

6 NATION 'INDIA janbandhan united' Our agitation will continue until Union minister Pradhan resigns: CJP founder Dipke
7 NORTHEAST CSI Medak Diocese appeals for peace, release of abducted persons in Manipur Liquor permit on medical grounds requires stringent verification in dry Mizoram: Official

Unlocking Northeast: EU eyes long-term economic partnership EU delegation to visit Assam for 2 days from today

GUWAHATI, June 7: A high-level delegation of the European Union will be on a two-day visit to Assam from Monday to explore collaboration opportunities between Europe and the North Eastern states of India, officials said.



green energy, sustainable urban infrastructure, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, semiconductors and electronics manufacturing, tea and agri-food processing, flavours and fragrances, and AYUSH," the statement added.

cross-border collaboration," he said. The visit will also see the launch of Assam's first 'Blue Valley Cluster', a new industrial hub focused on fragrances, flavours, AYUSH and food processing, the EEAS said.

154 mobile towers sanctioned under DBN Scheme for Karbi Anglong

DIPHU, June 7: In a major boost to digital connectivity in Karbi Anglong, 154 new mobile tower sites have been sanctioned under the Government of India's Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN) 4G Saturation Scheme to provide reliable mobile network coverage in remote and underserved areas of the district.



infrastructure has posed challenges for students, farmers, patients, entrepreneurs and the general public in accessing essential services and opportunities.

CM announces allocation of 'guardian districts' to cabinet colleagues

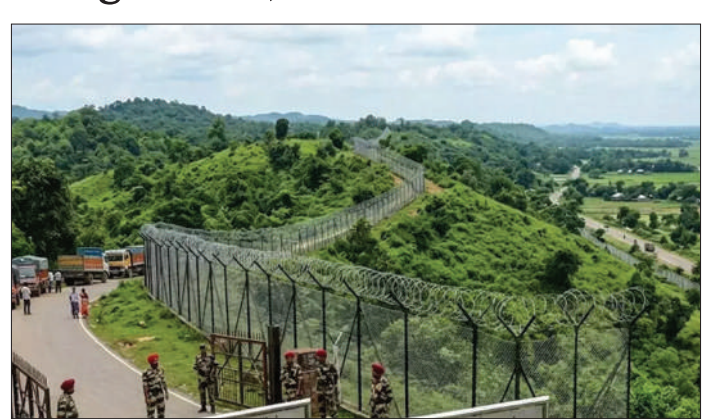


GUWAHATI, June 7: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday announced the allocations of 'Guardian Districts' to his 16 cabinet colleagues to look after the developmental works in association with local administration.

ment of Assam... I am confident that the Hon'ble Ministers will work closely with the district administrations to further accelerate our journey towards progress and prosperity," Sarma said in a post on X.

Meghalaya village protests India-Bangladesh border fence alignment, fears isolation

PYNURSLA (MEGHALAYA), June 7: Residents of a village along the India-Bangladesh border in Meghalaya held a demonstration on Sunday demanding that the fencing be done along the zero line, else they would get isolated from the rest of the country.



erected at the zero line so that our village remains inside India and within the fenced area," village head Ramu told PTI.

Shah to launch advanced Land Port Management System for smart borders

NEW DELHI, June 7: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will launch the Land Port Management System (LPMS) on Tuesday, a digital platform designed to integrate operations across Land Ports into a unified system.

able interoperable, efficient, and transparent border management," a statement from the Home Ministry said.

Two Nagaon women declared foreigners, shifted to transit camp in Goalpara

NAGAON, June 7: Two women from Assam's Nagaon district have been declared foreigners and sent to a detention centre, now called a transit camp, in Goalpara district, officials said on Sunday.

Nepal backs bilateral path with India to resolve border row

NEW DELHI, June 7: Nepal wants to resolve its border dispute with India through existing bilateral mechanisms as "no problem is too large and complex" when both sides meet with an open heart, rational mind and mutual respect, Nepalese Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal said on Sunday, effectively endorsing New Delhi's rejection of any third-party involvement.

hankar that focused on ways to further expand ties in diverse sectors, including trade, critical technology, connectivity and energy.

'Push-in' issue to feature in upcoming BGB-BSF talks: Bangladesh

DHAKA, June 7: Bangladesh said on Sunday that the issues of alleged "push-ins" by India and border killings will be discussed at an upcoming meeting between the heads of the two countries' border guarding forces.

Park aims to reverse loss of over 60 per cent of its grasslands as conservation programme seeks to rebuild a thriving wild pygmy hog population by 2040

Manas launches Assam's first grass nursery, releases 15 pygmy hogs into restored habitat

GUWAHATI/KOKRAJHAR, June 7: In a major step towards restoring Assam's endangered grassland ecosystems, Manas National Park and Tiger Reserve (MNPTR) on Sunday inaugurated the state's first dedicated grass nursery and released 15 captive-bred pygmy hogs into the Kuribeel grasslands under the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP).

of native grass species for restoration projects across Manas and other protected areas of Assam.



will ensure a sustainable supply of native grass species required for habitat restoration, invasive species management and recovery of critical wildlife habitats," he said.

world's smallest and rarest wild pig, remains one of the most endangered mammals globally.

This is the sixth release of pygmy hogs into Manas since 2020, taking the total number released in the park to 78.

LPG PRICE HIKE

Govt says rates in India among world's lowest despite 46 pc jump in global benchmark

NEW DELHI, June 7: Indian households continue to pay among the lowest prices for cooking gas globally despite a sharp rise in international LPG prices triggered by disruptions in West Asia, the government said on Sunday, a day after increasing domestic LPG prices by ₹ 29 per cylinder.

The price of a 14.2-kg domestic LPG cylinder in Delhi was raised to ₹ 942 from ₹ 913, while beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) will continue to pay an effective ₹ 642 per cylinder after receiving a subsidy of ₹ 300 per refill on the first four refills annually, down from 9 refills announced last year.

The increase follows a ₹ 60-per-cylinder hike on March 7, taking the cumulative hike to ₹ 89 per 14.2-kg cylinder. State-run oil marketing companies were estimated to be losing about ₹ 703 on every LPG cylinder sold before the latest revision.

In a statement, the government said the cost of supplying a domestic LPG cylinder has risen to more than ₹ 1,600 following a surge in international prices that followed the outbreak of war in West Asia at the end of February. India's LPG import costs are linked to the Saudi Contract Price (CP), the global benchmark for the fuel. The benchmark has risen after 46 per cent since February after disruptions linked to the Strait of Hormuz tightened supplies from the Gulf region, according to the statement.

Despite the increase, domestic LPG prices remain below those prevailing in neighbouring countries such as Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, and significantly lower than prices in advanced economies, including the United States, Australia, and Canada, the government said.

The government also said India was among the few countries able to maintain uninterrupted energy shipments through the Strait of Hormuz during the crisis, ensuring there was no shortage of LPG or other petroleum products in the country. Domestic LPG production was increased and supplies diversified through alternative sourcing



arrangements to safeguard availability, it added.

According to the statement, cumulative under-recoveries on domestic LPG sales rose to about ₹ 60,000 crore by the end of the previous financial year, compared with ₹ 41,338 crore a year earlier. The Union Cabinet has approved ₹ 30,000 crore in compensation to state-run oil marketing companies to partly offset these losses.

The government said the latest revision balances the need to shield households from volatile global energy prices while ensuring continued availability of cooking fuel across the country.

"The prices of petroleum products in India are linked to the corresponding prices in the international market. The government, however, continues to modulate the effective price to the consumer for domestic LPG. Any household can buy as many cylinders as it needs at ₹ 942," the statement said.

"A PMUY beneficiary will additionally receive the direct benefit transfer of ₹ 300 a cylinder on the first four refills each year -- broadly the average annual consumption of a typical Ujjwala household, about four refills a year -- and so pays an effective ₹ 642 on those refills; this support is unchanged."

Even a non-PMUY household would pay about ₹ 700 below the market-linked cost of the cylinder.

Retail prices differ marginally across locations on account of distribution costs.

"What the household does not

bear the brunt of is the several hundred rupees a cylinder which the government is bearing. Through a period of sharp international cost increases, that burden has been absorbed upstream rather than passed to the consumer," it said.

While the commercial cylinder used by hotels and businesses is revised automatically every month because its price is a direct pass-through of the international benchmark, the domestic cooking cylinder is not.

"India used to import 60 per cent of its LPG requirements, and the landed cost of that import tracks the Saudi Contract Price (CP) that Saudi Aramco sets at the start of each month. This is an external price over which the Indian consumer has no control," the government said.

Through the West Asia disruption the benchmark moved sharply higher. "Expressed as the 50:50 propane-butane blend used for India's LPG, the Saudi CP for LPG stood at about USD 543 a tonne in February, before the disruption. Following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz in late February, the April contract price -- the first set after the disruption tightened Mideast Gulf exports -- rose to USD 775 a tonne, with propane at USD 750 and butane at USD 800, and has since edged up further to USD 790 a tonne in June."

The blended LPG benchmark has thus risen by about 46 per cent since the pre-crisis February level, the statement said.

"The scale of this is visible in the fully market-priced commercial cylinder: the 19 kg cylinder used by hotels and restaurants sells in Delhi at ₹ 3,113.50, about ₹ 164 a kg, after five increases during the West Asia crisis. The domestic household, by contrast, pays about ₹ 66 a kg after the revision," it said.

"Commercial gas carries a higher rate of tax and larger margins, so it sits above the household's cost-reflective level; even so, the import-linked cost of a domestic cylinder works out to over ₹ 1,600."

The government said it maintained uninterrupted supplies of LPG and other petroleum products despite disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping route through which 54 per cent of India's LPG imports are transported. Domestic LPG production was increased by more than 60 per cent -- from about 32,000 tonnes a day to about 52,000 tonnes -- imports were diversified to suppliers, including the United States, Canada and Algeria, and ensured continued movement of LPG cargoes to Indian ports, preventing shortages in the domestic market.

To conserve supplies, consumers were encouraged to switch to piped natural gas where available, while enforcement against diversion of subsidised LPG cylinders to commercial use was stepped up through wider use of OTP-based delivery verification. The government said these measures helped sustain household supplies during a period of heightened geopolitical tensions and supply-chain disruptions.

"The under-recovery is separate from the subsidy: the gap between the international cost and the regulated retail price -- an estimated amount rising towards ₹ 60,000 crore on domestic LPG in the last full year, up from ₹ 41,338 crore the year before -- is borne by the public sector marketing companies and the exchequer, against which the Union Cabinet has approved ₹ 30,000 crore in compensation; over and above this, Ujjwala consumers receive an additional ₹ 300 per cylinder credited directly to their bank account, reaching more than 10.58 crore connections," the statement added. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

EU delegation to

with state officials to identify trade and investment opportunities. "The delegation will also participate in the 'Blue Valleys: Building ecosystems and value chains between India and Europe' workshop on June 9, organised by the Government of Assam, which will bring together European and Indian businesses to explore partnerships in sustainable value chains, industries and innovation," the release said.

The 'Blue Valley' aims to promote industrial clusters, MSME linkages and sector-specific value-chain integration between the EU and India, while ensuring economic growth and environmental sustainability, it added.

Key sectors identified under this initiative include clean energy, natural ingredients, bamboo-based industries, eco-friendly textiles, biotech, wellness and smart manufacturing, the EEAS said.

By combining funding, skills development and sustainability standards, the initiative seeks to create scalable business models that benefit local communities and connect them to European markets, it added.

Commenting on the visit, Delphin said, "Northeast India and Assam at its core has enormous potential -- its resources, its skilled workforce and is already one of the fastest growing regions of India by GDP."

While the general contours to strengthen the EU-India ties have been finalised at the EU-India summit, it will have to take roots at the state level, he added. "The EU has a long-standing engagement with Assam, and we are encouraged by the advancements we're seeing through initiatives like the Blue Valley," Delphin said.

Assam presently stands at a pivotal moment in history, and the state's strategic location as a gateway to South East Asia makes it well placed to attract EU's support in green growth, sustainable industries, skill development and technology-led transformation, the CM said. This visit will also help Assam connect more deeply with European expertise in renewable energy, semiconductors, food processing, education, healthcare and advanced manufacturing, he said. "The outcomes of this visit, I am certain, will aid local enterprises, spur opportunities for youth and enhance Assam's role in India's Act East Policy and global outreach," he added.

In addition to meetings and the Blue Valley event, the delegation will visit Tata Electronics' new semiconductor plant, showcasing Assam's growing role in high-tech manufacturing.

