoled the fire incident in New Delhi that killed at least 21 people, including 12 foreigners, and left dozens injured.

"Deeply saddened by the tragic fire that claimed at least 21 lives and injured many others in Malviya Nagar, New Delhi," Canadian Foreign Minister Anita Anand said in a social media post on Thursday.

"Canada stands with India during this devastating time, and I extend my deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those affected," said Anand, adding that she is in touch with her Indian counterpart S Jaishankar to convey Canada's solidarity.

The UAE Foreign Ministry has also extended condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims, and to the government and people of India, over the tragedy.

"The United Arab Emirates has expressed its solidarity with the Republic of India following a fire at a hotel in Malviya Nagar, New Delhi, which resulted in a number of deaths and injuries," it said in a statement on Wednesday. (PTI)

## Strong supply chains, talent make India perfect partner for US in civil nuclear sector: NEI chief

**WASHINGTON, June 4:** India with its strong supply chains and engineering talent is the perfect partner for the US in the civil nuclear sector poised for exponential growth, Maria Korsnick, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) said here.

Korsnick was in India a fortnight ago leading a 20-member delegation from the US nuclear industry to explore opportunities as New Delhi opened the tightly-controlled atomic power sector for private players by easing the draconian liability law.

"India has a very strong supply chain and very strong engineering talent. You're not new to nuclear. You understand it and have worked very well with it in a very established sector. And that, to me, just makes the perfect partner to go with the innovation in the US," Korsnick told PTI in an interview at the NEI office here.

She said the US nurtured innovation through its national labs over many, many years which was now



being brought to the marketplace.

"It just feels like a perfect marriage. I think because we're approaching that both with really strong skill sets, that's really what sets the backbone for building this trust," Korsnick said.

She said India and the US have rolled out aggressive plans for the growth of the nuclear sector which presents an opportunity to work to-

gether. India plans to increase its nuclear power capacity from the present 8.78 GW to 100 GW by 2047. In a similar timeframe, the US plans to increase its nuclear power capacity from 100 GW to 400 GW.

"That's an opportunity why we're working together, because we're both going through a very significant build-out," Korsnick said, adding

that small modular reactors (SMRs) are an area of future growth.

The US is investing big in fast-tracking deployment of SMRs with at least three such pilot projects expected to go critical by July 4, when the US celebrates the 250th anniversary of its independence.

Korsnick said the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act will help regain the lost momentum in the India-US civil nuclear sector over the past two decades due to unresolved liability issues.

"It was 20 years ago when we took a trade mission to India after a nuclear pact had been signed. There was a lot of momentum and maybe interest that there could be something. And now, look, 20 years have gone by," Korsnick said.

India and the US signed the civil nuclear agreement in July 2005. Over the next three years the US amended its laws to allow New Delhi to engage in nuclear com-

merce -- both fuel and technology -- with Washington.

However, the passage of the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act in 2010 prescribed stringent penalties on suppliers of nuclear equipment, which kept global private players away from the Indian civil nuclear market.

"I think what's wonderful is that the Shanti Act is really a new foundation which opens a door for cooperation between our two countries," Korsnick said, adding that it provided a perfect opportunity to build trust.

She called for closer coordination between governments and the industry in both countries to ensure the new law helps in the growth of the civil nuclear sector.

"From a nuclear liability perspective, which was really one of the sticking points, I think the Shanti Act, as we understand it, addresses that," Korsnick said. The focus should now be on implementation of the law, she added. (PTI)

Seeks stronger infrastructure, youth empowerment and regional cooperation

# Nagaland Guv calls for greater connectivity in NE at NEC session

HT Correspondent

**DIMAPUR, June 4:** Nagaland Governor Nand Kishore Yadav on Thursday called for enhanced regional cooperation, improved connectivity and greater investments in infrastructure, youth empowerment and sustainable development in the Northeast.

Addressing the 73rd plenary session of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in Shillong, Yadav stressed that improved connectivity remains essential for economic growth and regional integration.

He reaffirmed Nagaland's commitment toward building a prosperous, sustainable and inclusive Northeast, emphasising that regional collaboration remains central to achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047 and Viksit Nagaland.

Highlighting agriculture as the backbone of Nagaland's economy, he noted that more than 70% of the population lives in rural areas and depends on agriculture and allied



activities for livelihood.

He underscored the importance of strengthening value chains, certification mechanisms and market access for the state's organic products, including pineapple, cucumber, persimmon, Naga King chilli, coffee and agarwood, while advocat-

ing for integration of modern technology with traditional agricultural practices.

He highlighted the need for expediting development of the proposed airport at Ciethu, along with additional airstrips at Mokkokchung, Tuensang and Mon. He also advocated for development of the Foothill

Road and railway connectivity projects, stating that such initiatives would unlock industrial, mineral and agricultural potential across the State.

Emphasising education and youth empowerment, Yadav expressed concern over the absence of premier educational institutions in Nagaland, which compels many students to pursue higher education outside the State.

He urged consideration for establishment of national or regional institutions in the state while highlighting entrepreneurship, innovation and skill development as key pathways for the state's youthful population.

Calling for strengthening the NEC, Yadav advocated for enhanced powers, greater funding support and equitable distribution of resources among all eight northeastern states to bridge developmental gaps and accelerate regional progress.

## Manipur police personnel stabbed to death during anti-drug operation, accused held

**IMPHAL, June 4:** A Manipur police personnel was stabbed to death during an anti-drug operation in Thoubal district, following which the accused was arrested, officials said on Thursday.

During the raid at Moijing Khongkok on Wednesday night by a police commando team, Md. Naobi (25) and another person were detained, an official said.

"While they were being questioned, accused Md. Naobi suddenly attacked Khoirom Suresh with a knife, inflicting grievous injuries," police said, adding that both the accused fled the spot.

Khoirom was rushed to the district hospital, where he was declared dead around 9.15 pm.

"Following intensive search operations, the main accused, Md. Naobi was arrested at around 8.45 am on Thursday," police said.

Former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh has expressed anguish over the death of the police personnel.

In a post on X, he said, "Deeply anguished and disturbed to hear about the Manipur Police Commando personnel who succumbed to his injuries after being stabbed by a drug peddler during an anti-drug operation at Moijing Khongkok on Wednesday night."

"It is not just sad, but also shameful for all of us as a society," he said and called for stringent punishment of those responsible for the incident. (PTI)



## DC calls for quality improvement in education sector

HT Bureau

**YUPIA, June 4:** A coordination meeting of the Education Department, Papum Pare District was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Lobsang Tsering at the DC Conference Hall to review key educational initiatives, administrative issues and academic performance across the district.

The meeting commenced with a welcome address by TT Tara, DDSE, Papum Pare, who greeted the attendees and outlined the objectives of the coordination meeting.

A detailed PowerPoint presentation was delivered by Moromi Tang, DPC (ISSE), highlighting various departmental matters, including school merger issues, pending Land Possession Certificates (LPCs), educational initiatives undertaken under the ISSE scheme, recent CBSE examination results, Pupil-Teacher Ratios (PTR) and other important developments across the district.

During the meeting, Certificates of Appreciation were awarded to Government Higher Secondary Schools of Balijan, Kimin and Banderdewa, along with KGBV Sagalee for achieving a 100 percent pass percentage in the recently concluded CBSE/AISSE examinations for the academic session 2025-26.

The principals of the achiever schools also shared their success stories, innovative practices and strategies adopted to ensure excellent academic performance.

Addressing the gathering, Deputy Commissioner Lobsang Tsering emphasised that punctuality, sincerity, dedication and transparency are the foundational pillars for every government employee and urged all staff members to strictly adhere to these

professional ethics.

Highlighting the importance of the Education Department, the DC stated that teachers should look beyond standard textbooks and actively instill moral values, civic sense and ethics among students, as young minds are the easiest to mould.

The DC further directed the department to expedite all pending school Land Possession Certificates by maintaining close liaison with the Land Department.

While appreciating the improvement in CBSE results, Tsering encouraged the Education Department and the teaching fraternity to put in greater effort to further elevate academic performance in the coming years.

On infrastructure development, the DC advised the department to maintain close coordination with executing agencies for civil works sanctioned under various heads such as BE, RE and SIDF. He emphasised that regular monitoring and coordination meetings are essential to ensure quality infrastructure development in schools.

He also noted that since the majority of Education Department employees belong to the district itself, the progress of the education sector directly contributes to the development of their own home district.

The Deputy Commissioner additionally stressed the importance of cleanliness in educational institutions and informed that discussions would soon be initiated with the department for the implementation of effective waste management and waste segregation practices on school campuses.

The meeting concluded with active participation and deliberations from officials, principals and stakeholders of the district education department.

## DLIC reviews SWM Rules in Papum Pare

HT Bureau

**YUPIA, June 4:** The first meeting of the District Level Implementation Committee (DLIC), constituted for the implementation of the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2026, was held on Thursday at the Conference Hall of the Deputy Commissioner's Office, Yupia, under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner, Papum Pare.

The meeting was attended by representatives from various educational institutions, NEEPCO and railway authorities, along with officials from concerned departments.

Welcoming the members and participants, Teri Taniya, Executive Engineer, Urban Development (UD), Yupia Division, informed the committee that a State Level Monitoring Committee meeting chaired by the Chief Secretary, Government of Arunachal Pradesh was convened on June 2 to review the implementation of the directions issued by the Hon'ble Supreme Court and the provisions of the SWM Rules, 2026.

He stated that the DLIC meeting was convened in pursuance of the newly notified Rules, which came into effect on April 1, 2026. The committee deliberated extensively on key provisions of the Rules, in-

cluding four-way segregation of waste into wet, dry, sanitary and special care waste, identification and registration of Bulk Waste Generators (BWGs), online registration through the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) portal, certification of compliant BWGs, powers vested with District Magistrates under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and the responsibilities of various stakeholders.

Addressing the meeting, Lobsang Tsering, Deputy Commissioner, Papum Pare, stressed the importance of strict compliance with the SWM Rules, 2026 in view of the directions issued by the Supreme Court. He informed the members that the Government of Arunachal Pradesh is required to submit a compliance report before the Court by August 6, 2026.

The Deputy Commissioner explained that institutions consuming more than 40,000 litres of water per day, generating over 100 kilograms of waste daily or occupying premises measuring 20,000 square metres or more qualify as Bulk Waste Generators under the Rules. He urged all eligible institutions to complete their registration on the CPCB portal by June 14, 2026. A live demonstration of the registration process was also conducted during the meeting for the benefit

of participating institutions.

The committee was informed that compliant BWGs would be issued Certificates of Compliance valid for three years. It was further noted that the Rules empower District Magistrates to recommend the disconnection of water and electricity services to non-compliant entities after following due procedures.

Emphasising sustainable waste management practices, the Deputy Commissioner advised institutions to adopt in-situ management of biodegradable waste through composting and the development of kitchen gardens within their campuses. For dry waste management, institutions were encouraged to establish Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) wherever feasible or transport segregated waste to the existing MRF at Doimukh managed by DUDA, Yupia.

During the deliberations, the committee decided that the frequency of waste collection from institutions would be determined based on actual requirements, while user charges would be assessed by the Urban Development Department considering operational expenses.

The meeting also discussed the establishment of a Common Material Recovery Facility for institu-

tions such as NIT Arunachal Pradesh, FTII, Government Law College and Bini Yanga Women's College. The Urban Development Department was tasked with preparing a detailed estimate for submission to the Deputy Commissioner.

As an interim arrangement, the Urban Development Department may undertake the collection and transportation of segregated dry waste from these institutions until the proposed common facility becomes operational.