"This visit also highlights the importance of EU-India digital partnership under the EU-India Trade and Technology Council (TTC) and will give European investors a closer look at Assam's business environment, infrastructure and industry potential," the EEAS said. The delegation's programmes in Assam signal a new chapter in EU-India collaboration, with a shared vision to unlock the Northeast's economic potential through innovation, sustainability and inclusive growth, it added. (PTI)

154 mobile towers

Himanta Biswa Sarma, Ronghang said their efforts have been instrumental in strengthening telecom infrastructure in the region. According to him, the sanctioned tower sites will cover a large number of villages and remote habitations across Amrenge, Rongkhang, Howraghat, Bokajan, Lumbajong, Langsomepi, Deopani, Dokmoka, Langhin, Langtuk, Rongmongve, Sarbura, Sikari, Silonijan and several other interior areas.

Highlighting the importance of the initiative, the CEM said mobile connectivity has become an essential component of modern life, playing a crucial role in education, healthcare, emergency response, banking services, governance, business activities and overall socio-economic development. "The installation of these towers will significantly reduce the digital divide and create greater opportunities for people living in remote regions," he said. Ronghang assured that he would continue to monitor the progress of the project and pursue the matter with the concerned authorities to ensure that the sanctioned towers are installed and commissioned at the earliest. He also conveyed his appreciation to the Government of India, the Department of Telecommunications, BSNL, the Government of Assam and all agencies associated with the implementation of the project.

The sanctioning of 154 mobile tower sites is expected to bring transformative improvements to communication infrastructure and connect some of the most remote villages of Karbi Anglong to the mainstream of India's digital growth story.

Meghalaya village protests

issues and difficult terrain. A senior official of the Border Security Force (BSF) said an outpost has already been established in Lyngkhong to provide security and assistance to residents. "The BSF has a presence in the village and all necessary security measures are being taken to ensure the safety of the residents," he said.

A senior Home Department official said India has taken up with Bangladesh the issue of constructing a single-line fence along the zero line in areas where human settlements are likely to be affected.

"Talks have been initiated on the proposal to erect a single-line fence at the zero line. However, the new government in Bangladesh is yet to take a decision on the matter," the official said. (PTI)

CM announces allocation

Kamrup to Ajanta Neog, Bongaigaon and Barpeta to Ashwini Ray Sarkar, Darrang and Dhubri to Ashok Singhal, Sivasagar and Charaideo to Bimal Bora, and Nalbari and Sonitpur to Biswajit Daimary.

Sarma said Jayanta Mallabarua has been given Tamulpur and Goalpara, while Sribhumi and Hailakandi have been allocated to Kaushik Rai, South Salmara-Mankachar and North Lakhimpur to Keshab Mahanta, and Dima Hasao and Cachar to Krishnendu Paul. Nilima Devi will look after Bajali and Udalguri, while Biswanath and Golaghat have been assigned to Ranaj Pegu and Majuli and Dibrugarh to Susanta Borgohain. Pijush Hazarika will be the Guardian Minister for Nagaon, Hojai, Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts. (PTI)

Two Nagaon women

in 2019. "After that, separate petitions were filed in the Gauhati High Court challenging the FT verdict. The HC, in its order on April 24, sent the cases back to the Juria FT for review," he said.

Later, the FT declared them foreigners despite having valid documents of their families, as they could not provide linkage documents, Hoque said. "They were then sent to the transit camp by the authorities last week. We are now evaluating all legal options," he added.

The case against Jahanara was registered in 2016 by the FT, while that of Mamta was filed in 2015.

"The cause of their rejection is non-furnishing of valid documents instead of the village headmen's certificates. They have no birth certificates, and due to illiteracy, they also have no educational certificates, too," Hoque said. The FT declared the duo foreigners after rejecting their village headmen's certificates, he added.

Meanwhile, the Sadao Asom Gramin Shramik Santha (SAGSS) and Ganatantra Suraksha Mancha (GSM) have alleged that the FT sent both the "Indian citizens" to the transit camp after "ignoring the Gauhati High Court's ruling". The HC, in its order, had said the FT judgment of 2019 was given without proper discussion of the evidence in the documents, Hoque said. "Therefore, the judgment was quashed, and the matter was sent back to Juria FT for reconsideration. The petitioners were also directed to appear before the designated Juria FT with a certified copy of the HC order and submit necessary documents," he added.

He further alleged that the Tribunal did not conduct a detailed hearing before passing the fresh order declaring the two women foreigners and directing them to be sent to the transit camp in Goalpara. (PTI)

Nepal backs bilateral

consistently maintained that the territories are part of Uttarakhand. Late last month, Nepalese Prime Minister Shah sought involvement of China and the United Kingdom to address the long-standing border dispute between India and Nepal. Days later, New Delhi categorically rejected any role for third parties to resolve the row.

The Nepalese foreign minister said the involvement of the UK was meant in the context of availing documents and historical details from British libraries and museums. "We want to solve our disputes through diplomatic processes. We just want to see if we can access some of the documents that might be in libraries or museums in the UK. Our position was not that we were asking for mediation," he said.

"Rather than engaging in hyper-nationalistic grandstanding, we are pursuing calm, data-driven and evidence-based discussions to resolve challenges in good faith," the Nepalese foreign minister said.

Khanal said the year 2026 has provided the "most conducive, highly aligned window" for the two countries in decades to completely "elevate and transform" their relations. "No problem is too large, and no boundary too complex, when we sit down with an open heart, a rational mind and mutual respect," he said.

Asked about Nepal's objection to the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through the Lipulekh region, Khanal said Kathmandu's concerns stemmed from the understanding between India and China to use the route for the pilgrimage without consulting Nepal, claiming that the area belongs to his country. "Our concerns are with the renewal of the agreement between India and China over the Kalapani and Lipulekh area, where we have said for a very long time that the land belongs to us, and without Nepal's consent, the two countries by themselves cannot make those agreements," he said. "And we've made that very clearly known through our communication, including diplomatic notes to both countries," he said. At the same time, the Nepalese foreign minister asserted that Nepal seeks resolution of the issue with India through existing bilateral mechanisms. Khanal said the new government in Nepal has a strong desire to deepen ties with India. "When we look across the border, we see a rising India -- an India that has fundamentally and beautifully redefined itself on the global stage as a dynamic, fast-growing tech and economic powerhouse," he said. "We want to engage with this India of intense aspiration, cutting-edge technology, and relentless execution. In turn, we bring the energy of an aspiring Nepal," he said. Khanal also elaborated on historical India-Nepal ties, saying the people of the two nations are the children of the same rivers, the same mountains, and the same ancient wisdom. "Every time on the journey from Kathmandu to New Delhi, looking down at the majestic Himalayas yielding to the vast, fertile plains of the Gangetic basin, I am reminded of a profound truth," he said. "We are not merely neighbours joined by political lines drawn on a map; we are the children of the same rivers, the same mountains, and the same ancient wisdom," he said.

The Nepalese foreign minister refused to give a direct reply when asked about the youth-led "Gen Z" protests in Nepal in September 2025 and the Cockerroach Janta Party's protest in New Delhi on Saturday.

"There was a movement back in September and the political transition that took place brought us to power. I would not want to comment on what's happening in India," he said. Asked about the report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), Khanal said it was commissioned under an understanding of the prime ministers of the two countries. "The (EPG) report can only be submitted to the two prime ministers. I have no authority to make that public, accept or do anything," he said. Formed in January 2016, the EPG was tasked with reviewing the agreements and treaties between the two sides, including the Nepal-India Friendship Treaty of 1950. (PTI)

'Push-in' issue

which about 860 km remains unfenced, including 174.51 km of the "not feasible for fencing" gap. The DG-level border talks between the countries were held annually between 1975 and 1992, but they were made bi-annual in 1993, with either side alternatively travelling to the national capitals of New Delhi and Dhaka. (PTI)

Manas launches Assam's

significance of the reserve, Field Director Dr C Ramesh said Manas harbours some of the largest and most ecologically important grassland landscapes in the sub-Himalayan region. "The future of the pygmy hog is intrinsically linked to the health and extent of these grassland ecosystems. Sustained habitat restoration and scientific grassland management are essential for the survival of this unique species," he said. The day also saw Manas Tiger Reserve honouring two veteran camp elephants on their retirement while inducting five newly trained elephants into conservation duty. The newly inducted elephants will assist in anti-poaching operations, wildlife monitoring, habitat management and other conservation activities across the reserve. (With inputs from PTI)

Flipkart launches EV assist to accelerate electric mobility adoption among delivery partners

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 7: Flipkart has launched EV Assist, a digital marketplace aimed at simplifying access to electric vehicles (EVs) for its delivery executives, known as Wishmasters.

The platform is currently available for Flipkart Minutes riders across more than 20 cities and forms part of the company's broader commitment to electrifying its last-mile delivery fleet under the EV100 initiative.

The launch comes as Flipkart's EV fleet continues to expand rapidly, having crossed 20,000 vehicles during the 2025 festive season.

Through EV Assist, the company seeks to address key barriers to EV adoption, including affordability, vehicle ownership and access to reliable rental services.

The platform brings together verified EV fleet and rental providers, allowing delivery partners to browse electric two-wheeler options based on their city and budget. Wishmasters can compare rental plans, register their interest with minimal documentation and connect directly with mobility providers for vehicle allocation and onboarding.

According to Flipkart, the initiative has already generated strong interest among delivery partners, with Delhi NCR, Patna and Bengaluru emerging as leading markets. A recent Flipkart study involving more than 6,000 delivery partners found that nearly 46 per cent are willing to switch to electric mobility, although challenges related to financing, charging infrastructure and confidence in the EV ecosystem continue to hinder adoption.

The study also revealed that around 90 per cent of de-

livery partners spend between ₹2,000 and ₹5,000 per month on petrol.

Industry estimates indicate that electric two-wheelers can reduce fuel and energy expenses by up to 70-80 per cent, while lower maintenance costs can improve delivery partners' earnings by 15-20 per cent.

To improve accessibility, EV Assist is available in multiple languages, including English, Hindi, Bengali and Kannada. Mobility partners associated with the platform also provide vehicle servicing, maintenance and operational support.

The EVs come equipped with features such as GPS tracking, IoT-enabled monitoring and geofencing technology to enhance operational efficiency and security.

Commenting on the initiative, Rajneesh Kumar, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer of Flipkart Group, said making EV adoption simple and affordable is critical to India's transition towards sustainable mobility. He added that the company is focused on building systems that enable delivery partners to adopt electric vehicles in a practical and cost-effective manner.

Beyond EV Assist, Flipkart is also working with infrastructure partners to expand charging facilities across key delivery hubs and high-density routes.

The company has additionally piloted electric trucks on mid-mile logistics routes, including NCR-Jaipur and NCR-Agra, as part of efforts to reduce emissions across its broader supply chain.

The initiative reflects Flipkart's ongoing efforts to promote sustainable logistics and support India's transition towards cleaner transportation solutions.

Bengal: Dark spots on Himsagar mangoes cast shadow on export shipment

KOLKATA, June 7: Dark spots caused by a weather-induced disease have made the shipping of Bengal's famed Himsagar mangoes overseas uncertain, exporters said.

Spotting on the surface of mangoes is caused by continuous rain during bagging and subsequent high temperatures. These spots are early signs of infection. Bagging involves covering each fruit with protective bags while still on the tree. This technique is widely used to improve the appearance of mangoes and reduce damage caused by pests and diseases.

A major fruit exporter from West Bengal's Malda said efforts to address the problem of dark spots on bagged Himsagar mangoes have failed, rendering many of the fruits unsuitable for exports or for sale through organised retail chains.

"We were supposed to send the first consignment of mangoes to the US this week. We feared dark spots on the fruits, and it has come true. Had we exported the consignment, it would have been rejected by the importer as fruits have to be free of spots, which are an early sign of disease," co-founder of Shrishti Food Products, Prasun Chitlangia, told

PTI. He attributed the problem to adverse weather conditions during the growing season.

"Continuous rain during the bagging period followed by high temperatures led to the problem. The situation is bad, we have a large number of export orders," he said.

The exporter had earlier planned to send a one-tonne consignment of Himsagar mangoes to the US as the first overseas shipment of the season from Malda. The setback comes at a time when exporters and officials had been targeting a sharp rise in mango and litchi exports from the district to more than 300 metric tonnes (MT) this season, supported by the expansion of export-oriented cultivation practices and a larger number of farmers adopting fruit bagging techniques.

Despite the dark spot problem affecting shipping prospects, Malda Mango Merchants Association president Ujjal Saha remained optimistic about the export outlook.

"There have been reports of disease in around 15 per cent of the bagged fruits. But nearly three lakh more bagged mangoes are still available and can be exported. Orders for

Himsagar mangoes continue to remain strong," Saha said.

Exporters had earlier estimated that mango exports from the district could reach 300-500 metric tonnes this season, compared to around 15 metric tonnes exported to five countries last year.

The state horticulture department and exporters have been promoting export-oriented cultivation through fruit bagging, good agricultural practices (GAP), scientific harvesting and post-harvest handling measures to improve fruit quality and meet international standards. Officials had distributed around 2.5 lakh fruit bags among growers and were monitoring 50-60 orchards following export-compliant cultivation practices.

The export basket this season was expected to include premium mango varieties such as Himsagar, Langra, Lakshman Bhog and Amrapali, besides litchis from Malda and neighbouring Murshidabad district.

Despite the disease-related setback, exporters said overseas demand for premium Malda mangoes remains robust, and efforts are continuing to identify export-worthy fruits from unaffected orchards. (PTI)

Foreign liquor retailers urge Bengal govt to revise trade margin structure

KOLKATA, June 7: Foreign liquor retailers in West Bengal have urged the state government to increase the trade margin on alcohol sales to 10 per cent of MRP, withdraw special-purpose fees imposed during the COVID-19 period and review the state's liquor distribution mechanism.

The demands were raised by the Society for the Welfare of West Bengal Foreign Liquor Licences, an association representing more than 1,000 licensed foreign liquor (FL) shops across the state, which said rising operational and compliance costs had made the current business model unsustainable.

"We demand a margin of 10 per cent. It has come down to 3.5-4 per cent, which is not sustainable," the society's secretary, Bijon Patra, told reporters here.

According to a representation submitted to the excise commissioner, the association has sought rationalisation of trade margins in view of increasing business costs. It has also demanded the removal of special-purpose fees introduced during the pandemic and a shift to a system in which the state government directly manages liquor distribution instead of the existing distributor-led arrangement. Patra said the industry body was seeking reforms that would improve the business environment for licensed FL shops and ensure their long-term sustainability. The association also called for stronger action against illicit liquor, decentralisation of licensing and administrative processes, simplification of regulatory procedures and greater transparency in the implementation of excise policies.

"Licensed foreign liquor trade is an important stakeholder in West Bengal's economy and revenue ecosystem. We believe there is significant scope for policy reforms that can benefit consumers, strengthen compliance, improve business sustainability and enhance government revenues," Patra said.

Problems in the sector began after the erstwhile TMC government allegedly replaced the traditional distributor-led model with a state-controlled distribution system.

Patra, however, declined to comment on whether the new system was prone to corruption.

The association said it was willing to work with the state government and the excise department to develop practical solutions that support both regulatory objectives and business growth. (PTI)

CSR initiative strengthens healthcare infrastructure in Chirang and Kokrajhar districts

Bongaigaon Refinery distributes healthcare assets worth ₹ 4.60 crore



HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, June 7: In a significant boost to public healthcare in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) region, Bongaigaon Refinery, a unit of Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) located at Dhaligaon in Chirang district, on Sunday distributed health sector materials worth approximately ₹ 4.60 crore to the districts of Chirang and Kokrajhar under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme. The distributed items included ambulances, medical diagnostic equipment, vehicles and cooking gas cylinders for Anganwadi centres.

A formal distribution programme was held at the conference hall of Bongaigaon Refinery and was graced by BTC Chief Hagrama Mohilary as the chief guest. In his address, Mohilary commended the refinery for its exemplary initiative and extended his gratitude to Executive Director and Refinery Head Nayan Kumar Baruah. He observed that at a time when both the BTC administration and the Government of Assam are striving to achieve their healthcare goals, Bongaigaon Refinery's contribution of ambulances, medical diagnostic equipment and support for grassroots health workers

would provide substantial relief to the people of the two districts.

Speaking on the occasion, Nayan Kumar Baruah reaffirmed IOCL's commitment to community welfare and reiterated the refinery's dedication to supporting the development of the region. BTC Executive Member for Health Services Derhasat Basumatary also addressed the gathering and highlighted the positive impact the contribution would have on last-mile healthcare delivery across Chirang and Kokrajhar districts. The programme was attended by Paniram Brahma, MLA, along with BTC MCLAs and Secretaries, senior officials of Bongaigaon Refinery, officers and staff of the Health Department, ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers and helpers.

Among the notable contributions, a Bolero vehicle was handed over to the District TB Officer, Chirang, while Kokrajhar district received a total of five vehicles, including an ambulance. Additionally, cooking gas cylinders were distributed to a large number of Anganwadi centres across the two districts to improve the working conditions of frontline nutrition and childcare workers.

Swami Vivekanand University leadership meets CM

University discusses roadmap with focus on quality education, innovation and research

HT Correspondent
GOSSAIGAON, June 7: The leadership of Swami Vivekanand University called on Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati on Saturday and discussed the future roadmap of the university with special emphasis on quality education, innovation and research-oriented initiatives.

According to sources, the university Chairman Manish Singh and Chancellor Dr Ajay Karan held detailed discussions with the Chief Minister on strengthening the institution's role in delivering world-class education, promoting startup incubation and entrepreneurship and expanding research and development activities in line with the vision of a progressive Assam.

During the meeting, the university leadership highlighted the institution's commitment to nurturing young talent, encourag-

ing innovation and contributing to the socio-economic development of the region.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma appreciated the initiatives undertaken by the university in developing a strong academic ecosystem and advised the authorities to further enhance opportunities for students in the fields of skill development, industry collaboration and global exposure.

The university authorities also reiterated their commitment to creating a vibrant learning environment by blending traditional values with modern educational practices to ensure the holistic growth of students.

The meeting is being viewed as a significant step towards positioning Swami Vivekanand University as a centre for quality education, innovation and impactful research in Assam.



JCI Guwahati Princess holds health and welfare camp

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, June 7: JCI Guwahati Princess successfully organized a Free Eye Check-up Camp, Free Health Check-up Camp, Blood Donation Camp and Food Donation Drive at the LP School in Harijan Colony, an adopted school of the organisation.

The initiative witnessed active participation from residents of Harijan Colony as well as students of the school. The primary objective of the programme was

to provide essential healthcare services and support to underprivileged members of the community. During the eye and health check-ups, several individuals were identified with vision-related and other health concerns, enabling them to seek timely medical attention. Discount cards for further treatment and consultation were also distributed among the beneficiaries. The food donation drive received an overwhelming response and benefited numerous families in the locality.

Sivasagar University students join cleanliness drive in Sivasagar

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, June 7: Students of the History Department of Sivasagar University on Sunday carried out a cleanliness campaign in Sivasagar town under the leadership of Prof Kalyani Baruah, urging citizens to avoid the use of single-use plastics and other pollutants that harm the environment. Altogether, 32 students participated in the programme.

Manalika Hazarika, Supriya Dey and Abinash Bora, all students of the department, said that as students of the town, they want to see Sivasagar emerge as one of the cleanest towns in the country. They added that they had come forward to support the Sivasagar Municipal Board (SMB) and social organisations working towards the same goal. Nayanmoni Kalita, FMO, SMB; Pompi Talukdar, UTO and Riju Rahman and Jayanta Bez of the Sivasagar Municipal Board accompanied the students during the campaign.

Nagaon DC distributes laptops to 51 Sakhi workers

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, June 7: Nagaon District Commissioner Devashish Sharma on Saturday distributed laptops to 51 selected banking correspondent Sakhis and Digi Pay Sakhis of Nagaon district.

The initiative aims to expand and simplify digital transactions in rural areas. The laptops were provided to women who have shown excellent performance in advancing the rural economy through digital platforms under the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission, a central government scheme.

Speaking at the event held across 13 development blocks of the district, the DC said that these Sakhis have been playing a crucial role for several years by providing easy banking services, ensuring financial literacy and promoting digital payments in villages. He expressed hope that the laptops would significantly enhance their work efficiency and service quality, helping digital and financial services reach even the most remote and underserved areas of Nagaon.

ICAI Guwahati conducts seminar on GSTAT appeal filing

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, June 7: The Guwahati Branch of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) organized a seminar on "GSTAT Appeal Filing" on June 6, 2026, at ICAI Bhawan, Manik Nagar, Guwahati. The programme was organized in view of the operationalization of the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) after a wait of more than eight years since the introduction of GST and the approaching deadline of June 30, 2026, for filing eligible pending appeals before the Tribunal.

The seminar commenced with the inaugural address by Shri Somnath Ganguli, Hon'ble Vice President and Judicial Member, GSTAT, Guwahati Bench, who shared valuable insights into GST law and the functioning of the GST Appellate Tribunal. Addressing the gathering, he elaborated on the role of GSTAT in the GST dispute resolution mechanism and highlighted important aspects of appellate proceedings for professionals. His address provided participants with a deeper understanding of the procedures and expectations of the appellate authorities, particularly in an e-filing environment.

Speaking on the occasion, CA Anjani Kumar Mundhra, Chairman of the Guwahati Branch, stated that the seminar had been organized at a crucial juncture, as the due date for filing eligible pending GST appeals before GSTAT is June 30, 2026. He emphasized that with GSTAT becoming functional after more than eight years of GST implementation, tax professionals must be adequately prepared to assist taxpayers in pursuing their appellate remedies within the prescribed timelines. He mentioned that the objective of the programme was to provide both legal and practical guidance on GSTAT appeals and to facilitate a smooth transition into the GST appellate regime, even if there were procedural issues or minor defects. CA Manoj Nahata deliberated on the legal framework governing GSTAT appeals and discussed key statutory provisions, procedural requirements and important considerations relevant to appellate proceedings. CA Raginee Goyal, Immediate Past Chairperson of the Guwahati Branch, demonstrated the online GSTAT appeal filing process and highlighted important procedural aspects, documentation requirements and common portal-related issues. She also shared practical insights and tips to assist professionals in ensuring the timely and accurate filing of appeals before the due date.

Geremsa Literary Guild holds 28th annual meeting

HT Correspondent
HOWRAGHAT, June 7: The 28th annual meeting of the Geremsa Literary Guild (GLG) was held on Sunday at the Honest Hotel in Karbi Anglong, marked by the successful release of three significant books.

The meeting was presided over by Rituraj Basumatary, the president of the Geremsa Literary Guild and the proceedings were smoothly conducted by General Secretary Longkeswar Hainary.

The three books were released during the event. They were Daw-bayanayni Moundangthi, edited by Thaneswar Goyary (Chairman of the Publication Board, Bodo Sahitya Sabha) and Langouna Brahma; Geremsa (the official mouthpiece of GLG), edited by Mogesh Narja Bodo and Nirmal Basumatary and Swdwbni Gothai, edited by Dalsing Basumatary and K Deepak Basumatary.

The books were officially unveiled by Bilimohan Khakhlyar, Executive Member (EM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, alongside Promothesh Basumatary, a prominent lecturer from Diphu Government College.

The literary event was further graced by the presence of Dr Premananda Mosahary, vice president of the Central Committee of Bodo Sahitya Sabha and a distinguished Sahitya Akademi Award recipient. A key highlight of the annual meeting was a vibrant poetry recitation session, which saw participation from 14 noted poets and litterateurs from the Karbi Anglong district. The participating poets who enthralled the audience with their verses were Bisweswar Basumatary, Sumeswar Basumatary, Madaram Basumatary, Arabinda Uzir, Subhasi Basumatary, Subhash Basumatary, Ratneswar Narzary, K Deepak Basumatary, Dharmendra Khakhlyar, Ajit Basumatary, Krishnamohan Basumatary, Surendranath Basumatary, Nirmal Basumatary and Sonia Baglary.

Nirbha Aqua Solution mineral water plant inaugurated at Chachal

HT Correspondent
GUWAHATI, June 7: The plant with a production capacity of 2,000 litres per hour has been set up by young entrepreneur Tafizul Islam near his residence on Mahapurush Madhavdev Path. It will operate under M/s Reef Life (Neebha) as a drinking water project.

Dr Mineswar Hazarika, retired professor of Assam Veterinary College under Assam Agricultural University and recipient of the Bharat Gaurav Award, inaugurated the project at a solemn ceremony.

Several dignitaries attended the inaugural event, including advocate Lohit Hazarika; Dr Naba Nahar Deka, retired professor of Khanapara Veterinary College under Assam Agricultural University; Haji Abu Bakkar Ali, Tamizuddin Ahmed; Darbez Ali; local social worker Harendra Manta and Naba Kumar Mudoj, general secretary of the Central Committee of Upar Chachal Bihu Sammilan. In his inaugural address, Dr Hazarika expressed hope that the mineral water project would grow into a significant venture for the region and the state while maintaining quality and originality.

Dibrugarh launches eviction drive against illegal encroachments

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, June 7: In a major crackdown against illegal roadside encroachments, the Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation (DMC) has launched an extensive eviction drive across various parts of the town, removing unauthorised roadside vendors and structures operating outside designated vending zones.

Among the structures demolished was a roadside stall at Graham Bazar near Tinkunia, which had recently come under public scrutiny after a raid reportedly led to the recovery of 85.240 grams of suspected cannabis (ganja) from the premises.

The stall was removed during the civic body's enforcement operation as authorities intensified efforts to reclaim public spaces and restore order on busy roads and footpaths.