On the issue of e-waste management, the Deputy Commissioner informed the members that forward linkages for scientific disposal and recycling would be explored in consultation with the State Pollution Control Board. Pending the finalisation of such arrangements, institutions were advised to utilise authorised vendors empanelled on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) for the disposal of e-waste.

Concluding the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner reiterated the importance of the timely registration of all eligible Bulk Waste Generators and assured that necessary assistance would be extended by the District Administration to institutions facing difficulties during the registration process.

## Five militants arrested in Manipur, arms recovered

**IMPHAL, June 4:** Security forces have arrested five militants belonging to different proscribed outfits and recovered arms in separate operations in Manipur, police said on Thursday.

An official said that while a militant was arrested from Sawombung Khunjabo in Imphal East district on Monday, four others were apprehended from near Khangtung village in Chandel district on Tuesday.

They have been identified as Mayanglambam Gandhi Singh (24), Langpoklakpam Sushil Singh (25), Laitonjam Kanheya Singh (26) and Kangjam Naresh Meitei (20), the official said.

Security forces recovered arms and explosives from a hut during an operation at Irlbung area in Imphal East district on Wednesday. These included two AK rifles, one SLR rifle, a 9 mm carbine, four hand grenades, three magazines and 42 rounds of ammunition of different calibres. (PTI)

## Meghalaya to raise ILP, Eighth Schedule issues

**SHILLONG, June 4:** The Meghalaya government will raise its long-pending demands for the Inner Line Permit (ILP) and the inclusion of Khasi and Garo in the Eighth Schedule with Union Home Minister Amit Shah if an opportunity arises during his visit, Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong said on Thursday.

On whether ILP would be discussed with Shah, Tynsong said the immediate agenda is the North Eastern Council meeting, but the state remains committed to pursuing the issues.

"The plenary session tomorrow is about the NEC, so let's keep that aside," he said, referring to the 73rd NEC Plenary scheduled from June 3 to 5 in Shillong.

"On pursuing pending issues, from the government side, yes, for sure. If we get the opportunity to meet the Home Minister, we will certainly apprise him and discuss the pending issues of ILP and the Eighth Schedule languages," Tynsong said.

He noted that both demands have legislative sanction. (NNN)

## Kohima DC announces ₹ 2 lakh scholarship scheme for girl students

HT Correspondent

**DIMAPUR, June 4:** Kohima DC B Henok Buchem on Thursday announced a ₹ 2 lakh scholarship fund under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) programme for meritorious girl students in the district, aimed at promoting girls' education and empowerment.

Under the scholarship scheme titled 'Educate Her, Empower Her', 20 deserving girl students will receive one-time financial assistance of ₹ 10,000 each. The initiative aims to recognise academic excellence among girls and support their educational aspirations.

The scholarship is open to female students who are permanent residents of Kohima district and have passed Class X or Class XII examinations in 2026

with 60% and above marks.

Preference will be given to students from economically weaker sections, orphan or single-parent households and differently-abled students, the DC said in a notification.

Applicants are required to submit a duly filled application form along with supporting documents, including mark sheets, PRC/residential certificate, income certificate, Aadhaar card or valid ID proof and passport-size photographs.

As per the scheme, the annual family income of applicants should not exceed ₹ 1.5 lakh.

Selection of beneficiaries will be based on academic merit, socio-economic background and verification by the district level selection committee.

## Mizoram CM pushes for Northeast economic corridor, integrated connectivity at NEC plenary



said the implementation of the proposed corridor would provide a unified framework for strengthening inter-state connectivity, tourism, investments, trade and logistics across the Northeast.

A key recommendation put forward by the Mizoram Chief Minister was the adoption of a comprehensive "One-Grid Approach" that would integrate roads, railways, air connectivity, waterways, power supply, telecommunications and logistics infrastructure into a coordinated development framework, according to the statement.

With the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project nearing completion, Lalduhoma stressed the need for institutional and social preparedness to fully capitalise on emerging economic opportunities, it said.

He urged the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) to support programmes focused on investment readiness, trade facilitation, entrepreneurship development, skill enhancement, logistics infrastructure and community engagement.

The chief minister also advocated a cluster-based investment strategy, highlighting sectors such as bamboo, agri-horticulture value chains, food processing, textiles, eco-tourism, green energy and digital services as key drivers of inclusive growth.

He proposed that tourism should be developed through a common Northeast tourism circuit supported by unified branding and facilitation mechanisms.

The CM further observed that the Northeast could emerge as a major logis-

tics and trade gateway under the Act East Policy, particularly through the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway.

Lalduhoma also stressed the need for effective implementation of the mandated 10 per cent Gross Budgetary Support earmarked for the Northeast and proposed the establishment of a dedicated coordination mechanism under DoNER or the NEC to improve monitoring and convergence of development programmes.

Emphasising the importance of youth empowerment, he called for increased investments in skill development, incubation centres, tourism and hospitality, logistics, agribusiness, green technology and start-up ecosystems.

To accelerate project execution, he suggested setting up DoNER Project Implementation Units (PIUs) in every Northeastern state.

The chief minister expressed gratitude for the recognition of Mizoram as the "Ginger Capital of India" and reiterated the importance of the Mizoram Ginger Unique Selling Proposition (USP) project.

He also highlighted the importance of successfully implementing the proposed Thenzawl Peace City, which, according to him has the potential to emerge as a major centre for tourism, education, healthcare, sports and agro-based development.

The event was attended by DoNER Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, Minister of State for DoNER Sukanta Majumdar, chief ministers and senior officials from all Northeastern states, the statement said. (PTI)

## Nagaland bans products containing tobacco

HT Correspondent

**DIMAPUR, June 4:** The Nagaland health & family welfare department has prohibited food products containing tobacco and nicotine as ingredients, including gutkha and pan masala with tobacco/nicotine in the state.

The department issued a notification on Thursday as per Regulation 2.3.4 of the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sale of certain products) Regulations 2011, as amended intervalley, which stipulates that tobacco and nicotine shall not be used as ingredients in any food products and any article of food as defined in Section 3(1) (j) of Food Safety and Standards

Act 2006.

It explained that ingredient means any substance, including a food additive used in the manufacture or preparation of food and present in the final product, possibly in a modified form as per section 3(1) (y) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, Rule 1.2.1 of the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2011.

The department referred to the Supreme Court order, dated 23.09.2016 in the matter of Transfer Case Civil No 1/2010-Central Areca-nut Marketing Copn. & ORS), observed that to circumvent the ban on sale of gutkha, the manufacturers are

selling pan masala (without tobacco) with flavoured chewing tobacco in separate sachets but often conjoint and sold together by the same vendors from the same premises, so that consumers can buy the pan masala and flavoured chewing tobacco and mix them both and consume the same.

It observed that instead of the earlier 'ready to mix' chewing tobacco, companies are selling gutkha in twin packs to be mixed as one.

The prohibition includes all food products, whether chewable or otherwise, which are either flavoured or scented or mixed with any toxic additives.

No. GDB/ RD/BTC/15th/FC/174/2020-21/412 Date 04/06/2026

**SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

Sealed tender affixing a non refundable court fee stamp of 8.25 (Rupees Eight & paise twenty five ) only with a validity period of 180days which will subsequently be converted and drawn up in the printed of APWD, F-2 Form from the Govt. registered contractor/Farm of Class III and above category of Assam PWD Department (Roads & buildings) and BTC. According to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the following works under P&RD Department, BTC, Kokrajhar for the year 2024-25 during 2025-26 as stated below. The tender will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00 PM on 29/06/2026 and will be opened on the same date & Place at 2.30PM . Payment of non refundable, the tender form's cost is Rs. 500.00(Rupees Five hundred ) only and non refundable 0.03% only in cash for each act of tender paper Demand Draft to be drawn in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar payable at Kokrajhar.

Name of Scheme	A. A. Amount (Rs.)	Tender Value of work(Rs.)	Time of Completion of Work	Earnest Money(1% for ST/SC and 2% for Gen /Farm and
Construction of Community Toilet at Poschim Kajamati Masjid (ID-801, Activity Code-126147736 under Gobardhana Dev. Block of Baksa District under the award of 15 <sup>th</sup> FC (Tied Grant) for the year 2024-25 during 2025-26.	Rs. 11,00,000.00	Rs. 11,00,000.00	180days	(1%) Rs. 11,000/- (2%)Rs.22,000/-

The tender /tenders must be submitted with the requisite Earnest Money Deposit(EMD) in the form of deposit at Fixed Deposit /Demand Draft to be drawn in favour of the BDO, Gobardhana Dev. Block payable at Barpeta Road .Tender not accompanied by the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) is liable to be rejected .

Sd/-  
Block Dev.Officer cum Chairman  
Tender Committee Gobardhana Dev. Block, Barpeta Road

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/426

# Rahul Gandhi working against India's stability, spreading fear: BJP

*'If India's shock absorbers had truly been removed, why is the economy continuing to show resilience despite elevated crude prices, conflict in West Asia'*

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** The BJP on Thursday hit back at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his claim that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will no longer remain in office in a year's time, accusing him of spreading propaganda to create "instability" in the country.

Calling Gandhi a "certified anarchist", the ruling party also noted that the only Emergency imposed in the country was by former prime minister Indira Gandhi.

Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, claimed on Wednesday that Modi will not be the prime minister in a year's time as the "system that he once controlled is now shaken and collapsing internally".

He further alleged that the Modi government may try to suppress the public pressure and impose something like an Emergency.

Addressing tribal leaders from across the country at an event organised by the Adivasi Congress at the Indira Bhawan here, Gandhi on Wednesday warned that while an "economic tsunami" is coming, the system is also revolting due to public pressure. Reacting sharply to the remarks, BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said that despite having "access" to information from various institutions and officials, his party continues to lose elections and shrink politically.

"Every few months, he unveils a new conspiracy theory. First, democracy was over. Then institu-

tions were captured. Then election rigging. Now we are told that an Emergency is coming and an economic tsunami is around the corner.

"The country has heard these predictions before. The problem is that none of them ever come true," Malviya said in a post on X.

Referring to Gandhi's remarks that India is heading towards an "economic tsunami", Malviya said it is a classic case of "fear-mongering". "If India's shock absorbers had truly been removed, why is the economy continuing to show resilience despite elevated crude prices, conflict in West Asia, supply-chain disruptions, global financial tightening and persistent geopolitical uncertainty?"

"Rahul Gandhi should stop selling panic. India is facing global headwinds, but it is facing them with stronger reserves, lower inflation, better infrastructure spending, stronger domestic demand, record FDI inflows, substantial food buffers and targeted support for MSMEs and industry," he added.

Drawing a comparison between the Congress-led UPA and the Modi government, Malviya said one left India vulnerable while the other made it more resilient.

"The tsunami was 2013. The difference is simple: Congress created vulnerability. This government created resilience," he said, in an apparent reference to the economic challenges during the final years of



the UPA government.

On Gandhi's claim of receiving information from within the system, Malviya said, "Which raises an obvious question: If everyone has been working for Rahul Gandhi all this time, why was he so vehemently opposed to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR)? Didn't the Chief Election Commissioner tell him it was in the national interest? Or is Rahul Gandhi opposed to cleaning up electoral rolls because he wants illegal voters and infiltrators to remain on them?" he asked.

BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said Gandhi's comments reflect the Congress party's own history and mindset. "Rahul Gandhi comes from a family with a history of the Emergency. That is why he believes

everyone is out to impose an Emergency. The Constitution was crushed only once in India, and that was done by Indira Gandhi. The way she undermined constitutional institutions and interfered with them is well known," Poonawalla said in a video statement.

The BJP spokesperson alleged that the real "emergency" is within the Congress party.