The eviction drive was carried out following the expiry of a seven-day notice period issued jointly by the district administration and the Dibrugarh Municipal

Corporation, directing vendors occupying roadsides, footpaths and other public areas to shift to officially designated vending zones. Despite repeated warnings, several vendors allegedly failed to comply, prompting the authorities to initiate strict enforcement measures.

Speaking during the operation, DMC Commissioner Novas Das, ACS, said the corporation has adopted a zero-tolerance approach towards illegal encroachments that obstruct traffic movement and compromise public safety.

"Public roads, footpaths and highways are meant for commuters and pedestrians. Unauthorised occupation of these spaces creates serious inconvenience and safety hazards. The corporation is committed to ensuring that public infrastructure is used for its intended purpose," Das stated.

Municipal teams, supported by officials and law enforcement personnel, conducted the drive in multiple locations across Dibrugarh, dismantling illegal stalls and clearing encroachments that had nar-

rowed roads and obstructed pedestrian movement.

Officials said the operation is part of a broader initiative to improve urban management, ease traffic congestion, enhance pedestrian safety and maintain civic discipline within the town. Authorities also warned that similar drives will continue in the coming days and that stringent action will be taken against individuals attempting to reoccupy cleared public spaces.

The removal of the Graham Bazar stall, particularly in the wake of the recent alleged ganja recovery has drawn significant public attention and is being viewed as a strong message from the administration against both illegal encroachment and unlawful activities operating from public land.

Residents and commuters welcomed the move, expressing hope that sustained enforcement will help create a cleaner, safer and more organised urban environment in Dibrugarh.

Assam Forest Employees' Association thanks CM for promotion of 134 foresters

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, June 7: The Assam Forest Employees' Association has expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister for promoting 134 Forester-I staff to the post of Deputy Ranger on June 5, 2026.

In a press release issued by the Association of Non-Gazetted Officers and Employees of the Department of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Assam, president Homen Pegu and general secretary Rasul Borah said the promotion of 134 frontline forest staff was a welcome step. They conveyed "sincere thanks and gratitude" to the Chief Minister for the decision taken within days of the new government taking office.

The association noted that the Forest Department is the only department to have carried out such promotions immediately after the formation of the government. Calling it a gesture of magnanimity, the office bearers said forest staff at all levels have expressed

their appreciation.

They added that the Chief Minister's dynamic leadership and development-oriented approach have already brought momentum to the Assam Forest Department. The association expressed hope that other pending issues of forest employees, including pay structure concerns will also be resolved swiftly. They are optimistic that these will be addressed through the upcoming 8th Pay Commission, which they believe will bring "a ray of hope" for forest personnel across Assam.

The association also appreciated the efforts of Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Head of Forest Force Sandeep Kumar, IFS, for completing the promotion process efficiently in a short time. The office bearers said many staff who had been serving in the same post for years have now been promoted, which will boost morale and work motivation among the workforce.

Tezpur Litchi Festival 2026 concludes

Festival focus on value addition and global market expansion of Tezpur litchi



HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, June 7: The second day of the "Tezpur Litchi Festival 2026" drew an overwhelming crowd from the early hours of the Sunday morning, with tourists from Bengaluru, Chennai, West Bengal and Kerala joining locals from across the state to savour the celebrated fruit at the exhibition and sales venue.

The day's proceedings gained further momentum when MLA Prithiraj Rabha, District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das, APEDA officials, District Agriculture Officer Pradeep Talukdar and Sub-Divisional Agriculture Officer Dr Zakir Hussain jointly flagged off the export of one tonne of GI-tagged Tezpur litchi to Dubai — a milestone that organisers described as a significant boost to the region's agricultural export credentials.

Authorities announced that the export process would continue for the next three days, with Singapore and Thailand among the countries slated to receive consignments in the days ahead.

In a key academic session held in collaboration with the Food Engineering Department of Tezpur University, professors Dr Poonam Mishra, Dr Swami Ranjan Purohit and Dr Rahul Kumar delivered an important workshop titled "Food Technology and Litchi." The experts underscored the considerable potential for producing litchi-based processed food items on a

sustained basis, urging local entrepreneurs to step forward and convert this seasonal fruit into a commercially viable industry.

Litchi-based products, including biscuits, ice cream, cake, honey and chips had already drawn enthusiastic response from visitors on the festival's opening day. These items, prepared through food processing techniques and on

display at the venue, were first piloted at the Spring Valley restaurant of noted Tezpur businessman Hemanta Lahkar, where they received considerable patronage.

A separate session supported by NABARD saw Suman Chatterjee, District Deputy General Manager, brief litchi farmers on the various training programmes and support initiatives extended to cultivators over the years. He urged all farmers present to focus on scaling up production and making the most of available institutional support.

In a parallel development, MLA Prithiraj Rabha and District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das participated virtually from the festival grounds in an important conference organised by APEDA in New Delhi in alignment with the ongoing

evening of the first day had seen a vibrant band performance by the Sashstra Seema Bal, followed by a cultural programme organised by the celebration committee, which drew a large and enthusiastic audience to the District Library auditorium.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Be brave. Take risks. Nothing can substitute experience. - Paulo Coelho

SC order for SIR 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."

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.

It is now being observed that, over time, particularly since the Modi government assumed office in 2014, Hindutva has been pushed as the dominating ideology of the Indian State.

POST BAG

Failure in Competitive Examinations Does Not Mean Defeat

Dear Sir/Ma'am

In board and university examinations, results are generally classified as "Pass" or "Fail." A student who secures the prescribed minimum marks is considered successful.

There is a fundamental difference between board or university examinations and competitive examinations. Board and university examinations primarily assess a student's knowledge, understanding, and academic proficiency based on a prescribed curriculum.

Dr. Buljit Buragohain Career Counsellor and Assistant Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Assam Don Bosco University,

The Blueprint for Student Resistance

The Cockroach Janta Party's Jantar Mantar protest marks a historic bottom up shift in Indian student activism. Driven by systemic failures in our academic machinery in specifically the massive structural cracks exposed by the NEET UG paper leaks and the flawed CBSE On Screen Marking system the country's newest voters have effectively bypassed conventional stale political channels.

Dr Vijaykumar H K

The Future of the Assamese language: Concerns and Possibilities

The sustainability of a language does not depend merely on emotion or slogans; rather, it is determined by its practical necessity and economic utility.



DEGREE OF THOUGHT By: Dipak Kurmi

Urban areas of Assam to its remote villages, an attitude of indifference towards the mother tongue has gradually developed. Particularly among the younger generation, the habit of speaking, reading, and writing in Assamese has been steadily declining.

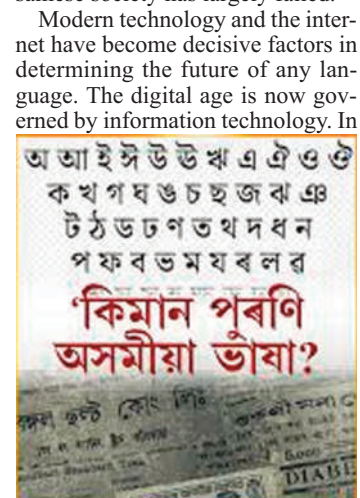
requently, students are forced to rely on other languages. Until pathways are created that allow students to pursue higher education through their mother tongue and establish themselves in a competitive world, it will be impossible to persuade anyone to study in Assamese merely through appeals to patriotism.

A language survives through its commercial and practical applications. If we examine the current condition of Assamese, it becomes apparent that the language has little place in the market economy.

A language survives through its commercial and practical applications. If we examine the current condition of Assamese, it becomes apparent that the language has little place in the market economy.



As a common language of communication has declined. A language that once served as a link language across much of Northeast India now finds its acceptance questioned even within its own state.



In this context, the position of Assamese is deeply disappointing. Digital content in Assamese remains extremely limited.

The intellectual community and national institutions associated with the Assamese language are equally responsible for its current predicament. Many literary and cultural or-

ganizations that were established to promote and develop the language have become confined to ceremonial activities and festivals. They have largely failed to address the practical challenges facing the language, attract younger generations, or undertake meaningful and contemporary research.

The role of the media and journalism has also significantly influenced the future of the Assamese language. As a mirror of society, the media has an important responsibility in promoting a language and maintaining its standards.

remains inadequate. To keep pace with a rapidly changing world, it is essential to incorporate new concepts and terminologies from science, economics, and philosophy into the language.

Despite these serious concerns, certain possibilities still remain, provided we are prepared to adopt practical and determined measures instead of relying solely on emotional appeals. The first and foremost requirement is to establish a strong connection between language and the economy.



Assessing India's social determinants of health approach using NFHS-6 Data

By: Oommen C. Kurian

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6 (2023-24)) fact sheets on 29 May 2026, covering nearly 6.79 lakh households across 715 districts. Compared with NFHS-5 (2019-21), the latest survey points to broad-based gains across maternal health, child immunisation, and nutrition. Institutional deliveries reached 90.6 percent (up from 88.6 percent), antenatal care coverage rose to 95.9 percent (from 92.6 percent), and skilled birth attendance improved to 91.3 percent. Full immunisation coverage among children aged 12-23 months reached 87.1 percent, with rotavirus vaccination more than doubling from 36.4 percent to 85.4 percent.

On adult nutrition, both ends of the BMI distribution worsened simultaneously (Figure 1)—the share of overweight or obese women rose from 24.0 percent to 30.7 percent, and that of men from 22.9 percent to 27.3 percent, while underweight prevalence also increased among both sexes—a textbook double burden of malnutrition.

Contrasted against these impressive gains, several indicators moved in the wrong direction. Exclusive breastfeeding among infants under six months fell from 63.7 percent to 55.8 percent. The share of institutional births occurring in public facilities declined from 61.9 percent to 58.6 percent, pointing to a quiet shift towards private delivery care—possibly financed by large publicly funded insurance schemes—even as overall institutional delivery rates rose. The caesarean section rate climbed from 21.5 percent to 27.2 percent, with increases recorded in both public and private facilities. Modern contraceptive use slipped from

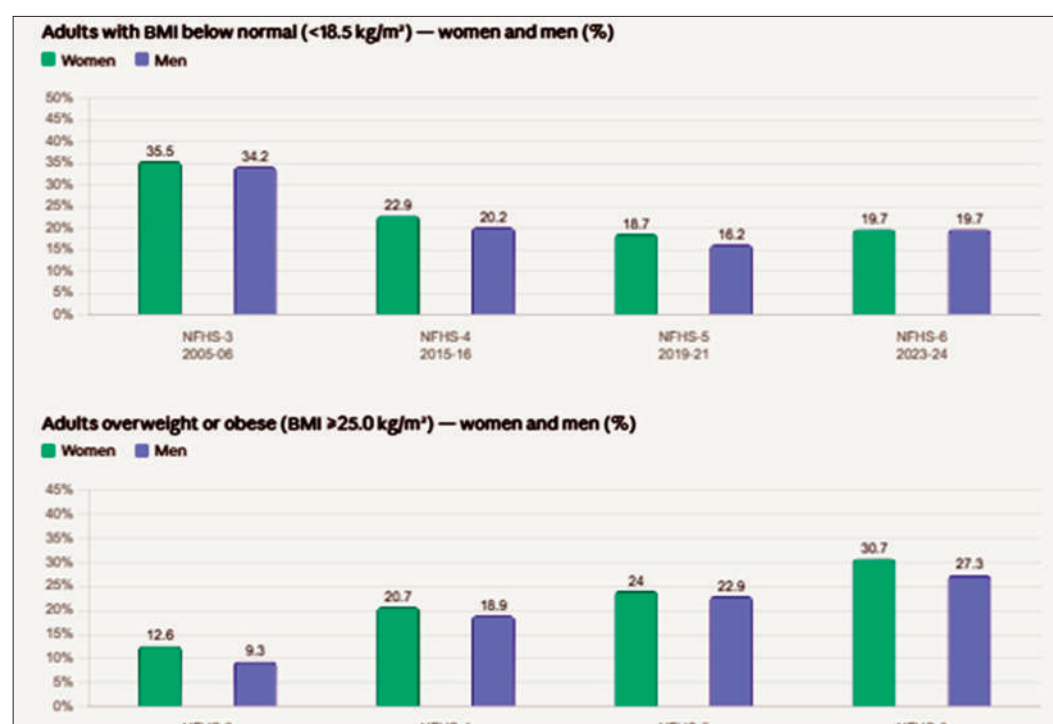
56.4 percent to 52.7 percent, replaced by a corresponding rise in traditional methods. On adult nutrition, both ends of the BMI distribution worsened simultaneously

tion, nutrition, road access, clean cooking energy, women's education, financial inclusion, and food security, among other factors. India has not always framed this as

ficial fact sheet and press releases do not provide a methodological explanation for these omissions, it was reported that the omissions were part of an attempt at data harmonisation because some parameters are covered by other government data systems.

It remains unclear whether these omissions are confined to the fact sheets or were also reflected in the data collection process. Once the detailed reports, questionnaires, and unit-level data are released, these questions can be answered more definitively. At the same time, India's official SDG National Indicator Framework 2025 continues to list NFHS as the source for anaemia, an indicator dropped from the NFHS-6 fact sheet, creating an unresolved gap.

Given this broader context, this article examines India's progress over the last two decades in ad-



(Figure 1)—the share of overweight or obese women rose from 24.0 percent to 30.7 percent, and that of men from 22.9 percent to 27.3 percent, while underweight prevalence also increased among both sexes—a textbook double burden of malnutrition, an emerging challenge previously explored in detail by ORF researchers.

Social Determinants of Health in Practice in India

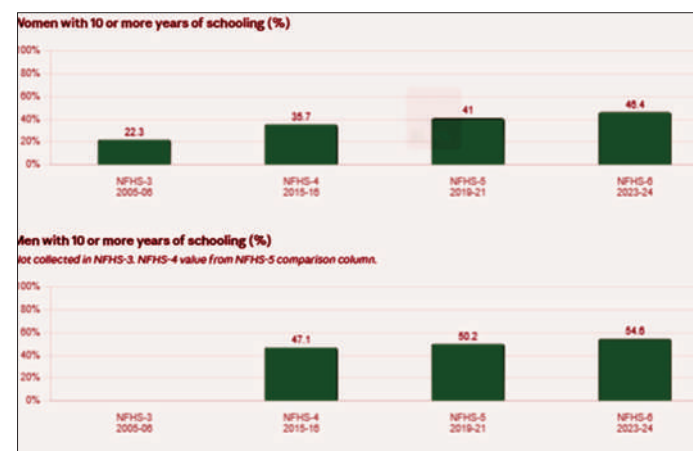
Over the last two decades, some of the most consequential public health shifts in India have emerged from interventions that sat outside the formal boundaries of the health ministry: drinking water, sanita-

a formal Social Determinants of Health (SDH) approach, nor has it built a single institutional architecture around it. Yet, in practice, large welfare and infrastructure programmes have steadily entered the terrain where health is produced.

The NFHS is one of India's foremost sources of health information and allied themes, and the latest release of topline findings offers an opportunity to take stock of gains across various SDH indicators. There is ongoing debate over the health ministry's decision to omit several indicators that were included in NFHS-5. While the of-

addressing social determinants of health across a range of sectors, using the NFHS-6 fact sheets. Alternative official sources are used in place of indicators dropped from the latest fact sheet.

Educational attainment among adults has improved steadily across all four survey rounds covering 2005-06 to 2023-24. The share of women aged 15-49 with ten or more years of schooling rose from 22.3 percent in 2005-06 to 46.4 percent in 2023-24, more than doubling over two decades (Figure 2). The corresponding figure for men, available from NFHS-4 onwards, increased from 47.1 percent to

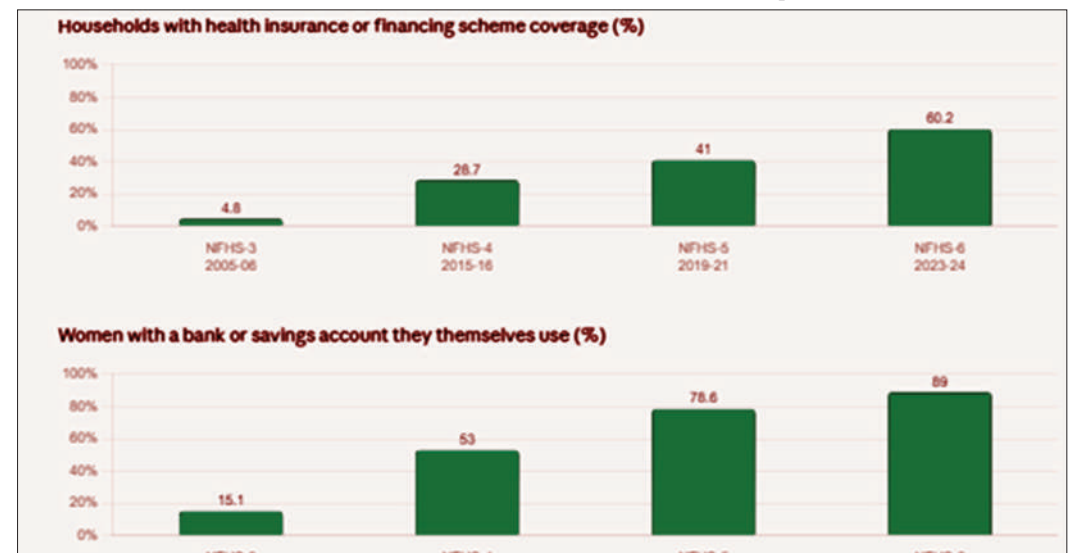


54.6 percent. The gender gap in schooling, while narrowing, remains substantial, and further improvements and convergence are likely to yield additional health benefits across the country.

Child undernutrition has improved, albeit often slowly, across all three anthropometric measures (Figure 3), with stunting falling from 48.0 percent to 29.3 percent between 2005-06 and 2023-24, a reduction of nearly 20 percentage points that reflects cumulative gains in maternal nutrition, sanitation, and child feeding practices. Wasting has remained stubbornly high at 19.0 percent, while the prevalence of

trition frame.

Living conditions have shown steady improvement over the last two decades. Access to electricity, drinking water, and sanitation has expanded substantially, as tracked using NFHS and other official sources (Figure 4). Household electricity access rose from 67.9 percent to 98.3 percent, and improved drinking water coverage increased from 87.6 percent to 96.5 percent. Clean cooking fuel use, at 63.4 percent in 2022-23, continues to lag considerably behind, with rural coverage remaining below 50 percent, representing a significant and ongoing source of indoor air



underweight children stands at 31.8 percent, indicating that progress in child nutrition remains incomplete and requires additional effort. The decline in exclusive breastfeeding from 63.7 percent in 2019-21 to 55.8 percent in 2023-24 is a concerning reversal that warrants specific programmatic attention. Among adults, both ends of the BMI distribution have worsened since 2019-21 (Figure 1), a transition that demands policy responses beyond the conventional undernu-

trition and respiratory disease burden.

Parallel to these developments, health insurance coverage among households expanded from a very low 4.8 percent in 2005-06 to 60.2 percent in 2023-24, a transformation driven largely by publicly financed schemes, most recently Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY. Women's ownership of bank accounts they themselves use rose from 15.1 percent to 89.0 percent over the same period, reflecting

have emerged around breastfeeding, the caesarean section rate, and the double burden of adult malnutrition. At the same time, the omission of several indicators available in earlier rounds, on grounds of data harmonisation with other government systems, raises questions about the continuity of a series that derives much of its value from long-term comparability. However, greater clarity will emerge once the unit-level data are disseminated in the coming weeks. (Courtesy: ORF)

Cervical cancer prevention: Why linking HPV awareness matters



By: Charu Pragya

On the Menstrual Hygiene Day (May 28), Delhi CM Rekha Gupta raised a very powerful voice by promising No more silence on Menstruation. While many political leaders and public figures treat menstrual hygiene as a welfare issue and focus on just the distribution of sanitary pads, she is trying to institutionalise the apparatus and position menstrual health as a public health matter.

In her article, the Delhi CM also linked menstrual hygiene to cervical cancer awareness. "This (menstrual hygiene) will be directly linked to awareness of HPV and cervical cancer. Cervical cancer remains one of the most common cancers among Indian women, and it is also one of the most preventable. By connecting menstrual health to HPV awareness, we treat a girl's reproductive health holistically," she argued.

India needs to treat health as a continuous journey instead of just focusing on building cure infrastructure. While all the new hospitals, the increase in the number of medical seats, colleges, and Jan Aushadhi Kendras are essential to ensure that no one loses lifespan or healthspan due to unfortunate incidents, the focus should be on minimising the need for the same in the first place. A good parallel would be the city transport infrastructure - the European

cities initially focused on improving the road and metro infrastructure for city commute, but could never keep up with the growing population and its needs - later they realised that the solution lies in eliminating/minimising vehicle commute altogether and redesigned the city for pedestrian and cycle traffic. And the result of this is that European cities are cleaner, the population is healthier, and the quality of life is much better. Similarly, we need to minimise the need for healthcare infrastructure by focusing on preventive healthcare.

According to the WHO, cervical cancer is the 2nd most common cancer after breast cancer among women in India. Cervical Cancer is primarily driven by Human Papillomavirus (HPV), and our country accounts for roughly 20% of the global cervical cancer burden against 18% of the global population. Cervical cancer is preventable through vaccination administered between the ages of 9 and 14 before any exposure to the virus.

Adolescence represents a narrow, vital developmental window. Treating menstruation, reproductive education, and cancer prevention as completely separate may make sense from a curative point of view, but from a preventive lens, all of this could be dealt with a holistic strategy. When a young girl learns about her reproductive system in early teens, this is the right time

to introduce her to the preventive vaccination framework, also. Many authoritative studies have pointed out that schools are the basis for preventive healthcare interventions. Sensitisation about HPV and the vaccination to prevent the same will end the pandemic and will make our coming generations healthy and productive.

For too long, India has focused on curative healthcare despite being a low-per-capita-income country. While we see the 'prevention is better than cure' slogan in almost every other clinic and hospital, preventive healthcare has not been the focus of the community or the policymakers. India has one of the highest out-of-pocket healthcare expenditures (OOPHE) in the world at 43%. It was even higher, 64 percent a decade ago, but thanks to the Modi government's focus on healthcare infrastructure and improved spending, the ratio has decreased significantly. However, in a lower-middle-income country, people cannot afford to pay 43% OOPHE, which means the majority of India's population is one medical bill away from being pushed below the poverty line.

The people of the United States, with a per capita income of around 90,000 dollars (30 times that of India), can afford to pay OOPHE, and most of Europe has fully public healthcare, but given India's stage of development, both of these models are unsustainable for us. Thus, we have to focus on preventive healthcare in a big way if we want to have a healthy country that can reap the benefits of the demographic dividend by participating in the economy. Various studies have shown that health is directly linked to productivity, and as the cases of obesity, diabetes, breast and cervical cancer increase, the productivity of our young population will go down. If this demographic window is lost, India risks becoming old before becoming rich, and unless the country focuses on preventive healthcare to improve the healthspan and lifespan of the population, this risk will linger on. Therefore, our political leaders and public figures need to work on this on a war footing. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

Drug Addiction: Are we punishing victims instead of helping them?

By: Fayiz Mehmood

From the last one month, the entire Jammu and Kashmir was focused on the Nashamukt Bharat Abhiyan. I was also a participant in it, the one pattern I noticed was that everyone was talking about drug addiction, but no one was talking about the drug addict.

I always thought that addiction was a personal choice of an individual where society had little to no role to play. Now this thought comes naturally when it has been more than a century since the first case of drug addiction was recorded on paper.

And from then, we never truly looked back. The pace today appears faster than the Rajdhani Express.

I will not merely talk about the catastrophic effects of addiction on society on a moral level.

Instead, one simple question must be asked: What is the right thing to do now?

Across countless households, addiction continues to be seen as a criminal act. And it is not limited to one family alone, this perception exists almost everywhere. Whenever addiction tightens its grip, what truly remains within the control of the addict?

So as a society that prides itself on consciousness and morality, where exactly are we placing the blame?

There exists a very thin line between crime and injustice. Whether drug addiction is a crime, or a consequence of prolonged injustice, remains a question society still hesitates to confront honestly.

Are all those struggling with addiction merely criminals in need of punishment, or victims of consequences beyond their control?

Despite drugs being avoidable, more than 700 drug-related deaths continue to be registered annually. And



all of this is a clear indication that our drug policies are failing. We as a part of society are failing.

Why do we allow an individual to reach such a state of vulnerability in the first place, where drugs appear easier than communication?

What compels people to escape reality and attempt to mask their pain? The reasons can vary from isolation and the dreadful state of loneliness that society has normalized, to societal pressure, glorification through the internet, lack of awareness, rejection, and failure.

And if bans imposed on drugs are clearly not working, then what exactly are we waiting for? We need to shift our focus and align it with the psychology of addiction itself, identify the causes, and once those causes are no longer unknown, meaningful action becomes the need of the hour.

Punishing those who consciously ruin the lives of youngsters by supply-

ing drugs unquestionably a just and necessary act.

And most importantly, spaces of acceptance and rehabilitation must be encouraged. There is absolutely nothing wrong with considering rehabilitation if one unfortunately falls into addiction.

But what is truly wrong is refusing to seek help because of the fear of societal judgment. And that is where society needs immense improvement.