"Rahul Gandhi, who places dynastic rule above democracy, continues to see an Emergency everywhere even today. There is an emergency of sorts, but it is within the Congress. There is institutional collapse and revolt within the Congress. There is a systemic breakdown, but it is in the Congress party," he said.

The BJP spokesperson also ac-

cused Gandhi of repeatedly making allegations against India's institutions and harming the country's image abroad.

"But you are the LoP -- the leader of propaganda. Spreading lies, creating panic and profiteering -- that is your model," he said.

Poonawalla said the Congress leader should stop "panic-to-profit" politics. "Stop this agenda of maligning India. Stop this 'panic-to-profit' politics. And remember that LoP does not stand for leader of propaganda," he said.

Responding to Gandhi's remarks, another BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari alleged that the Congress leader is seeking to create instability in the country and accused him of working with "forces that want to spread anarchy".

"Rahul Gandhi is an anarchist. George Soros and Rahul Gandhi want to create disorder in the country. Rahul Gandhi wants to create a democratic deficit in India. I have never seen a politician who hates India as much as Rahul Gandhi does," Bhandari told PTI Videos.

He claimed that Gandhi has realised he could not win the trust of the people through democratic means and is therefore targeting the country's democratic institutions, stability and security.

"Rahul's modus operandi is dangerous for the country, and today he stands exposed as a certified anarchist," Bhandari said. (PTI)

# CJP backed by 'urban naxals', claims Telangana BJP chief

**HYDERABAD, June 4:** Telangana BJP president N Ramchander Rao on Thursday alleged that groups such as CJP were being backed by "urban naxals" and organisations like the AAP.

Asserting that Gen Z identifies with the Indian ethos, he said the country's youth would not fall into the trap of people allegedly backed by international investor and philanthropist George Soros and others like him. Rao was speaking at a 'Meet the Press' organised by the Press Club Hyderabad on the occasion of Telangana Formation Day.

"Youth have the right to fight on issues. There are many student organisations. I am not saying every student should follow the BJP or the ABVP. Cockroach Janata Party is not a new phenomenon," Rao said.

"It has been created by people associated with parties like the Aam Aadmi Party. They are trying to spread certain narratives through social media. Their presence is limited to social media, and they have no real grassroots base," he claimed.

The satirical platform emerged following a controversy over remarks attributed to Chief Justice of India Surya Kant about "cockroaches" and "parasites" during a court hearing on the "senior" designation for lawyers. The CJI later clarified that his observations, directed at individuals entering the legal profession through "fake and bogus degrees", were misquoted.

What began as an online satire project has since evolved into a wider conversation on digital dissent and youth frustration, with the platform using memes and sharp political commentary to address issues,



such as unemployment, exam-paper leaks and education.

Asked whether the BJP would contest alone or enter into alliances for the upcoming elections to the three municipal corporations in Hyderabad, Rao said the party's national leadership would take a decision on alliances.

"As far as our current stand is concerned, we will contest alone. However, we need the support of all people for our victory. Alliances and other matters will be decided by the party's national leadership," he said. Elections to the Greater Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Malkajgiri municipal corporations are expected to be held later this year.

Rao alleged that the ruling Congress and the opposition BRS were trying to stir Telangana regional sentiment as they lacked confidence in winning public support based on their performance. Referring to the recent opposition by some Congress leaders and opinion-makers to a proposed meeting to be addressed by Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, and the subsequent denial of permission by the police, Rao said the event should have been allowed. (PTI)

## AAP MP Sanjay Singh slams BJP over paper leak incidents

**HARDOI (UP), June 4:** AAP MP Sanjay Singh has targeted the BJP government at the Centre and in Uttar Pradesh over the paper leaks issue, claiming repeated examination irregularities were forcing students across the country to commit suicide.

Addressing party workers and supporters here on Wednesday, he said discussion on paper leak incidents had virtually become a crime despite widespread concerns among students and their families.

He claimed several examination papers had been leaked since 2017 during the tenure of the BJP governments at the Centre and in Uttar Pradesh, adversely affecting students who spend an entire year preparing for competitive examinations. Referring to an incident in Prayagraj, Singh alleged that police and administrative officials had prevented him from interacting with students. He described the situation as a sign of "dictatorship replacing democracy" in Uttar Pradesh and said he would issue a privilege notice against the officials concerned.

The AAP leader also alleged that two youths, identified as Ashutosh Pandey and Pankaj Pandey, were arrested and sent to jail while they were on their way to attend his programme. He claimed that both were scheduled to appear for the Trained Graduate Teacher (TGT) examination on June 3 and had been waiting for the recruitment process for the past five years.

Singh said programmes aimed at interacting with youths would continue despite such actions.

The MP said he had come to Hardoi after meeting the family of a student in Lakhimpur Kheri, who allegedly died by suicide following the NEET examination.

He further accused the BJP of using central investigative agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to weaken opposition parties. (PTI)

## Balagopal hits back at White Paper, says Satheesan's debt claims on Kerala stand exposed

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, June 4:** CPI(M) leader K N Balagopal on Thursday accused the UDF of "misleading" the public about the state's financial position, saying the White Paper tabled in the Assembly by Chief Minister V D Satheesan had exposed several claims made by the opposition in recent years.

Reacting to the findings in the White Paper, the former Finance minister said Satheesan, while serving as Leader of the Opposition, had repeatedly claimed that Kerala's debt had crossed ₹ 6 lakh crore.

"Even when the LDF government presented figures showing otherwise, he continued to repeat the claim. Now the White Paper itself states that Kerala's total debt is around ₹ 5 lakh crore. This proves that our figures were correct," Balagopal told reporters here. The Kottarakkara MLA also rejected allegations that the state owed more than ₹ 1 lakh crore to government employees.

According to Balagopal, the White Paper shows that the total amount payable, including dearness allowance arrears, is around ₹ 48,000 crore.

"The narrative that Kerala had a debt of ₹ 6 lakh crore and owed over ₹ 1 lakh crore to employees was spread across the state. The figures in the White Paper itself show that these claims were incorrect," he said.

Balagopal further alleged that the White Paper had failed to explain the reasons behind Kerala's financial difficulties. He argued that the document did not adequately highlight the reduction in central grants and other financial support to the state.

"In 2021, Kerala received about ₹ 33,000 crore in grants from the Centre. Last year, it came down to ₹ 7,000 crore. After the introduction of GST, the state's share of taxes also declined. These factors have had a major impact on Kerala's finances, but they have not been properly reflected in the White Paper," he said.

The former minister also claimed that the real objective behind the White Paper was to justify the privatisation of public sector assets.

"There are moves to privatise sectors such as electricity, ports, airports and mineral sand resources. There are also attempts to

increase the retirement age of government employees," he alleged.

Questioning the process followed in preparing the document, Balagopal said a White Paper containing official and confidential financial information should normally be prepared by the Finance Department itself.

"If an external committee prepares such a document, it could set a wrong precedent. The government has to explain why this process was followed," he said.

Later, in a Facebook post, Balagopal said he was "thankful" to Satheesan for placing figures in the public domain that contradicted earlier opposition claims.

He noted that the White Paper presented in the Assembly put Kerala's total debt at ₹ 5.07 lakh crore, including the figures for the current financial year, and stated that total arrears payable, including those due to government employees, stood at around ₹48,000 crore.

Balagopal said that with the figures now officially available, Satheesan should apologise to the people of Kerala for what he described as a misleading campaign regarding the state's debt and liabilities. (PTI)

## PM working to further external interests rather than national priorities: Rahul

**DEHRADUN, June 4:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of working to further external interests, claiming that the central government was "systematically dismantling" critical socio-economic protections.

Addressing a public rally in Uttarakhand's Almora via phone, Rahul accused the central government of being involved in the 'looting' of the state's natural resources.

"The team of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah has destroyed the economic foundation established by the Congress party, which was aimed at empowering the common man. Demonetisation has taken away the money you kept at home for emergencies, and the GST has harmed small businesses across the country," Rahul stated.

Rahul postponed his scheduled visit to Almora and returned to the Pantnagar airport midway after his helicopter encountered severe weather conditions.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha later addressed the public rally, titled 'Parivartan ka Shankhnaad', over a phone call facilitated by Congress general secretary and Uttarakhand in-charge Kumari Selja.

Though a major portion of Gandhi's address over the phone was not clearly audible, he apologised to the people gathered in Almora for his inability to reach the venue and promised that he would visit them again soon.

"I was scheduled to arrive this morning. However, while we were travelling by the helicopter, the pilot informed us that the weather had deteriorated and we would have to return to Pantnagar," Gandhi said.

Addressing the public, the Congress leader alleged that the vision behind the creation of Uttarakhand was being undermined. He said the people of the state had envisioned a future where they retained self-determination rather than being governed by external forces.



"The Constitution states that India, that is Bharat, is a Union of States. You made immense sacrifices to form this state. Regrettably, Uttarakhand is not being managed by its own people today; it is being operated via remote control from Delhi," he said.

He further alleged that outsiders are exploiting the natural resources of the state, depriving the local population of the benefits.

Gandhi also targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing the central government of "systematically dismantling" critical socio-economic protections. He highlighted four specific areas where he claimed these protections had eroded.

Firstly, he alleged that household savings and gold held by the public had been diminished.

Secondly, he stated that small and medium enterprises, particularly in the textile and food processing sectors, had been devastated by the flawed implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Thirdly, the Congress leader criticised the current foreign policy alignment, claiming that India's energy security is now constrained by external geopolitical pressures.

"Today, we can only purchase oil from countries approved by America. This crucial protection has been

dismantled by Narendra Modi and Amit Shah," he alleged.

Gandhi cited geopolitical tensions, noting that during the conflict between Iran and the United States, the Strait of Hormuz was subsequently closed.

He further claimed that the Modi government has undermined both agriculture and education in the country, while the nation's foreign policy has become subservient to the United States.

"Currently, the conflict between America and Iran is creating a potential economic tsunami for a country like India, yet the Modi government is focused on serving the interests of America and a handful of wealthy businessmen in our country," he said.

Lastly, he claimed that the agricultural protection system for farmers had been weakened, alleging that the prime minister is "working to further external interests rather than national priorities."

Rahul also claimed that the current Dharm government is not prioritising the interests of the state.

The public meeting, held with the upcoming assembly elections in mind, was attended by many senior state leaders, including Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly Yashpal Arya and former chief minister Harish Rawat. (PTI)

# Concern expressed at Parl panel meeting over rupee, sluggish pvt investment

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** Members expressed concern at a parliamentary standing committee meeting on Thursday over the falling value of the rupee and sluggish private investment in the country even as the government said despite challenges India's economy was emerging stronger.

At a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on finance, headed by BJP leader Bhartruhari Mahtab, Economic Affairs Secretary Anuradha Thakur and Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran made a presentation about the economic situation of the country and discussions took place on the evolving dynamics.

"Issues such as rising prices, inflation, the conflict in West Asia, and China's recent stringent laws aimed at protecting its industries were deliberated upon. While there are still certain headwinds, I would

say that despite these serious challenges, India's economy is emerging in a stronger position," committee chairman Mahtab told reporters after the meeting.

He said there are several encouraging indicators as household savings have increased compared to last year, and investment is also rising.

"However, the challenge is that while the government investment and capital expenditure are increasing, private investment has not been picking up at the same pace. This is an issue that we need to address," he said.

Mahtab said the committee decided to meet again in the third week of the month.

"We will also prepare a report that will not only describe the challenges we face but will also provide recommendations on what the government should consider to address them," he said.



Asked whether the issue of the falling value of the rupee figured in the meeting, Mahtab said the MPs discussed the issue.

"Falling rupee is also a matter of concern. The RBI is taking steps to control it," he said.