Society needs to support and welcome those who slowly attempt to walk away from hell in search of healing. I remember one last thing that an addict once said.

He said that while everyone is given only one life, sometimes the life one chooses becomes far worse than the life one is given. And perhaps that is the reality society must finally accept.

The price of our inaction yours and mine is far greater than the cost of their mistake. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

23 parties have confirmed participation: Congress 'INDIA janbandhan united'

NEW DELHI, June 7: Twenty-three political parties have confirmed their participation in the "INDIA janbandhan" meeting at the Constitution Club here on Monday, the Congress said and asserted that the opposition bloc continues to stand united through its diversity.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said there are some parties that have expressed their inability to attend this particular meeting for their own reasons.

In a post on X, he said, "23 political parties have confirmed participation in the INDIA janbandhan meeting at Constitution Club, New Delhi, on Monday, June 8, 2026, at 12 noon."

Tagging Ramesh's post, TMC MP Derek O'Brien said, "Meeting with a common purpose and clear intent. INDIA united. Many parties look forward to meeting in the spirit of camaraderie."

"There are some parties who have expressed their inability to attend this particular meeting for their own reasons, even though they have conveyed their strong opposition to the Modi government's policies and actions that are snatching away the right to vote for millions of Indians, as-



saulting the Constitution daily, attacking Opposition leaders through investigative agencies, seriously damaging the livelihoods of crores of Indians, breaking household budgets through relentless price rise, betraying the hopes and aspirations of lakhs of youth, dampening investment climate, and compromising the national interest by its foreign policy," said the Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh.

Like India, the "INDIA janbandhan" continues to stand

over the allegation by top Congress leaders that the Left had colluded with the BJP in Kerala.

According to sources, CPI(M) general secretary M A Baby has recently written to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge seeking clarification on remarks by senior Congress leaders that suggested a political understanding between the CPI(M) and the BJP in Kerala.

The meeting also comes in the backdrop of the recent assembly elections in which TMC and DMK were ousted from power in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

The gathering is being seen as an effort to deepen coordination among opposition parties, particularly after the recent round of assembly elections and amid evolving political equations in several states.

The AAP has publicly distanced itself from the bloc, while the DMK this week announced its decision to boycott the meeting.

In the past, the INDIA bloc leadership has also got together formally for consultations ahead of Parliament sessions, when opposition parties discussed floor coordination and issues to be jointly raised against the central government. (PTI)

Our agitation will continue until Union minister Pradhan resigns: CJP founder Dipke

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, June 7: Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke said on Sunday his agitation over alleged irregularities in examinations and recruitment tests will not stop until Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigns.

Dipke also said their protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Saturday was largely successful, with around 7,000 people participating in it, and added that the movement would now expand nationwide. The CJP founder reached his residence in the MIDC Waluj area in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district on Sunday morning and was welcomed by his family members.

Later, speaking to reporters, Dipke said the agitation undertaken by the Cockroach Janata Party will not stop until Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigns.

"The protest we staged (at Jantar Mantar) was successful, as 6,000 to 7,000 people attended it. This agitation will go nationwide. We won't step back till Dharmendra Pradhan resigns," he asserted.

"We will roll out a further action plan to take this agitation nationwide," Dipke added.



Hundreds of protesters gathered at Delhi's Jantar Mantar on Saturday under the banner of the CJP, demanding Pradhan's resignation over alleged irregularities in examinations and recruitment tests, with Dipke delivering the message not to be "scared".

At a press conference later in the national capital, CJP spokespersons announced that they will wait for a week either for the Centre to sack Pradhan or his voluntary resignation, after which they would launch a countrywide protest.

Dipke, who called for the protest, arrived in Delhi from the United States on Saturday morn-

ing, walking out of the airport carrying a copy of B R Ambedkar's autobiography. After receiving permission from the Delhi Police, he reached Jantar Mantar.

Protesters, armed with posters demanding Pradhan's resignation, were seen wearing cockroach masks, which were being distributed at the venue. Besides demanding the education minister's resignation, the protesters also raised slogans demanding that the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stop indulging in "Hindu-Muslim" politics, and hailed the motherland with "Bharat Mata ki Jai" slogans. (PTI)

Ram temple donation funds missing, claims Akhilesh

LUCKNOW, June 7: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday said that reports have emerged claiming that crores of rupees from donations offered at the Ram Temple were missing and urged the court to take cognisance of the matter.

There was no immediate response from the temple trust or the Uttar Pradesh government on Yadav's remarks.

In a post on X, Yadav said the issue was "extremely sensitive" for devotees of Lord Ram across the world and described the situation as "highly embarrassing" for the temple trust.

"It is very sensitive news for devotees of Lord Ram across the world that crores of rupees from donations made to the Ram Temple have been found missing," Yadav's post read in Hindi.

The Samajwadi Party chief also questioned the "silence" of the temple trust and the government over the issue. "The government's silence is suspicious," Yadav said.

Calling the alleged discrepancy a matter of public concern, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said, "This is an extremely shameful situation for the temple trust. No one is willing to come forward and offer an explanation."

Yadav urged the court to intervene in the matter, saying it was linked to the deep faith of the global Sanatani community in Lord Ram.

The court should take "suo motu cognisance because the issue is directly related to the profound faith that the Sanatani community across the world places in Lord Ram," he said. (PTI)

Indicators 'missing' in NFHS factsheet being monitored via national surveys, databases: Govt sources

NEW DELHI, June 7: Union health ministry sources said the indicators claimed to be "missing" in the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-6 Fact Sheets are being monitored through dedicated national surveys and administrative databases, and therefore were not duplicated in the preliminary release.

Responding to "commentary in sections of the media regarding the absence of certain indicators", official sources emphasised that the factsheets represent only the first stage of dissemination and cover 101 major indicators intended to provide a concise snapshot of India's most critical health and demographic trends.

"The factsheets are the first stage of dissemination. The detailed national report will provide a much broader picture," they said. It will be released subsequently with a much wider range of indicators, detailed analyses and methodological documentation, they added. "The objective is to ensure that each indicator is reported through the most appropriate and authoritative source, reducing duplication and improving overall data coherence," one of the sources said.

Official sources noted that several indicators cited as "missing" from the factsheets are already being monitored through dedicated national systems.

Sanitation and clean cooking fuel coverage, for instance, are tracked through specialised surveys and administrative platforms such as Swachh Survekshan Grameen and the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's surveys, making duplication within the factsheets unnecessary, they said.

Similarly, key statistics relating to mortality, birth registration and population characteristics continue to be generated through established systems such as the Sample Registration System (SRS), Civil Registration System (CRS) and Census framework, which remain the country's designated sources for these indicators, the sources said. On the absence of anaemia estimates in the factsheets, they explained that haemoglobin testing was not undertaken in NFHS-6 due to concerns surrounding the capillary blood sampling methodology used in previous rounds.

Instead, anaemia prevalence estimates will be derived from the Indian Council of Medical Research's Diet and Biomarkers Survey, which employs gold-standard venous blood sampling methods to improve accu-

LPG price hikes: Govt will pay 'political price', says Sharad Pawar; Cong's Wadettiwar slams BJP

KOLHAPUR, June 7: NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday criticised the Centre over rising prices, claiming the government would pay a "political price" as frequent hikes in essential commodities were burdening the common man.

People across the country were facing hardship due to inflation, the former Union minister claimed and questioned the government's stand that price rise was under control.

"The hike may have started with just two rupees, but over time the increases have kept piling up, and today we can see how far the prices have risen. All of this has a direct impact on the finances and daily lives of ordinary people," Pawar said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had initially claimed his government would keep inflation under control, the NCP (SP) supremo said.

However, it now appears that their (Centre's) idea of "control" is to deliver these price shocks step by step, he added. "Those responsible will have to pay a political price," he said in response to media queries on the LPG price hike.

Maharashtra Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar accused the BJP of abandoning its earlier stand on price rise, and said the ruling party was no longer showing the same concern for issues affecting ordinary people as it had done while in the opposition.

In a statement, Wadettiwar said BJP leaders used to stage protests whenever cooking gas prices were increased during the UPA regime, but remained silent despite repeated hikes in fuel and LPG prices since coming to power.

"Commercial LPG cylinder prices have risen sharply over the past few months and petrol, diesel and CNG prices have also witnessed multiple revisions in recent years. Inflation was severely affecting household budgets and placing an additional burden on middle-class and economically weaker families," the Congress leader claimed.

Domestic cooking gas LPG price has been raised by Rs 29 per cylinder, marking the second increase in three months as state-owned fuel retailers continue to grapple with elevated global energy costs.

The increase follows a Rs 60-per-cylinder hike on March 7 after the conflict in West Asia disrupted global energy supplies and drove up international fuel prices.

Meanwhile, the Union government on Sunday said Indian households continue to pay among the lowest prices for cooking gas globally despite a sharp rise in international PG prices triggered by disruptions due to the West Asia crisis that began on February 28 following a joint attack by the US-Israel on Iran.

In a statement, the government said the cost of supplying a domestic LPG cylinder has risen to more than Rs 1,600 following a surge in international prices that followed the outbreak of war in West Asia.

India's LPG import costs are linked to the Saudi Contract Price (CP), the global benchmark for the fuel. The benchmark has risen about 46 per cent since February after disruptions linked to the Strait of Hormuz tightened supplies from the Gulf region, according to the statement. (PTI)

'PM wants youth to keep making reels, fry pakodas': Rahul Gandhi hits out at PM Modi on CBSE OSM row

NEW DELHI, June 7: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday hailed whistleblower student Sarthak Sidhant and his associate Nisarga Adhikary for exposing the "collusion" between the CBSE and COEMPT and said Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants the youth to keep "making reels and fry 'pakodas'" but these two youngsters asked questions and found answers too.

Gandhi shared on X a video of his meeting last week with Sarthak Sidhant, an 18-year-old student affected by the CBSE's on-screen marking system (OSM) who has pointed out alleged irregularities in the tendering process to select a vendor for the OSM exercise in Class-12 board exams.

In his post in Hindi accompanying the video, Gandhi said, "Sarthak is 18 years old, yet, in terms of mindset, courage, and principles, he is second to none."

"He and his associate, Nisarga, accomplished what the country's major media houses and investigative journalists could not: they exposed the collusion between CBSE



and COEMPT to the nation."

An 18-year-old from the country proved faster and sharper than the CBI; this victory for the youth is, in the true sense, a defeat for the government, Gandhi said.

"Modi ji wants our youth to keep making reels and frying pakodas, without asking questions or opening their eyes. But these young men did ask questions, and they found the answers, too," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

"This is India's true youth power -- inquisitive, aware and informed. And remember, the country's future will not be led astray," he said.

While the government has shunted out two top CBSE officials following the on-screen marking system row, the opposition Congress has dismissed it as an eyewash and a cover-up, with Rahul Gandhi demanding that Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan be sacked and an independent judicial inquiry be ordered

Rajeev Chandrasekhar calls Kerala's political culture 'strange' after first Assembly session

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, June 7: Kerala BJP president Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Sunday said several aspects of the state's political discourse appeared "strange" to him during his first Assembly session, alleging that political parties were creating "unnecessary controversies" instead of focusing on issues affecting the public.

In a Facebook post, Chandrasekhar, a former Union minister and three-time MP, said he entered the Kerala Assembly for the first time as an MLA on June 1 after spending 18 years in Parliament.

"I thought I had seen almost everything in politics and parliamentary functioning during my 18 years in Parliament. But now I realise I had seen nothing," the Nemon MLA remarked sarcastically.

The BJP leader said the recent Assembly session was notable for several reasons, but what stood out to him was what he described as a

"political culture disconnected from the real concerns of society."

"The strangest thing for me was the politics of some people. It is a strange kind of politics that has no connection with the real issues facing society," he said.

Chandrasekhar said the country was living in an era of rapid technological transformation, with artificial intelligence opening up new opportunities for young people while businesses face emerging global challenges.

However, he alleged that sections of the political leadership were preoccupied with ideological debates and political controversies rather than discussions on development, investment and employment generation. Referring to the debate over the state's economic white paper, Chandrasekhar criticised CPI(M) leaders for opposing it and alleged that political rivals were more interested in blaming one another for the BJP's electoral success than ad-

ressing public concerns.

He claimed that despite rising prices, a lack of fresh investments and concerns over employment opportunities, "none of the real issues affecting people are becoming subjects of discussion".

"The economy of Kerala has collapsed not because of anything else, but because of the disastrous politics of the Congress and the CPI(M)," he alleged.

Describing the situation as "painful, pathetic and completely irresponsible", Chandrasekhar said the BJP's objective was to bring about a change in the state's political culture.

"Our goal is to replace this culture of trivial political debates and manufactured controversies with a politics of performance," he said.

Chandrasekhar also said the party would continue to advocate its vision of a "developed Kerala" and raise development-oriented issues in the Assembly. (PTI)

immediately.