On sluggish private investment, he said: "That is a concern, that is a concern. For that, certain policy changes are required. At the same time those who are moving out of China, what type of support we are providing to set up their industries in our country, that is also we have to see".

Mahtab said the panel members also asked about the trade agreement India is going to sign with the United States.

"But the major concern is when we are attracting FDI in large number, there is also a flight of FDI from our country. What the chief economic advisor has said that it is cyclical in nature. In three years' time, when FDI is increasing, there is another three-year term when there is flight," he said.

But the greater challenge, Mahtab said, is that the US is attracting FDI in larger volumes -- a large number of peo-

ple who were investing in other countries are now going to the US for investment.

He said another challenge is that after 2022, the interest index of most countries has been increasing.

"When Japan had zero interest rate, now they are providing 2-3 per cent interest rate... so flight of money is also taking place in those developed countries, whereas earlier the emerging economies were getting most of the investment. These are certain challenges which we have to look at. But India has a very good market and we will meet those challenges. The government has taken a number of steps, the government has provided a corpus fund," he said.

Those who attended the meeting included Congress MPs Pramod Tiwari, Gaurav Gogoi, Manish Tewari, BJP MPs PP Chaudhary, Dinesh Sharma, and LJP (R) MP Arun Bharti, among others. (PTI)

# India, Venezuela vow long-term energy tie-up as PM Modi holds talks with Delcy Rodriguez

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** India and Venezuela on Thursday vowed to set up a long-term energy partnership building on their complementarities as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held extensive talks with Venezuelan Acting President Delcy Rodriguez focusing on ramping up economic ties including in critical minerals, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and automobiles.

Rodriguez kick-started a five-day visit to India on Wednesday to bolster the overall bilateral cooperation against the backdrop of New Delhi seeking to diversify its crude oil procurement amid supply disruptions due to the West Asia crisis.

India's procurement of Venezuelan crude oil has picked up momentum since April and the South American nation has already emerged as the third largest oil supplier to the country.

In the meeting, the Venezuelan leader's clear message was that her country looks at India as a "preferred energy partner" given the size of the Indian economy and the fact that it will be stable buyer in the energy market for many years to come, Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs Rudendra Tandon said.

The response by the prime minister was that India looks forward to building this energy relationship and it will cover both upstream and downstream activities, he said at a media briefing.

"The discussions focused on forging an energy partnership.



They (Venezuela) see India as a stable demander for many years to come. Therefore, there exists a perfect complementarity for India and Venezuela to work in the energy sector, in both upstream and downstream," Tandon said.

In the talks, the Indian side also raised the issue of Venezuela owing over USD 500 million in dividends to ONGC Videsh. "It is our money. They (Venezuela) are very sensitive to the issue," Tandon said responding to a question.

The Modi-Rodriguez discussions also went into broadening the overall bilateral economic partnership to other areas.

"Venezuela is a resource-rich country. It's not just about critical minerals; it has also gold, diamonds, and other materials. So, mining is very much there. In fact, there was a discussion on how to assess the potential reserves that they have, or whether we could co-

operate in that area," he said.

Tandon declined to directly answer a question on whether the political transition in Venezuela following the detention of then President Nicolas Maduro by US forces in January came up for discussion. "We all know that there was a transition in Venezuela. We are working with a government that is friendly, that wants a partnership with India. We want to reciprocate that. And do not forget that Venezuela has traditionally been very close friend of us, both bilaterally as well as international level," he said.

The senior diplomat said BRICS also came up for discussion, and added that it was more to compliment India and PM Modi for New Delhi's chairmanship of the grouping. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the two leaders reviewed the full spectrum of bilateral relations and explored new

avenues of cooperation in energy, trade, investment, healthcare, automobiles, among others.

"The leaders also exchanged views on global and regional issues of mutual interest. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to deepening the bilateral partnership and advancing the interests of the Global South," he said.

Rodriguez took charge as Venezuela's acting president following the detention of then President Nicolas Maduro by US forces in January.

India was once a major processor of Venezuelan heavy crude, importing more than 4,00,000 barrels per day at peak levels, until sweeping US sanctions and rising compliance risks forcibly shut down purchases in 2020.

New Delhi started purchasing crude oil from Venezuela after the sanctions were lifted following Maduro's capture. Indian oil marketing companies significantly ramped up crude oil sourcing from Venezuela in the last few weeks largely due to the West Asia crisis.

The Venezuelan acting president is accompanied by several ministers, including the ministers of foreign affairs, economy and finance, science and technology, communication and information, and transportation.

The Venezuelan delegation will visit several sites connected with energy, pharmaceuticals and auto sectors to gain insights into India's technological and industrial capabilities and to explore opportunities for collaboration. (PTI)

# Shuttered shops and silence mark aftermath of deadly Delhi hotel fire

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** A day after desperate cries rang out for help from a hotel, silence has taken over the Malviya Nagar lane where a charred building, damp mattresses and sparse conversations pointed to the tragedy that unfolded in the hours gone by.

A massive blaze erupted at Hotel Flourish Inn on Wednesday morning, leaving 21 people dead and dozens injured. Many of the victims were foreign nationals staying at the hotel while attending to relatives undergoing treatment at nearby hospitals.

Visuals from Thursday morning showed several guest houses, homestays and shops in the area lying shut, with shutters pulled down and gates locked. Locals said occupants of these establishments had to pack their belongings and vacate as the owners were shutting them down.

The usually busy neighbourhood appeared subdued, with fewer people on the streets and little commercial activity visible.

People passing through the lane slowed down as they approached the gutted building. Some stopped briefly to look at the charred structure, while others quietly discussed the horrors that had unfolded there.

A day after the incident, locals recalled seeing people trapped inside the building desperately banging on glass windows and calling for help as the fire spread.

"I received a call early in the morning from my tenant, who lives behind my house, informing me that a fire had broken out. I was alarmed and initially thought the



fire was in my own house. As soon as I stepped outside, she told me that the fire was actually in the building behind ours," a local told PTI. He added that when he reached the spot, he saw several people trapped inside.

"They were hitting the glass windows with their hands and signalling for help. We immediately gathered stones, hammers and other tools to break the glass. After managing to create an opening, we went upstairs and helped rescue the people who were trapped inside," the local said.

Residents further claimed that hotel owner Lavkesh Bajaj, who was arrested on Wednesday evening, owned three hotels in the area, including Flourish Inn.

Outside the hotel, mattresses that were used to cushion the fall of desperate people jumping from the hotel to escape the fire remained near the building, drawing the attention of onlookers.

Hotel Flourish Inn before the fire showed a white multi-storey building with blue-tiled panels on its facade. The entrance had a short flight of stairs leading to a lift lobby, while another staircase beside it descended to the basement through a glass-door entry. Now only a charred building stands in its place.

The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained, officials said.

According to investigators, the establishment had permission for only six rooms but was allegedly operating around 25 rooms, including some in the basement. Officials are also verifying reports that additional floors had been constructed without the required approvals.

The building lacked a fire no-objection certificate (NOC), officials said. Police have arrested Bajaj and registered a case, including under charges of culpable homicide. (PTI)

## DIG visits areas along LoC in J-K's Poonch

**JAMMU, June 4:** Deputy Inspector General of Rajouri-Poonch Range, Sandeep Wazir, on Thursday visited forward areas along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district to review the security scenario and assess operational preparedness, officials said.

The DIG, who oversees the operational areas of the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch, visited the forward areas of Sawjian and Anganpathri.

During the visit, Wazir interacted with police personnel deployed in the forward areas and assessed the arrangements in place for maintaining vigilance and responding effectively to any emerging situation, they added. Emphasising the strategic importance of the border region, he directed personnel to maintain a high level of alertness, strengthen surveillance measures and ensure close coordination with all security agencies operating in the area. (PTI)

## FEMA case against Myntra closed following compounding: ED

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** A foreign exchange violation investigation against Flipkart-backed online fashion-and-lifestyle platform Myntra has been "terminated" after the RBI issued a compounding order based on a "no objection" given by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued the order on April 20 in the case of Myntra Designs Private Limited, the ED said in a statement on Thursday. The central agency initiated a probe against the e-commerce platform in July 2025 for alleged contraventions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), based on "credible" information. The ED had then said it had registered a FEMA case against Myntra, its linked companies and directors for an alleged FDI (foreign direct investment) violation exceeding Rs 1,654 crore. "The RBI has issued a compounding order on 20.04.2026 under section 15 of FEMA, in the case of Myntra Designs Private Limited, which has resulted into termination of investigation against the company for alleged contraventions of the provisions of FEMA, 1999...", the agency said. (PTI)

## CIC directs railways to provide Amrit Bharat Station redevelopment records under RTI

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** The Central Information Commission (CIC) has directed the West Central Railway to furnish records related to redevelopment and construction works carried out at a railway station under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, stating the information could not be denied under provisions relating to personal information and commercial confidence.

The directive followed a complaint seeking copies of documents concerning the redevelopment of the Narmadapuram railway station in Madhya Pradesh, including work orders, estimates, drawings, and related records under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

The railway authorities had denied the information citing exemptions under Sections 8(1)(j) and 8(1)(d) of the Act.

During the hearing, the respondent railway officials submitted that the information sought was exempt from disclosure under the RTI Act. However, they voluntarily agreed to provide a revised reply to the complainant in response to the RTI application.

Information Commissioner Swagat Das pulled up the railway authorities for denying the information, holding that the rejection under Section 8(1)(j), which deals with personal information, was "misplaced and untenable" as the provision had "no applicability in the present case".

The commission also found that Section 8(1)(d), relating to commercial confidence, had been invoked in a "mechanical and unjustified manner" without demonstrating how disclosure

would harm the competitive position of any third party.

Observing that the information sought related to redevelopment works at a railway station under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme and utilisation of public funds, the commission said such details "squarely fall within the ambit of larger public interest".

"The Commission takes a serious view of such casual and improper denial of information, particularly in matters involving public works and transparency in governance," the order said.

The CIC directed the railway authorities to provide a revised point-wise reply and furnish the requested information free of cost after severing any commercially sensitive details, if required, in accordance with the RTI Act. (PTI)

## India committed to unity in diversity, says J&K LG at interfaith conference

**SRINAGAR, June 4:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday said India has consistently emphasised unity in diversity and shown respect to every faith that emerged thousands of years after Sanatan Dharma.

Addressing the "Rishwar Inter-Faith Conference 2026" here, Sinha said the idea of respecting all faiths has been woven into the fabric of India's philosophy for millennia.

"While many nations today struggle with the challenge of coexistence, diversity has been our natural rhythm of life. While many societies have devised measures to safeguard unity, India embraced the ethos and value of coexistence and practised seamlessly for thousands of years," he said. Sinha also said that Rigveda teaches that hearts and minds should be aligned, "our aim should be the same, our feelings in harmony, and our thoughts united."

"Scholars and researchers worldwide agree that the spirit of equal regard for all religions finds its philosophical roots in the ancient traditions of our great country. When I reflect on

the ideals and philosophies India has gifted humanity, it becomes evident that through both thought and deed, our Vedas, Upanishads, saints and seers have illuminated a path toward lasting world peace," he added. The lieutenant governor said that every thread of society must be woven together, advancing with a shared commitment to the welfare of humanity.

"That is precisely what humanity needs most today. The ethos of equal respect for all religions is India's most precious gift to the world. We must continuously nurture it so we can move forward together in unity and bring prosperity to every community," he said.

Highlighting Jammu and Kashmir's exceptional performance during the three phases of the Vande Mataram initiative, the lieutenant governor described the achievement as extraordinary and a testament to the people's enduring patriotic spirit. He also lauded the overwhelming public support for the 'Nasha Mukta Jammu Kashmir Abhiyan' (drug-free Jammu and Kashmir campaign). (PTI)

## Delhi to withdraw B&B policy after Malviya Nagar fire tragedy: Tourism Minister Kapil Mishra

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** The Delhi government has decided to officially withdraw its Bed and Breakfast policy and review all establishments operating under the scheme following the deadly fire at a hotel in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar area, Tourism Minister Kapil Mishra has said.

"We are going to officially withdraw the Bed and Breakfast scheme, and all establishments licensed under it will be checked," Mishra told PTI.

"Action would be taken against operators found violating the terms of the licence. If any establishment registered under the scheme is found running more than six rooms, its licence will be cancelled," the minister said. The move comes after a massive fire ripped through the Flourish Stay B&B on Wednesday morning, leaving 21 people dead, including 11

foreign nationals, and several injured.

According to Mishra, Flourish Stay was granted a licence under the B&B scheme in 2024 in the Silver category for six rooms, with validity until 2027.

However, investigators said the hotel was allegedly operating nearly four times beyond its permitted strength and did not possess the mandatory fire safety clearance. It was allegedly running around 25 rooms, including some in the basement, police sources said. Explaining the role of the tourism department, Mishra said its responsibility is largely limited to granting and renewing licences and verifying compliance during inspections.

"The owners are required to submit guest records to the local police station every 15 days. The tourism department does not have a role in the day-to-day functioning of

these establishments," he said.

The decision to withdraw the policy comes despite the tourism department recently proposing a revamp of the scheme.

Last month, the department released a draft policy proposing several changes to the existing framework. It introduced two categories - Gold and Silver - with classification based on factors such as room size, furnishings, sanitation standards, guest amenities and safety arrangements, a senior official said. As of 2023, more than 2,200 rooms across 432 properties in the national capital had been registered under Delhi government's B&B scheme.

Urban planning expert Jagdish Mangain said the city has witnessed a series of fatal incidents in recent months, raising concerns about enforcement and regulatory oversight. (PTI)

## Mobile app for complaint registration to be launched soon: Haryana ACB

**CHANDIGARH, June 4:** Haryana State Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (SV & ACB) is set to launch a mobile application soon, which will enable citizens to submit videos, photos, and other evidence of corruption directly to the Bureau.

The move is a decisive push to broaden public participation in the fight against corruption and to make the complaint process more transparent and accessible, officials said.

The mobile application will be user friendly, they said.

SV & ACB chief AS Chawla on Thursday said through the app, complainants will be able to upload videos and photographs relating to corruption, contact the helpline directly, and access details of ACB unit officers in their respective districts.

Critically, complainants will have the option to report corruption anonymously, while all information received will be duly verified and acted upon, he said in Panchkula.

Chawla said that during the first five months of 2026, the Bureau registered a total of 83 criminal cases as part of a sustained anti-corruption drive. Of these, 67 were trap operations in which officials, government employees, and private individuals were caught red-handed while accepting bribes.

The officer also stated that between January 1 and May 31, the Bureau registered 40 departmental inquiries involving officials from a wide cross-section of departments, including town planners, tehsildars, Block Development and Panchayat Officers, senior accounts officers, and medical officers.

Of these, 36 inquiries have been completed, on the basis of which departmental action has been recommended against 63 gazetted officers and 10 non-gazetted employees. In addition, four separate cases have resulted in recommendations to register criminal cases against 3 gazetted officers, 1

non-gazetted employee, and 16 private individuals.

Owing to thorough investigation and vigorous prosecution, 20 accused persons were convicted across 18 cases during this period, including officers, employees, and private individuals from various departments. In the majority of cases, courts imposed sentences of up to five years' rigorous imprisonment.

Chawla said that the Bureau will now formally recognise complainants who not only enabled successful raids but also played a decisive role in securing convictions by testifying in court. Complainants since 2021 are being identified for felicitation through commendation certificates and cash awards.

Similarly, the Bureau has identified five police officers across the state who have conducted the most successful and effective raids over the past five months.

Chawla said that the revolving fund mechanism is being streamlined to ease the financial burden on complainants. Henceforth, any amount spent by a complainant to facilitate a trap operation will be reimbursed from the revolving fund within 15 to 20 days, a reform expected to significantly boost public confidence in and engagement with the Bureau.

Warning those public servants who demand bribes, he said they will not be spared. He stated that Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini has issued strict directives to take stringent action against all such individuals. The chief minister, he noted, firmly believes that transparency must be the cornerstone of governance.

Chawla also assured honest citizens that they have nothing to fear, while making clear that every corrupt individual will inevitably face the law "if not today, then tomorrow. The innocent may go about their work without apprehension; those who are corrupt will, without exception, find themselves in the grip of the law. (PTI)

# SC releases draft regulations on use of AI in courts, seeks comments from stakeholders, public

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** In a move to modernise the legal landscape while safeguarding judicial integrity, the Supreme Court released draft 'Regulations for Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in courts' which contain a list of permissible and forbidden usage, stating that "no judicial outcome shall be reached through Algorithmic Decision-Making alone."

Inviting comments and suggestions from stakeholders and the general public by June 20, the Artificial Intelligence Committee of the Supreme Court provides for allowing AI tools in "case management (including identification of defects in new filings), cause list preparation, hearing scheduling and docket prioritisation".

The draft regulations for use of AI in courts "shall apply to the use, deployment, or integration of AI in any judicial, adjudicatory or administrative function of the Supreme Court of India, High Courts, and all Courts including the Tribunals and statutory Commissions performing adjudicatory functions, within the territory of India". The necessity for such a

regulatory framework has become increasingly evident as the top court and several High Courts have raised concerns about the misuse of AI tools, which sometimes produce non-existent case laws that have even influenced actual judgments.

At the same time, the justices of the Supreme Court have emphasised the importance of using AI tools to enhance benefits such as translating judgments into local languages and streamlining legal searches.

"These regulations aim to govern the use of AI, grounded in the principles of human primacy, transparency, accountability, data protection, and judicial independence, while establishing an institutional framework for responsible AI adoption across India's judicial system," the apex court said in its notice. The 35-page draft proposes a clear "red line" for technology, indicating that while AI may assist, it will never replace the human mind.

According to one of the regulations, "the use of AI in court processes shall at all times remain



strictly subservient to human judgment and judicial authority and every AI System shall function solely in an assistive capacity and shall not supplant or compromise the independent exercise of judicial authority by a duly appointed judicial officer and the ultimate authority to determine matters of law, fact and justice shall vest exclusively in the judicial officers of the competent jurisdiction."

Regulation 20 states that the use of AI for reaching judicial out-

comes, such as judgments, sentencing, or determining the credibility of witnesses, is strictly forbidden.

All adjudicatory functions must involve a "Human-in-the-Loop" (HITL) approach, ensuring that final decision-making authority remains solely with a duly appointed judicial officer.

"No judicial outcome (including any judgment, order, or finding of fact or law) shall be reached through Algorithmic Decision-

# Tom Holland recalls 'uncomfortable conversation' with Sony to delay 'Spider-Man' for 'The Odyssey'

Hollywood star Tom Holland says he requested Sony to postpone the production of "Spider-Man: Brand New Day" so he could start working on Christopher Nolan's directorial "The Odyssey".

The actor recalled his conversation with Sony Pictures boss Tom Rothman.

"So I said to Chris, like, look, I want to do this movie, but if I'm going to do it, I'm going to have to call Sony and have a very uncomfortable conversation," he told GQ in an interview.

"I think one of the reasons

why Sony were happy to move is because Chris has that reputation of, "This movie isn't going to go five months over, and we aren't actually going to lose Tom for two years... Any other director, it might have been a slightly different conversation," he added.

The actor said the break also allowed the makers to bring Destin Daniel Cretton, who replaced Jon Watts, the director of the first three MCU Spider-Man films, who stepped away from the franchise.

"The Odyssey" almost saved "Spider-Man" because we wouldn't have had Destin... He

wouldn't have been ready to make the movie when we were ready to go. We wouldn't have had the six-month period to develop the script with Destin to get it to a place where it is now. And I truly believe that we've made the best version of any "Spider-Man" movie going. So while it was a tough pill to swallow for Sony, I think in hindsight, they're very grateful that it happened," Holland said.

"Spider-Man: Brand New Day" marks the fourth film for the actor, who has previously featured in "Spider-Man: Homecoming" (2017), "Spider-Man: Far From Home" (2019), and

"Spider-Man: No Way Home", which released in 2021.

The film is set to release in theatres on July 31. Holland first essayed the role of Peter Parker in 2016's "Captain America: Civil War", before reprising the role in three stand-alone films as well as several Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) titles such as "Avengers: Infinity War" and "Avengers: Endgame".

"The Odyssey" is set to release on July 17 and also features Zendaya, Robert Pattinson, Lupita Nyong'o, Anne Hathaway and Charlize Theron, among others. (PTI)



## WIM WENDERS PULLS 'WRONG MOVE' OUT OF CIRCULATION OVER TEEN NUDE SCENE OF ACTOR NASTASSJA KINSKI



German filmmaker Wim Wenders has pulled out his 1975 film "Wrong Move" out of circulation over a nude scene of actor Nastassja Kinski, who has long demanded the scene to be removed from the film as she was just 13 at the time.

The celebrated filmmaker, known for films such as "Wings of Desire", "Paris, Texas" and the contemplative Japanese language drama "Perfect Days", confirmed the news in a statement via his foundation's official Instagram.

Kinski, 65, has, for years, campaigned that the controversial scene be edited out of the movie.

"Although I didn't know much at the age of 13, I could already tell that it wasn't right," Kinski said in a recent interview with German newspaper the Süddeutsche Zeitung, as per Variety. The Wim Wenders Foundation, which has the rights to Wenders' films, announced that it has withdrawn "Wrong Move" from circulation.

"As the only person responsible at the time for 'Wrong Move' who is still here, I recognize that Nastassja Kinski should have been better protected back then. For that, I apologize to you, Nastassja, unreservedly, no ifs and buts.

"The non-profit Wim Wenders Foundation, which owns the film, is withdrawing it from all current forms of distribution and exhibition. Streaming services, television broadcasters and distribution partners will be instructed to cease public access to the film," the statement read.

Wenders said the many reactions, comments, and conversations played a significant role in further sharpening his understanding of the events of that time.

"For that, I am grateful. Only an open and respectful exchange can lead us to reconsider positions and reassess responsibilities. It is necessary for our society to find appropriate ways of dealing with controversial film works from the 20th Century and to

face new learning processes and inclusive perspectives regarding cinema," the statement further read.

The statement also promised that the film will be made available only after a "mutually agreed solution" with Kinski.

During an award ceremony recently, Wenders was more combative but that stance seems to have softened in the statement.

In his address at the time, Wenders said he would not shoot the scene today and admitted the pain that scene has caused Kinski, who he addressed as an actor "whom I deeply admired, and still do."

But he also debated whether he had the right to change the film retrospectively.

"I can't blame the 29-year-old young man I was then, 50 years ago, who made a film of his time; wanting, in a way, to capture the zeitgeist."

After "Wrong Move", Wenders and Kinski also collaborated later on "Paris, Texas" and "Faraway, So Close!" (PTI)

**"If I could snap my fingers and make generative AI disappear forever, I probably would," Parsons said. "Creatively, I get no enjoyment from using those tools. It defeats the purpose entirely for me."**

## 'Backrooms' director Kane Parsons on generative AI use in cinema: It defeats the purpose

"Backrooms" director Kane Parsons recently sounded off on AI in filmmaking during a recent interview with The Australian. The 20-year-old filmmaker said that he was "in the same boat as most well-adjusted people," and does not want to see the technology take over Hollywood.

"If I could snap my fingers and make generative AI disappear forever, I probably would," Parsons said. "Creatively, I get no enjoyment from using those tools. It defeats the purpose entirely for me."