In the video, Gandhi asks Sidhant how he was able to find out information about alleged irregularities in the OSM tendering process.

Gandhi also hails him for doing the job of investigative journalists. After meeting Sidhant and his family last Tuesday, Gandhi had posted pictures from the meeting and said, "Sarthak, stay firm on your principles."

Sidhant also made a presentation before a parliamentary panel on Tuesday on the alleged irregularities in the OSM tendering process.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) replaced the traditional method of checking papers with digital evaluation for Class 12 through the on-screen marking system.

However, a controversy erupted after some Class 12 students alleged that the scanned copies of their answer sheets uploaded by the board did not match their handwriting, raising concerns over possible answer-sheet mismatch in the OSM system. (PTI)

Four workers die after inhaling toxic fumes at septic tank in Surat

SURAT, June 7: Four workers died after inhaling toxic fumes while cleaning a septic tank at a jewellery manufacturing unit in Gujarat's Surat city on Sunday morning, police said. While asphyxiation is likely the primary cause of their death, the exact cause will be confirmed by the post-mortem report, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone-1, Alok Kumar said. The incident occurred at the septic tank, which collects waste from the jewellery cleaning process, in the Ashwini Kumar area, he said.

The facility's septic tank undergoes cleaning and maintenance every two months. This morning, four individuals - a supervisor and three labourers - entered the tank. They collapsed due to the effects of poisonous gas and all of them died, the official said. "We are examining whose negligence led to the incident, as preliminary investigations indicate that safety protocols were not followed. Nevertheless, we will conduct a detailed investigation into the matter," he said. (PTI)

King of fruits meets global culinary creativity in 'Mangomania'

NEW DELHI, June 7: 'Tis the season of mangoes, the perfect time for chefs to don their thinking caps and reimagine the king of fruits. Enter "Mangomania", an ongoing festival that celebrates summer's most beloved fruit with a vibrant mix of bold flavours, global influences, and seasonal indulgences, showcasing the mango in all its delicious glory.

The month-long festival, currently underway at Mido Social House, Kailash Colony, showcases the versatility of mango across a curated menu of savoury plates, desserts, and beverages that are equal parts nostalgic and unexpected.

Moving beyond traditional interpretations, the menu pairs fresh Alphonso mangoes with vibrant ingredients like tain, chamoy, habanero, coconut, avocado, and fresh herbs, creating dishes that balance sweetness with heat, acidity, and depth.

"Mangoes evoke a sense of nostalgia and joy that is deeply rooted in



the Indian summer experience. With 'Mangomania', we wanted to celebrate the fruit in a way that feels fresh, contemporary and exciting.

"The menu draws inspiration from flavours across the world while allowing the mango to remain the hero of every dish and drink," said Kanishk Tuteja, co-founder of the restaurant, said in a statement.

The culinary journey begins with the "Mango & Tajin Bowl", where chilled Alphonso mango meets lime, chilli salt, micro mint, and a chamoy drizzle. It's followed by the "Chilli Mango Tacos", layering mango habanero salsa, pickled red cabbage, and lime crema in soft corn tortillas, with a choice of crispy fried chicken or tofu -- creating a lively burst of

sweet, spicy, and tangy flavours. For a more substantial bite, the "Mango & Prawn Flatbread" delivers pure satisfaction, layering chilli-lime prawns, raw green mango slaw, avocado crema, and pickled red onions over a wood-fired flatbread.

But what is a mango festival without its share of sinful treats?

As expected, the menu continues its celebration of the season with a sweet finale. It features a comforting "Mango Sticky Rice", combining pandan-scented coconut sticky rice, fresh mango slices, and toasted sesame, alongside a "Mango Chia Pudding" layered with coconut-soaked chia, mango compote, and tain-spiced mango cubes.

The indulgent "Mango Basil Sundae" brings the experience to a close with house-churned mango basil ice cream, churro crumble, salted caramel, and chamoy, balancing nostalgia with a contemporary twist.

"Mangomania" will come to a close on June 30. (PTI)

'In this difficult and painful moment, we make a humble, earnest and prayerful appeal to all concerned communities'

CSI Medak Diocese appeals for peace, release of abducted persons in Manipur

IMPHAL, June 7: The Church of South India (CSI) Medak Diocese, Hyderabad has appealed for justice, peace and the safe release of abducted pastors and civilians in Manipur.

"We, the members of the Church of South India (CSI) Medak Diocese, Hyderabad, TG, express our deep anguish and concern over the continuing incidents of violence, abduction and loss of innocent lives in Manipur," said the appeal letter of the church body. It added, "In this difficult and painful moment, we make a humble, earnest and prayerful appeal to all concerned communities, civil society organisations and community leaders to work collectively towards peace, justice, reconciliation and the protection of innocent civilians."

It also respectfully appealed to the United Naga Council (UNC) and the Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM) to extend their humanitarian intervention and moral leadership in facilitating the safe and immediate release of the hostages.

In its appeal letter, the South India church body mentioned Rev Dr Manu Thiumai of Leimakhong Baptist Church, Pastor Kenpibou Chawang of Juna Baptist Church, Phenrongwibou Thiumai, Dilip Thiumai, Phenrilung Chawang and



Kaliwangbou Abonmai from Kongsakul (Konsaram), a Naga village, who were reportedly abducted at Leilon Vaiphei Kuki village in Kangpokpi district on May 13, 2026.

At the same time, the church body also earnestly appealed for the safe and unconditional release of the fourteen Kuki civilians re-

portedly abducted in Senapati district by Nagas in the aftermath of the recent tensions.

It said the suffering of innocent civilians, irrespective of community, denomination or identity, deeply wounds the social fabric of Manipur and prolongs fear, mistrust and collective trauma.

The church body then mourned

and strongly condemned the tragic killings of Rev Vumthang Sithou, Rev Kaigoulun Lhouvum and Pastor Paogoulun Sithou of the Thadou Baptist Association India (TBAI) and United Baptist Council (UBC), as well as the killing of Wilson Thanga of the Chiru community.

"We are equally saddened by the

abduction of two Catholic (Salesian) trainee priests, Panmei Aching Albert and Poji Kuvise Peter (Nagas) from Sapormeina in Kangpokpi district, Manipur on May 13, although they were released on May 15, 2026, after civil society organisations and the church intervened," it said, adding, "Such acts of violence against religious leaders and innocent civilians undermine the moral foundations of humanity, coexistence, justice and peace."

The Church of South India (CSI) Medak Diocese, Hyderabad, then urged the Government of Manipur and the Government of India to ensure impartial, transparent and humane investigations into all incidents of abduction and killings, without bias.

It said justice, dialogue and reconciliation are essential for restoring trust and rebuilding peace among communities.

As people of a faith that believes in forgiveness, the church body said it believes that lasting peace cannot emerge through vengeance, hatred or violence, but through compassion, mutual respect, justice and collective healing. "We continue to pray for the safe return of all abducted persons and for justice, peace and harmony to prevail in Manipur," it added. (NNN)

Liquor permit on medical grounds requires stringent verification in dry Mizoram: Official



AIZAWL, June 7: A stringent multi-tier verification process is required to secure 'Red Card', a special permit system to possess and consume liquor on medical grounds in dry Mizoram, an official said on Sunday.

Mizoram's Excise and Narcotics department had last week announced the rollout of the 'Red Card' permit and invited applications from people whose health conditions require consumption of liquor.

The department has so far not received applications seeking such permission, the official said.

To qualify for the permit, an applicant must submit a doctor's prescription certifying the need for alcohol consumption as part of medical treatment, he said. Such a prescription will be thoroughly scrutinised by the district medical superintendent concerned before granting final clearance, he said.

The 'Red Card' permit will be issued only to those who clear this

verification process, the official said.

The excise department emphasised that the scheme is intended for genuine medical cases and not as a means to bypass Mizoram's liquor regulations.

Under the proposed system, a 'Red Card' permit will be valid for one year and will cost ₹ 5,000 annually.

Cardholders will be permitted to purchase liquor only in quantities prescribed by their doctors, the official said.

The 'Red Card' provision forms part of the state's regulated approach to liquor control, allowing limited access to alcohol for individuals whose medical conditions may warrant its use, he said.

The excise department has opened a store in its Aizawl office, where liquor that has been seized by enforcement agencies and subsequently cleared for disposal by the courts will be sold to cardholders at ₹ 75 per cent lower than the prevailing market price. (PTI)

Indian Army organises youth empowerment drive under project NAVBHARAT



HT Bureau

LIKABALI, June 7: The Indian Army's Spearhead Division of Spear Corps successfully organised a dynamic youth empowerment initiative under Project NAVBHARAT at Likabali on Sunday. The event aimed to motivate and inspire the local community, especially the youth to become responsible citizens contributing towards a Viksit Bharat.

More than 250 students, along with teachers from Likabali and the neighbouring Silapathar region, participated enthusiastically in the programme.

The primary objective of the initiative was to foster national integration and instill a deep sense of patriotism among the younger generation. Throughout the day, participants engaged in a series of motivational activities, including specialised lectures and documentary screenings showcasing the rigorous training, discipline, bravery and sacrifices of Indian Army personnel.

The sessions highlighted inspiring stories of heroism and selfless service, encouraging students to contribute positively to society and embrace the spirit of national service. The event also provided attendees with a rare opportunity to gain firsthand insight into the Indian Army's preparedness, operational capabilities and dedication to safeguarding the nation.

Adding to the excitement, a comprehensive static display of modern weapons and military equipment drew immense curiosity and admiration from the visiting students.

Project NAVBHARAT concluded on a high note, significantly strengthening the bond between civilians and the armed forces. By showcasing the Indian Army's core values of courage, discipline and dedication, the initiative left a lasting impression on the youth, inspiring pride, purpose and a deeper sense of national responsibility.

Nagaland overhauls civil services exam pattern



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, June 7: The Nagaland government has effected a major overhaul of the examination pattern and syllabus for Nagaland Civil Service (NCS), Nagaland Police Service (NPS), Nagaland Secretariat Service (NSS) and Allied Services examinations by amending the Nagaland Public Service Commission (State Civil & Other Services) Recruitment Rules, 2008. The revised rules broadly align the state's examination structure with the UPSC Civil Services Examination while incorporating Nagaland-specific components.

The amendments titled the Nagaland Public Service Commission (State Civil & Other Services) Recruitment (11th Amendment) Rules, 2026, will come into force prospectively from the next recruitment cycle or advertisement, according to a state personnel & administrative reforms department (Personnel B Branch) notification, dated June 4.

The notification said the Preliminary Examination, under the amended Rule 14(1) will consist of a single objective-type paper carrying 200 marks with 100 multiple-choice questions.

As per the new rules, negative marking has been introduced, with one-third of the marks allotted to a question deducted for every incorrect answer. The examination will be of two hours' duration.

The preliminary examination syllabus covers general science, history of India and Nagaland, geography, Indian polity and economy, the Indian national movement, general mental ability and current events.

The Main Examination has been restructured into six papers carrying a total of 1,200 marks. A new paper, General Studies-Nagaland has also been introduced, focusing on the state's history, culture, geography, economy, polity and governance, society and current affairs.

Tezu hosts first Amar Chitra Katha storytelling contest

HT Bureau

TEZU, June 7: Book lovers in Tezu were treated to a feast of storytelling at the first Amar Chitra Katha Storytelling Contest, titled "A Hero (ine) I Admire", as students of Classes VI to X from six schools in Lohit district competed to regale and inspire the audience on Saturday evening. The event was organised by Bamboosa Library and the Forum of Library Activists to pay tribute to renowned Amar Chitra Katha scriptwriter late Kamala Chandrakant and journalist Myppalli Chandrakant of Mumbai.

Dr Asmi Mega, DTO, Tezu and Arindam Sarkar, teacher at GHSS No 2, served as judges for the competition. Appreciating the spirited performances of the participants, Dr Mega said that the experience gained through participation in such events would benefit students throughout their lives. Arindam Sarkar, himself an active library activist, observed that similar training sessions in schools could significantly enhance students' learning skills. DACO Tezu Bitchey Rjijju, who attended as a special guest, congratulated the participants on their excellent performances and advised them to speak from their hearts rather than merely memorising stories.

Introducing the eminent Amar Chitra Katha writer Kamala Chandrakant, the Coordinator of the Lohit Youth Library Network fondly recalled his five-decade-long association with her and the affectionate mentorship he received during his early writing years. He said that "Kamala Aunty" was an ever-energetic personality and that her encouragement had enabled him to write the story of Kanaklata for an Amar Chitra Katha title in the early 1980s. He noted that it was the first time Kanaklata's inspiring story had appeared in a popular national children's publication. He further added that even after the establishment of Bamboosa Library, she remained a passionate supporter of the youth library move-



ment. In the keenly contested junior category, Solong Krong of Class VII from Nimkay Vidya Niketan won the first prize. The second prize was jointly awarded to Ome Olung Tatak and Kalung Odi, both Class VI students of VKV Sunpura, while the third prize went to Rehanso Kathak of Nimkay Vidya Niketan.