Parsons explained that he sees a future where AI could make some VFX tasks less laborious, but he added that "right now it's difficult to discuss objectively because there's so much at stake and so many genuinely harmful consequences already happening."

While wanting AI to stay away from his work, Parsons teased that he wants to explore the themes surrounding AI in a future film.

"What interests me more is interrogating it artistically," Parsons said. "We already live in a world where you walk outside and there are billboards and signs that are obvious AI slop. That's become part of our visual reality. To me, generative AI feels less like innovation than a symptom of a broader cultural and economic rot."

He added, "I'm interested in using that iconography in art — not using AI to make the art itself, but examining what it represents. I definitely want to explore it further in future projects."

While Parsons is rejecting AI, one of Hollywood's most celebrated directors, Martin Scorsese, is embracing it. The "Taxi Driver" director recently joined the AI firm Black Forest Labs as an adviser in a bid to "push the bounds of creativity to create deeper and richer experiences for audiences."

"Cinema is a young medium, only around 125 years old, so we have to be open to how it can evolve," Scorsese said in a statement posted on Black Forest Labs' website. "I utilized 3D with 'Hugo' and de-aging technology for 'The Irishman.' Now, with this tool, I can share what I'm visualizing more clearly and efficiently to my creative team — the production designer, art designer, and cinematographer — for them to build on to enrich cinematic intelligence." (PTI)



## 'Game of Thrones' star Emilia Clarke on surviving two brain surgeries

"Game of Thrones" star Emilia Clarke, who survived through two brain surgeries while shooting for the globally popular series, says for years, she felt like she had cheated death. Clarke, who was honoured at Variety's Power of Women London, presented by Lifetime, said the health scare led her to found the charity Same You in 2019 with her mother.

"For a number of years, I felt that I had cheated death, and it was coming to get me. I truly felt like I had done something wrong, and I shouldn't be here. I also thought it ruined my ability to act — which some people might agree with," the actor said during her speech.

The actor first opened up about her health in 2019 and said she was overwhelmed by the response of the people who reached out to her.

"Today we have tens of thousands of survivors in our community saying essentially the same thing: the journey to healing feels like falling off the edge of a cliff without anyone there to catch you." (PTI)

## Pahlaj Nihalani, producer and former CBFC chief, dies at 76

Pahlaj Nihalani, the veteran producer and former chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), died on Thursday. He was 76.

Nihalani passed away at his residence in Bandra. His last rites were performed at the Santacruz Hindu crematorium.

Actor Govinda, who got his big break with Nihalani's 1986 production "Ilzaam", visited the producer's residence to pay his last respects.

The actor also attended the last rites of the producer.

"Pahlaj Nihalani ji laid the foundation stone for so many of us. Several artists, including me, who rose from difficult and financially challenging circumstances, received his support and encouragement."

"There must be at least a dozen artists in the country whose careers were shaped by his guidance. Pahlaj ji had a rare ability to identify talent and help people rise from the ground to great heights. It was a gift bestowed upon him by God," Govinda told PTI.

Others who paid their last respects to the producer included filmmakers Farhan Akhtar, Zoya Akhtar, Anees Bazmee, David Dhawan and sons Rohit and Varun, Boney Kapoor, Ramesh Sippy and Abhishek Kapoor.

Veteran actor and politician Shatrughan Sinha also attended Nihalani's funeral.

"He was one of our closest friends and a family



friend. Our association with him goes back many years. He was a great filmmaker, a wonderful human being, a sincere friend, and a person with an outstanding personality. He also served as the chairman of the censor board. He gave us many blockbuster films. Above all, what stood out most was his humanity," he told PTI.

Nihalani started his career as a producer with the 1982 movie "Haathkadi". He is widely credited for giving actor Govinda his first big break with the 1986 movie "Ilzaam". He also introduced actor Chunky Panday with "Aag Hi Aag" in 1987.

His other producing credits included "Shola Aur Shabnam", "Aankhen", "Dil Tera Diwana", "Ta-

laash" and "Rangeela Raja".

In January 2015, Nihalani was appointed as the chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification. His tenure, which lasted until August 2017, was riddled with controversies and was marked by frequent run-ins with filmmakers over cuts, disclaimers and certification decisions.

During his stint, he introduced strict new guidelines that barred certain expletives even in 'A'-rated films, trimmed kissing scenes, and restricted content that could be seen as hurting religious sentiments or depicting violence.

"Spectre", Daniel Craig's 2015 James Bond movie, was released only after its kissing scenes were heavily trimmed, while the makers of another Hollywood title "Fifty Shades of Grey" had to edit out sexual content before it could be cleared.

Among the Indian filmmakers, Pan Nalin's female buddy film "Angry Indian Goddesses" and Abhishek Chaubey's "Uda Punjab", starring Alia Bhatt, Shahid Kapoor, Diljit Dosanjh and Kareena Kapoor Khan, ran in trouble with the board over multiple cuts.

Shashi Shekhar Vempati, the current chairperson of the CBFC, condoned his death in a post on X. "Heartfelt condolences from the entire CBFC family on the demise of former CBFC Chairperson Shri Pahlaj Nihalani," he wrote.

He is survived by his wife, Nita Nihalani, and three sons. (PTI)

# Iran players describe how the war affects their World Cup preparations

**ANTALYA (TURKEY), June 4:** Iran is heading to the World Cup while the country is at war with the primary host nation, a situation that is unique in the tournament's history.

In exclusive interviews with The Associated Press during a team camp in Turkey, two members of Iran's squad described how the conflict is affecting its World Cup preparations.

"Well, to be honest, it's not easy," said Saeid Ezatollahi, a 29-year-old midfielder who also played for Iran in the 2018 and 2022 World Cups.

"That's going to be my third World Cup. So for me and some of the other players, it might be easier to manage these kind of things," he said in English on the sidelines of a training session on Wednesday. "But at the end ... it is going to be difficult for us because at the same

time, we are following the news in our country and the political things, of course, can affect the mind of the players and the people."

The Iran team has spent more than two weeks in Turkey, mostly practicing at the coastal resort Antalya, and some went to the capital Ankara to submit visa applications to their World Cup preparations at the U.S. embassy. Media access has been limited, and the players rarely speak to international journalists.

**Iran will be based in Mexico during the World Cup**

The team is set to travel to Mexico this weekend after receiving visas from the Mexican embassy in Ankara. The team said Thursday that the process of obtaining entry permits had been finalized for all members of the squad. Problems with visa processing meant Iran's

World Cup training base was moved from Tucson, Arizona, to Tijuana, on Mexico's border with California.

Iran will play its first two games near Los Angeles, which has a large Iranian community, many of whom oppose the current government.

"So for sure, we are expecting to have a lot fans during our games at the stadium," Ezatollahi said. "And this is going to be a lot pressure for us because the expectation is going to be high. I just wish we can make them proud and show them that Iranians, they are prepared for every hard job in the world," he said.

Mohammad Ghorbani, 24, is going to his first World Cup for Iran.

"It's true that we are facing special circumstances right now but we are football players and we



have to play, practice, and prepare ourselves for the competitions we have ahead," the Abu Dhabi-based player told the AP in Farsi.

"On the other hand, we know that our people have been going

through a lot of difficulties throughout the war, and we are going there for them, to get the best results for their joy and the joy of the people of our country."

The U.S. and Israel launched its

war against Iran on Feb. 28, killing its supreme leader and other top officials. Iran responded with strikes targeting Israel, U.S. forces and the Gulf Arab states. It also has maintained a chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf, imperiling global energy supplies.

Despite a nominal ceasefire being in place, Iran and the U.S. have yet to negotiate a permanent end to the war and attacks continue in the region.

**Iran is in Group G with New Zealand, Belgium and Egypt**

Iran's team is not required to enter the United States until June 14, one day before its first match against New Zealand at the Los Angeles Rams' stadium in Inglewood.

Iran returns to Inglewood to face Belgium on June 21 and completes Group G in Seattle, against Egypt

on June 26.

"I'm really proud to be part of my national team," said Ezatollahi, whose career has taken him to play for clubs in Spain, Russia, England, Belgium, Denmark, Qatar and now Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

"We need to clear up our minds and be fresh because our target and our duty is to fight for our people, to represent our country and to show how good we are," he said.

Ghorbani agreed, saying the team wants to bring joy to Iranians.

"The best message I can give right now is that the Iranian team is showing what it means to be a team," he said. "We are showing that we are one team under one flag that can bring joy to our whole country, and to show the power of Iranian players and Iranian people to the world." (AP)

## Gulf war hits India's sports infra industry as raw material costs escalate

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** Worth over USD 2.5 billion (₹ 23,000 crore) in multiple estimates, India's Sports Infrastructure Industry is currently facing a crisis of cost escalation as the ongoing Gulf war disrupts supply chain of petroleum products which are essential raw material for the companies involved in developing such facilities.

The cost of raw material for athletic track systems, artificial sports turf, polyurethane-based components, and PVC vinyl sports flooring systems has gone up by 15 to 20 per cent thanks to the war.

All these raw materials are petro-chemical and natural gas byproducts and due to the disruption in supply chain, which has caused a surge in oil and gas prices globally, their procurement too has become difficult and expensive.

"The impact is significant. We import a large portion of the raw materials used in athletic tracks, artificial sports turf systems, and PVC vinyl sports flooring. Over the last few months, material costs have increased by nearly 15 per cent, while the strengthening of the dollar has added another 10 per cent impact on procurement costs," said Nasir Ali, founder and CEO of Gallant Sports & Infra, told PTI.

"Many of these (raw materials) products are petroleum-based and are directly affected by fluctuations in global commodity prices and currency exchange rates.

"...projects awarded or executed in the last few months, particularly



those dependent on imported materials and asphalt-bitumen-based infrastructure, could benefit from temporary support mechanisms or relief measures to absorb the sudden increase in input costs," he added.

Ali's Gallant Infra built the FIFA-certified Tawang Stadium in Arunachal Pradesh which is used for training the Indian Football team for high altitude play. His company is also involved in several other government sports infrastructure projects, including the ones under its flagship Khelo India Scheme.

"For a highly price-sensitive market like India, these increases put pressure on project viability, margins, and execution time-

lines. Companies are often locked into contracts signed months earlier, making it difficult to pass on these additional costs to clients," he said.

A sports ministry source said government contracts already have the Force Majeure clause, which allows companies to revise their quotations during circumstances which are beyond anyone's control, including natural calamities and wars.

"The provision is there from the tendering process stage and the government is there to absorb the pressure if cost goes up due to something like war. (Industry would not be allowed to suffer," the source said.

The government is also working

towards formulating a sports code for manufacturing that would lay down the framework for the industry's operations.

Gallant is currently involved in a Sports Authority of India (SAI) project in Mizoram, and an athletic track project for the Indian Navy, among others.

"One of our most significant ongoing developments is at Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE), where we are nearing completion of what will be one of India's largest integrated university sports infrastructure projects," Ali elaborated.

"The facility includes a full-sized cricket ground, World Athletics-standard track, FIFA-standard football field, FIH-standard hockey

field, basketball courts, volleyball courts, cricket practice facilities, and multiple supporting sports amenities within a single integrated sports ecosystem," he added.

Gallant is one among the growing number of sports infra companies in the country, the other prominent names being SE TransStadia Limited, 4K Sports Infra and the Hyderabad-based Great SportsTech Limited among others.

Ali said India's sports infrastructure industry has the potential to grow exponentially but "gaps" remain in maintenance standards, and manufacturing self-reliance. The industry is expected to be worth USD six billion by 2030.

Globally, the industry is worth USD 132 billion with North America having the largest market share of over 50 per cent, followed by China.

"While demand for sports facilities is increasing rapidly, there is still a shortage of certified, international-standard venues across many parts of the country," Ali said.

"The industry would also benefit from greater investment in indigenous manufacturing capabilities, quality benchmarks, and long-term maintenance frameworks to ensure facilities continue performing at international standards throughout their life-cycle," he added.

Ali said the long-term solution lies in strengthening domestic manufacturing under the Make in India initiative. (PTI)

### MY Bharat receives Guinness World Records Recognition

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** MY Bharat, the flagship youth engagement platform of the Department of Youth Affairs, has been awarded the Guinness World Records title for the "Most Users to Take an Online Quiz in One Week."

The recognition was conferred for the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders' Dialogue (VBLYD) Quiz, a nationwide youth engagement initiative aimed at strengthening awareness and participation among young citizens, the ministry of youth affairs and sports stated in a press release.

As many as 390,812 participants successfully completed the full length of the quiz during the official assessment period between October 25 to 31 last year. (PTI)

## Suryakumar Yadav's form doesn't warrant him place in Indian T20I side: Saba Karim



**NEW DELHI, June 4:** Former India cricketer and selector Saba Karim on Thursday said Suryakumar Yadav's prolonged ordinary form with the bat does not warrant him a place in the side as selectors will now be focussed on the 2028 T20 World Cup.

The 35-year-old Suryakumar has not been able to sustain his form with the bat even as he hit a few half-centuries at the start of the year against New Zealand, and played a match-winning knock in the T20 World Cup opener against the USA.

The incumbent Indian T20I skipper could not find runs even in the IPL, with only 270 runs coming off his bat in 13 matches at a strike rate of 147.54 and two fifties.

"On current form, Suryakumar may not be a part of the selection committee's vision to take this team

## Indian men's hockey team braces for Pakistan challenge, women face China in U-18 Asia Cup semis



**KAKAMIGAHARA (JAPAN), June 4:** The Indian men's hockey team will look to address its weaknesses when it faces Pakistan, while the women's side will aim to continue its dominant run against China in the semifinals of the U-18 Asia Cup here on Friday.

The Indian U-18 men's hockey team finished second in Pool A with three wins and one defeat. India scored 32 goals and conceded only six during their campaign so far.

The men's side opened the tournament with a commanding 13-0 victory against Kazakhstan before suffering a 2-4 defeat against hosts Japan.

They responded strongly with a 4-1 win over Korea, followed by a comprehensive 13-1 victory against Chinese Taipei to book their place in the semifinals.

Captain Ketan Kushwaha leads the scoring charts for India with seven goals, while Ashish Tani Purti has scored six goals. Gazeer Khan and Shahrukh Ali have contributed three goals each.

Pakistan, on the other hand, topped Pool B with two wins and one defeat from their three matches.

"After playing four matches, we have identified the areas where we need to improve, especially penalty corner attack and defence," Indian U-18 men's team coach Sardar Singh said.

"We have been working on these

areas in separate groups with the defenders, midfielders, and forwards to ensure we are fully prepared," he added.

The Indian women's team, meanwhile, has been one of the standout performers of the tournament. They topped Pool A after winning all three of their matches, scoring 30 goals and conceding only two.

India began their campaign with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Malaysia before registering a convincing 3-1 win against Korea.

They then produced a fantastic performance in their final pool match, defeating Singapore 25-0 to seal top spot in the standings.

Nousheen Naz has been India's leading scorer with 10 goals so far in the tournament.

Meanwhile, China finished second in Pool B with two wins and a draw.

"We have approached this tournament one match at a time, and now our complete focus is on China. It does not matter what the opposition does, our priority is to play to our standards, play attacking hockey, and convert our chances," Indian U-18 women's team coach Rani said.

"The girls are very fit and coordinate well amongst themselves. They will fight hard for every ball, play to our strengths, capitalise on counter-attacks, and give their best to secure a place in the final," she added. (PTI)

## Only thought about Candidates for 2 years, dealing with that disappointment: Praggnanandhaa

**OSLO, June 4:** Indian chess ace R Praggnanandhaa on Thursday admitted that it was hard to come to terms with missing out the Candidates Tournament title, having given "everything" to earn the right to challenge D Gukesh for the World Championship crown, only to be left deeply disappointed.

The 20-year-old Grandmaster was among the eight players who competed in the Candidates in Cyprus earlier this year but endured a disappointing campaign, finishing seventh as Uzbekistan's Javokhir Sindarov claimed the title and the right to face Gukesh for the world crown.

Praggnanandhaa now has an opportunity to put the Candidates disappointment behind him at Norway Chess, where he has emerged as a title contender, sitting third with two rounds remaining and just two points behind leader

Wesley So. He can kickstart the new two-year World Championship cycle on a positive note with a title here.

"Yeah, certainly that's (disappointment of not doing well in Candidates) is something that I have to deal with because in the last two years I was thinking only about this cycle... I sort of gave everything for this. There was nothing else I was thinking about," said the Chennai-based GM, reflecting on the disappointment of missing out in the Candidates.

"You can also see from the tournaments I played last year that I was just going for this (Candidates qualification)...one spot in FIDE circuit and it is disappointing the way it ends like this. But, yeah, it is what it is. I have to try and get back to playing tournaments," he added.

Praggnanandhaa said after investing so much time and energy into qualifying for the Candidates, he now wants to rediscover the joy of the game without constantly looking ahead to the next qualification race.

"After the Candidates, I felt like I just want to enjoy chess now. I just want to play and have fun. Last year, I was just going for that one thing but now I feel I don't want to think about the next cycle...all the way from now I just want to chill and enjoy chess," he said.

While many elite players take months to recover from the agony of a major setback, Praggnanandhaa said he tends to bounce back relatively quickly, drawing strength from the success of his sister R Vaishali, whose triumph in the Women's Candidates and qualification for a World Champi-

onship match against defending champion Ju Wenjun provided a welcome source of comfort.

"I am usually quick (to recover from disappointments). And, I think, like this Candidates specifically like my sister winning, certainly helped with me cope with my (own) disappointment," he added.

Praggnanandhaa, who also featured in the 2024 Candidates where Gukesh emerged victorious before going on to defeat Ding Liren for his world title, said he would make a conscious effort to lighten his schedule, admitting that constantly living out of a suitcase had taken its toll.

"Yeah, that's something that I've decided... I'll try to play less. Try to have breaks in between. Last year, even though the results went my way, it was a bit too much to play so much of chess. (PTI)

## Will Rashid play Tests again? It is between him and selectors, says skipper Shahidi

**MULLANPUR, June 4:** Rashid Khan has done extremely well in the six Tests that he has played but he donning the whites again for Afghanistan is something between him and the national selectors, skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi said ahead of one-off game against India.

Shahidi, by far Afghanistan's best Test batter with two double hundreds and a healthy average of 48 plus, also spoke about how their nation needs to play more red ball games to measure up with the best.

"Rashid has done well in the Tests (45 wickets in 6 Tests) that he has played. Personally I haven't spoken to Rashid about whether he would play Test again or not. He had discussions with selectors and I don't want to talk about that," Shahidi said at a press conference on Thursday.

However, he did concede that playing two Tests a year on an average has been the bane for Afghan cricket since they made their debut in 2018.

"We played India in 2018. We have more experience now but we need to play more to build our Test team. When it comes to domestic



cricket, we play six to seven red ball games but Tests, we get only one or two games a year," Shahidi sounded practical yet helpless about the situation.

When asked if the best talent in Afghanistan

only want to make a career out of franchise based T20 leagues, Shahidi begged to differ.

"Everyone knows that our guys do very well in franchise leagues and if you see our white ball performances have been good. But even then, we have a lot of talent in Afghanistan who are waiting for their chance," said Shahidi.

He has no complaints about the pitch and the scorching heat in Mullanpur.

"We had a camp in Jalalabad in Afghanistan and also played a tournament. Temperature was 35 degrees there so we are well equipped to handle the heat," he said.

Last time, Afghanistan lost 20 wickets in two sessions on the second day of the Test against India but Shahidi gave his own example.

"I have scored two Test double hundreds. So I can say we have patience and discipline to succeed in this format. But we need to play more."

For Shahidi, this one-off Test is an opportunity to get exposure against the best in the business.

"We know India is a big country there is a lot of talent. As an opposition, I don't want them to do well. But this is an opportunity for us to check ourselves against tough opposition." (PTI)

# Deflated India eye turnaround in FIFA friendly against Tajikistan

**HISOR (TAJIKISTAN), June 4:** After being deflated by back-to-back defeats in the Unity Cup last month, India's beleaguered football team would need all the resilience it can muster to outwit a rising Tajikistan when the two sides clash in a FIFA international friendly here on Friday.

For inspiration, the Indians can draw from their win against the same opponents last year in the CAFA Nations Cup.

But coming in for Friday's game, India have lost to Jamaica (0-2) and Zimbabwe (0-1) in the Unity Cup in London on May 27 and 30 respectively, before arriving here for two matches against Tajikistan in the current FIFA international window (June 1-9).

The second match will also be played here on Sunday.

India's 2-1 win over Tajikistan on August 29 last year during the CAFA Nations Cup at the same venue of Hisor Central Stadium was head coach Khalid Jamil's first match in charge of the team.

India had finished third in that tournament, after beating Oman in a penalty shootout.

But India could win only once in the next six matches, losing to the likes of Bangladesh and Singapore. Pressure has been piling on Jamil under whom India have won just three matches out of 10 so far.

India played the Unity Cup



without seven Mohun Bagan Super Giant players after the club refused to release them at the eleventh hour on the ground that the tournament was being held outside the FIFA window.

The same controversy was triggered during the CAFA Nations Cup last year when MBSG refused to release seven players.

The two international friendly matches are being held inside the FIFA window but Mohun Bagan Super Giant players not will feature in them. The Indian team reached here directly from London.

After Mohun Bagan Super Giant refused to release seven of their players for the Unity Cup, the AIFF had made late additions

of five players to the team.

Three out of those five -- Mohammed Sanan Kundoyi, Vikram Partap Singh and Macarlon Louis Nickson -- have been named in the 22-member squad for the two friendlies against Tajikistan here.

"We need to utilise every available FIFA international window to prepare for the tournaments we have up ahead," Jamil said.

In a blow to India, Ryan Williams, who made it to the Indian team after relinquishing his Australian passport recently, got injured during the Unity Cup and has been replaced by Parthib Gogoi in the squad.

While India's FIFA ranking has been on the slide since failing to qualify for the 2027 Asian Cup,

Tajikistan's fortunes have been on the rise.

The central Asian country qualified for the 2027 Asian Cup and is ranked much higher than India in the FIFA charts -- 103 as against the latter's 137.

Tajikistan, however, will be playing their first match under a new coach Igor Angelovski from Macedonia.

Historically, India and Tajikistan have played each other six times in the past, with the Central Asian country winning three.

The Blue Tigers have won twice -- in the AFC Challenge Cup 2008 final and 2025 CAFA Nations Cup -- while one match had ended in a draw.

**India squad:**  
**Goalkeepers:** Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Hrithik Tiwari, Albino Gomes.

**Defenders:** Rahul Bheke, Nikhil Barla, Nikhil Poojary, Roshan Singh Naorem, Sandesh Jhingan, Akash Mishra, Bijoy Varghese, Pramveer.

**Midfielders:** Jeakson Singh Thounaojam, Noufal PN, Ricky Shabong, Macarlon Louis Nickson.

**Forwards:** Edmund Lalrindika, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Rahim Ali, Farukh Choudhary, Mohammed Sanan Kundoyi, Vikram Partap Singh, Parthib Gogoi.

Match starts at 8:30pm IST. (PTI)

# Jaismine climbs to World No 1, Priya and Vishvanath enter top 3 in World Boxing rankings

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** Reigning world champion Jaismine Lamboria climbed to the top of the women's 57kg rankings, while Asian championships gold medalists Priya Gianghas (60kg) and Vishvanath Suresh (50kg) broke into the top three of their respective categories in the latest World Boxing rankings.

Indian boxers featured in the top 10 across nine of the 10 women's weight categories and eight of the 10 men's divisions.

In the women's section, Minakshi retained her World No. 1 ranking in the 48kg category, while Preeti Pawar jumped five places to third in the 54kg weight class.

Jaismine, who won the silver at the Asian Championships earlier this year, moved up a spot to be the top ranked boxer in her weight class.

World Cup medallists Arundhati Choudhary (70kg), Pooja Rani (80kg) and Nupur (+80kg) were all ranked second in their respective divisions.

Two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen (51kg), who failed to qualify for this year's Commonwealth Games and Asian Games, slipped one place to fourth, while Olympic medallist Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) held on to her seventh position.

In the men's categories, Sachin Siwach (60kg) and Asian Games



medallist Narender Berwal (90+kg) broke into the top-5. World Cup gold medallist Hitesh Gulia (70kg) dropped one place to sixth, while Abhinash Jamwal (65kg) was ranked eighth.

Akash (75kg) and Lokesh (85kg) also entered the top 10, both ranked eighth.

India currently stands third overall in terms of top-10 ranked athletes globally, while emerging as a dominant force in women's boxing, where it is placed second, and holding a strong fourth position

in the men's category. The depth extends well beyond the top 10. On the women's side, Parveen (60kg) is ranked 13th while Ankushita Boro (65kg) is ranked 11th.

Among the men, Ankush (80kg) sits just outside the top 10 at No. 11, while Deepak (70kg) is ranked 12th.

Jugnoo (85kg) is placed 14th, Harsh Choudhary (90kg) is ranked 10th, and Sumit (75kg) and Kumar Naveen (90kg) are both 18th in the world. (PTI)

## Kohli out of Afghanistan ODIs with hamstring injury



**NEW DELHI, June 4:** Indian batting superstar Virat Kohli was on Thursday ruled out of the upcoming ODI series against Afghanistan due to a hamstring injury that he sustained during the recently-concluded IPL.

The three-match series begins on June 13 in Dharamsala. Kohli suffered the injury during the IPL final that his side Royal Challengers Bengaluru won on Sunday.

"He is out of the ODI series due to a hamstring injury. He got injured during the final. Scans have revealed distal semimembranosus tendon tear," a BCCI source told PTI.

A distal semimembranosus tendon tear is a rare hamstring injury affecting the thick tendon that attaches a muscle to the inner part of the shinbone, just below the knee.

Kohli, known for his unmatched fitness even at 37 years of age, was in stellar form in the IPL where he steered Royal Challengers Bengaluru to a second consecutive title. He hit the winning runs in the final against Gujarat Titans.

Reinventing his T20 game, Kohli amassed 675 runs in RCB's triumphant campaign including a hundred and five fifty plus scores. Kohli's absence will take the sheen off the upcoming series.

Though the former India captain is now a one-format player, he remains a top draw for fans worldwide. It is extremely rare for Kohli to miss games due to an injury, given his exemplary fitness standards.

It also remains to be seen if Rohit Sharma is available for the whole series against Afghanistan. The opener was included in the squad subject to fitness after a hamstring injury affected his IPL appearances.

Ever since both Kohli and Rohit retired from Tests last year, there has been immense speculation on their ODI future.

The next 50-over World Cup is scheduled in South Africa in October-November 2027 and they would be included in the squad on the basis of their form and fitness leading up to the tournament.

The second ODI against Afghanistan will be played in Lucknow on June 17 followed by the third and final match in Chennai on June 20.

After the Afghanistan series, India's next ODI assignment will be in England -- three games beginning from July 14. (PTI)

## We need to stick to a No 3 and trust him: Ten Doeschate

**MULLANPUR, June 4:** India's assistant coach Ryan Ten Doeschate conceded that too many players have batted at number three in Test matches after Cheteshwar Pujara's retirement and it was time that either Sai Sudharsan or Devdutt Padikkal is given a long rope at the key batting position.

Pujara announced his retirement in 2025 but last played in white flannels for India in the WTC final in 2023. Since then Shubman Gill, Padikkal, Sudharsan, Karun Nair and Washington Sundar have all been tried in that position.

Sudharsan has played six Tests and has managed a not-so-impressive average of 27 plus.

"There's been a lot of changes in that spot and that's not ideal, you know. You need to look at the incumbents for that role and maybe stick with someone," Ten Doeschate said at a press conference on Thursday.

While both Sudharsan and Padikkal have been getting long rope at nets, Ten Doeschate didn't want to spill the beans about the one who would make it.

On the day, during slip formation, Padikkal was seen standing alongside KL Rahul and skipper Shubman Gill. After Rahul went to the nets, Sudharsan came in.

During nets, Sudharsan once again lost the grip on his bat which slipped and flew backwards like it happened in IPL twice.

"It's a difficult position to bat in and a very important position to bat. Dev comes in with a ton of runs in domestic cricket across all the formats and obviously Sai's been high on runs in IPL with Gujarat, so they're both in good form.

## In Suthar versus Dubey, Ashwin has his eyes on the latter

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** India spin great R Ashwin is looking forward to left-arm spinner Harsh Dubey making his debut in the one-off Test against Afghanistan beginning in Mullanpur on Saturday following the rookie's recent domestic exploits. It could be a toss up between uncapped Manav Suthar and Dubey with Kuldeep Yadav and Washington Sundar expected to feature in the playing eleven.

"My eyes will be on Harsh Dubey. I am curious whether he will get a chance. We will have to wait and see if the team goes with Manav Suthar or Harsh Dubey. But I am particularly interested in Dubey because of his strong domestic season.

"He also had a very good IPL season. Those performances work in his favour. I am



"Whoever plays they'll be given a bit of a run. That's quite difficult with one Test match now, and then we don't play a Test match for another two months, and then we play two Test matches, and then you don't play for a while. So, you know, we need to factor that in," Ten Doeschate said citing a practical problem.

However he maintained that one needs to quickly decide and continue with the person of choice.

"The main point around there is we want to make a decision and then trust that person to grow into the role, and ideally quickly. Where we find ourselves in the WTC table? It's prob-

ably something we could have done better leading up to this is maybe backing someone in a different spot."

**Siraj looks, fine assures Dutch coach**

While there were reports about Mohammed Siraj's workload management, the Hyderabad fast bowler looked in fine rhythm at the nets.

"Siraj bowled yesterday, he looked absolutely fine."

**Suthar vs Dubey? Keep guessing**

If one goes purely by net performance, Manav Suthar looks a way more crafty bowler compared to Harsh Dubey but the Vidarbha slow left arm orthodox's better batting skills could get him a maiden Test cap.

Suthar is no mug with the bat having a first class ton under his belt.

Ten Doeschate said only one among Suthar and Dubey will play alongside Washington Sundar and Kuldeep Yadav.

"The chance of both of them playing in the Test are probably pretty small. We haven't finalised the combination but I imagine, Kuldeep will play and Washington will play, and then one of those two will play," Ten Doeschate said.

Combination is being looked keeping the WTC games in mind.

"I would imagine we play two seamers and a spinning all-rounder, and two spinners (spin-all-rounders) if you consider that the two guys we brought in can bat a little bit as well."

"It's going to be nine crucial Test matches in the in the WTC cycle, and sort of our last chance of making that final which is top of priority at the moment." (PTI)

## ASIP and SporTech forge partnership

**NEW DELHI, June 4:** The Association for Sports Industry Professionals (ASIP) has announced a partnership with SporTech Innovation Lab Pvt Ltd (SporTech) to strengthen support, services and opportunities for sports industry professionals across India.

ASIP, founded in 2025 by Shaji Prabhakaran under the Khel India Sports Foundation, is a body dedicated to uniting, supporting and advancing sports professionals through networking, advocacy, professional development and sector collaboration. By integrating AI, computer vision, and biometric identification through its flagship platform SportsKeyz, the company digitizes athletic milestones and provides grassroots-to-elite performance analytics.

Together, ASIP and SporTech bring complementary strengths and a shared vision to create long-term value for the sports industry.

Under the partnership, ASIP will adopt SporTech's SportsKeyz platform for member registration, delegate management, digital credentialing, and conference and event coordination, supported by technical guidance and customisation input from SporTech. (PTI)

## Switching formats not easy; devoted time at nets for Afghanistan Test: Kuldeep

**MULLANPUR, June 4:** Switching formats in a short span of time is never easy, concedes Kuldeep Yadav and the senior India spinner hopes that players coming off a gruelling IPL season have prepared well for this week's one-off Test against Afghanistan just as he did with extended red-ball practice.

Kuldeep's franchise Delhi Capitals failed to make the IPL play-offs and he himself had an underwhelming season with only 10 wickets from 12 games. In an interview to PTI ahead of the Test beginning on Saturday, Kuldeep talked about how he had been personally doing net sessions for the past two weeks to get into the red-ball groove.

"It is tough when you switch from IPL cricket to red-ball cricket. Preparation becomes very necessary. Luckily, I got time. I practised for at least 10 to 15 days and got the feel of the red ball," Kuldeep said in the exclusive interaction facilitated by series broadcasters 'JioHotstar'.



"In T20, you are always attacking. You always think about going after the batter. You stay in the game with that mindset. But in Test cricket, it's not like that. The batter has a lot of time.

"Some players are coming straight after the IPL final. They don't have

that much time. But I'm sure they have prepared well. So yes, it's a challenge, but I'm confident that everyone is preparing themselves well," he added.

For him, the other key aspects of Test preparation are patience and attention to detail.

"Consistency of bowling on a good length matter. That is a big challenge. Tactics matter a lot. Which angles you are bowling from, which crease position you are using, all these become very important.

"Small things like giving flight to the ball, deceiving the batter in the air, using the red ball well. There are many things, but for that you need time," he said.

If Kuldeep plays the game, then for the first time in his career, he would neither have a Ravichandran Ashwin (now retired) nor a Ravindra Jadeja (rested) alongside him in the line-up.

Kuldeep acknowledged that the absence of Jadeja for this game and even Axar Patel would be felt but expressed confidence in rookies Manav Suthar and Harsh Dubey's ability to shine at the highest level.

"Yes, Jaddu bhai (Ravindra Jadeja) is not there, as he is a regular Test player. We will also miss Axar Patel in the Test match. But the preparations have been good," he said. (PTI)

### OM SHANTI



**NIRMAL NUNISA**

Date of birth – 13.11.1964

Date of death – 05.06.2020

### 6<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary

We fondly remember my husband / father / brother / brother-in-law / uncle Late Nirmal Nunisa who left for his heavenly abode on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, 2020. We pray to the Almighty for the eternal peace of his departed soul.

#### FAMILY MEMBERS :-

Dr. Ritu Thoasen Nunisa (Wife)

Ringsmaidi Nunisa (Daughter)

Ringdao Nunisa (Son) and Aditya Goel (Son-in-law)

Dr. Motilal Nunisa (Brother)

Pradip Nunisa (Brother)

Usha Hojai (Sister)

Dr. Rupal Nunisa (Brother)

Alo Thoasen (Sister)

Dr. Bishnu Ram Nunisa (Brother)

Ramesh Thoasen (Brother in law)

Jayanti Nunisa (Sister in law)

Prabhathi Thoasen Nunisa (Sister in law)

Anima Thoasen Nunisa (Sister in law)

All nephews and nieces