In the senior category, Arpita Ram of Class X, GHSS No 1, secured the first prize with an impressive narration on Dr Varghese Kurien. The second prize was won by Kanyan Jami Kham of Class X, VKV Sunpura, while Asni Yun of Class IX, VKV Tafrogam, secured the third position.

Proposing the vote of thanks, Manisha Halai, a senior volunteer and accomplished storyteller, expressed gratitude to Maharishikaa Preeti of Goa, daughter of Kamala Chandrakant, for graciously sponsoring the annual contest in memory of her distinguished parents. She also appreciated the teachers and parents for encouraging children to participate in innovative activities such as storytelling competitions, noting that such an event was being organised in Tezu after a gap of nearly a decade.

Security forces urge Manipur villagers to sensitise youths to not get carried away by violence

IMPHAL, June 7: Security forces have asked village authorities and civil society in Manipur's Ukhrul to sensitise youths to not get carried away by violent incidents in other districts, as they carried out a combing operation a day after three people were killed in a gun attack in Kangpokpi.

"To prevent any spillover of recent violence in Kotlen, security

forces undertook a combing operation on Saturday in areas around Litan, Mahadev and Sinakeithel" and highway areas in Tangkhul Naga-majority Ukhrul district which shares boundaries with Kuki-majority Kangpokpi district," police said in a statement.

The development came in the wake of the killing of three civilians in a gun attack at Loibol

Khullen village in Kangpokpi district on Friday. Police said villages of both communities were patrolled jointly and bunkers were traced and dismantled.

"Village authorities and civil society organisations were approached for their essential support and were assured of the presence of security forces in the area to ward off any threats", it said. (PTI)

'The Arch' inaugurated at Jorabat as North East's largest dream spaces destination

HT Correspondent

JORABAT, June 7: A landmark moment in the building materials, furniture and furnishing industry of North East India unfolded with the grand joint inauguration of Sani Steels Pvt Ltd, DreamHouse Furniture and House of Homes at "The Arch", Jorabat on Sunday.

On the occasion, the event was graced by several distinguished dignitaries, including Chief Guest MLA AL Hek from the Meghalaya Government, National People's Party President James R Sangma, Assam's Boko-Chaygaon MLA Raju Mushahary, along with MPs, MLAs, political leaders and senior administrative officials from the Governments of Assam and Meghalaya.

Spread across 65,000 sq. ft., "The Arch" is envisioned as one of the largest and most comprehensive destinations for creating dream spaces in the region. Bringing together three industry-leading entities under one roof, the destination offers an integrated experi-



ence where customers can explore everything required to design, build, furnish and beautify homes and commercial spaces.

With a legacy dating back to 1967, Sani Steels Pvt Ltd showcases a wide range of premium building materials, tiles, sanitary-ware, bath fittings, wellness solu-

tions, surface products and architectural innovations. DreamHouse Furniture presents contemporary, premium and bespoke furniture collections, while House of Homes offers curated furnishings, décor and lifestyle solutions aimed at transforming homes into homes.

For the first time in North East

India, customers will have access to a unified destination where building materials, furniture and furnishings come together seamlessly, enabling them to conceptualise and create complete living and commercial spaces under one roof.

"The Arch" has been designed as a one-stop hub for builders, ar-

chitects, interior designers, contractors, developers and end users seeking inspiration, quality and convenience. Whether building a new home, renovating an existing space or designing a commercial project, visitors can find end-to-end solutions backed by expert guidance and globally inspired brands.

Speaking on the occasion, the management stated: "Our vision is simple — to create a destination where every individual can bring their dream space to life. By bringing together Sani Steels Pvt Ltd, DreamHouse Furniture and House of Homes under one roof, we are creating an ecosystem that caters to every aspect of modern living and design."

The inauguration marks a significant milestone in the evolution of the region's construction and interior design industry and is expected to establish Jorabat as a key destination for architecture, interiors and lifestyle solutions in North East India.

NFR unloads 1,034 freight rakes in May



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 7: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) continued its strong freight performance in May 2026, recording a notable mark in unloading activity. During the month, 1,034 freight rakes were unloaded across the zone, marking a steady start for the zone in FY 2026-27.

Throughout the month, NFR ensured the smooth transportation of essential and industrial commodities, including food grains, food-grade items, fertilisers, sugar, SNTP coal, salt, tank consignments and other goods. These consignments were efficiently handled at various goods sheds across its jurisdiction, ensuring timely supply and operational reliability.

A significant share of the freight traffic was dedicated to meeting the requirements of the Northeastern states. Assam accounted for the highest unloading with 557 rakes, comprising 271 rakes of essential commodities and 286 rakes of non-essential commodities, underscoring the vital role of

Railways in supporting public distribution systems, industrial activities and daily consumer needs. During the same period, 74 rakes were unloaded in Tripura, 34 rakes in Nagaland, 20 rakes in Manipur, 10 rakes in Arunachal Pradesh, 8 rakes in Mizoram and 1 rake in Meghalaya.

In addition, West Bengal recorded the unloading of 196 rakes, while Bihar accounted for 134 rakes comprising both essential and non-essential commodities, further strengthening regional supply chains, trade connectivity and economic activities across the region.

The movement of essential commodities and industrial goods remains crucial for meeting public needs and supporting economic activities across the region. Through close monitoring and coordinated efforts by field units, NFR has improved turnaround time and unloading efficiency, reaffirming its commitment to reliable freight operations and the socio-economic development of the Northeast.

Suthar brilliant on debut as India take control against Afghanistan

MULLANPUR, June 7: Debutant Manav Suthar's classical left-arm spin bowling was a beacon of hope for a bright future as his three wickets gave India complete control on the second day of their one-off Test against Afghanistan here on Sunday.

With mercury soaring, India declared their first innings at 564 for 8 once Washington Sundar scored a pressure-free half-century while adding 54 useful runs with Suthar (28 off 41 balls).

At stumps, Afghanistan were tottering at 113 for 5 with Suthar recording figures of 3 for 21 in 15.5 overs.

Prasidh Krishna (2/27 in 7 overs) was the other wicket-taker. Hosts, now, are ahead by 451 runs.

Having warmed up nicely with a short yet sweet maiden Test knock, Suthar got into the act straightaway after being summoned to bowl the last over before tea.

He removed opener Abdul Malik, who wanted to sweep his way out of trouble after looking clueless facing first three deliveries.

A classical action and the old school diagonal run-up of bowling to right-handers while cutting between the umpire and stumps, the 23-year-old from Rajasthan's Sri Ganganagar was a delight to watch.

In times when spin bowling is



increasingly starting to become more of a restrictive weapon, thanks to the mushrooming T20 leagues, Suthar brought a lot of freshness while sticking to basics -- flight and turn.

Suthar has a high release point and his main attributes included putting multiple revs (revolutions) on the ball. He could hang the ball for an extra second in the air and also get some drift before it turns away from the right-hand batters.

The 23-year-old has a repetitive action and the pitch map on TV showed that he could land the ball on the same spot and make it do three different things.

A few would turn more, a few would go straight with extra bounce forcing batters to go on

back-foot, and a few others were classic arm balls that come in with the angle.

The wicket of the Afghanistan opener was one which he bowled straight and the ball bounced a tad extra making Malik's sweep look like an ugly hoick.

In the case of Rahmanullah Gurbaz, a former KKR opening batter, he simply didn't allow him to come on the front-foot.

He bowled a few that went straight and Gurbaz defended. Then from the same spot, he bowled one that dipped late and then turned away kissing the edge of Gurbaz's willow into Sai Sudharsan's hands in the second slip.

Suthar's third and final wicket of the day came when the ball

stopped and bounced with Afsar Zazai closing the face of the bat and the loopy leading edge resulted in an easy return catch.

Skipper Shubman Gill, very rightly allowed him to bowl unchanged for 13 overs from one end while shuffling between Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh and Kuldeep Yadav at the other end.

If Suthar's impressive initiation into Test arena is any indication, Indian selectors can hope for a smooth transition as and when Ravindra Jadeja is phased out from red ball format.

Earlier, Rishabh Pant answered his critics in the best possible manner with a stroke-filled 81 while Afghanistan pacer Mohammad Saleem enjoyed the fruits of labour in punishing weather with figures of 6 for 140.

In-front of a sparse Sunday crowd, Pant did play his signature strokes but also curbed his natural instinct to go after each delivery, treating each ball on its merit during his 121-ball knock that had six boundaries and three sixes.

He should have completed his century but off-spinner Hashmatullah Shahidi slowed the pace considerably.

Pant charged down the track but couldn't fully reach to the pitch of the delivery as the lofted hit ballooned up for a simple catch for Azmatullah Omarzai.

For Afghanistan, their IPL star Omarzai was distinctly unlucky.

He was impressive with the second new ball, beating the bat on a number of occasions without much luck.

In fact, Pant, like KL Rahul did on Day 1, also edged one but no one from the Afghanistan team appealed for caught behind. The replays, though, showed a snick.

In the first hour of the second morning, Gill (126 off 177 balls) was dismissed by Saleem (4/109 in 20 overs), who bowled a beauty to get rid of the Indian skipper.

It was pitched on fuller length on off-stump channel drawing Gill forward and then there was a hint of outward movement, as the ball took the edge of his bat to end a 169-run stand.

Dhruv Jurel (19 off 20 balls) played a few beautiful square of the wicket shots but Saleem got one to reverse as Jurel decided to leave the ball on length only to find his off-stump pegged back.

However, one dismissal that left the crowd high and dry was Pant's as they were expecting some more fireworks from him once the spinners came into operation.

Washington and Suthar added 54 for the seventh wicket to take the team past the 500 run mark.

With the bowlers tiring, Washington calmly rotated the strike and hit the occasional six. Just after he completed his half-century, Gill signalled for declaration. (PTI)

Pragg is more dangerous than Carlsen: Pravin Thipsay



NEW DELHI, June 7: First Indian to win the prestigious Norway Chess title, Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa is a more dangerous player than even World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen and the most improved chess player in the world, according to Arjuna awardee Grandmaster Pravin Thipsay.

Pragganandhaa's historic triumph at Norway Chess 2026 has reinforced his status among the game's elite, with Thipsay rating him as India's strongest player at present, ahead of reigning world champion D. Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi.

"Pragganandhaa is the best Indian chess player right now. On current form, he can be considered one of the most dangerous opponents in the world, even more dangerous than Carlsen," Thipsay told PTI in an interview.

He pointed to Pragganandhaa's impressive record against the Norwegian legend, noting that few players have enjoyed such success against Carlsen in recent years.

Thipsay described the Norway Chess victory as one of the finest achievements by an Indian player in recent years.

He particularly praised Pragganandhaa's finish to the tournament, where he won his final four rounds against opponents rated above 2750, including Carlsen and Gukesh.

"What a great comeback. After a somewhat disappointing 2025, he has produced something truly extraordinary. Indian chess needed a performance like this," he said.

According to Thipsay, the 20-year-old's biggest achievement has been the transformation of his playing style.

Once known primarily as a sharp attacking player who relied heavily on opening preparation, Pragganandhaa has developed into a far more versatile competitor capable of excelling in a variety of positions.

"Three or four years ago, he was feared for his attacking chess. But opponents gradually

learned how to neutralise those strengths. Over the last few months, he has added new dimensions to his game, including improved defence, positional understanding and tactical accuracy," Thipsay explained.

He compared the evolution of Pragganandhaa's style to that of former world champion Anatoly Karpov and Carlsen, players who focus less on gaining opening advantages and more on gradually outplaying opponents through superior understanding and consistency.

Thipsay believes India currently possesses three genuine world-title contenders in Pragganandhaa, Gukesh and Arjun Erigaisi.

While all three are capable of becoming world champion, he feels Pragganandhaa holds a slight edge at present because of his recent form and ability to consistently defeat players of equal or greater strength.

"It's very important to maintain form for a long period. Like Kasparov was the strongest, highest rated player in the world for 18 years. If our youngsters gain that sort of consistency than singular performance, then it would really be great."

Former Grandmaster Dibyendu Barua also praised Pragganandhaa's achievement, calling the Norway Chess title a remarkable milestone.

He said the victory would provide additional confidence and motivation for future tournaments.

Barua, however, stressed that Pragganandhaa, Gukesh and Arjun are all performing at a similar level and represent the future of Indian chess. He noted that their rivalry is pushing each player to improve and helping India maintain its position among the world's leading chess nations.

"The competition between them is bringing out the best in all three. Sometimes Arjun will win, sometimes Pragganandhaa, sometimes Gukesh. We are witnessing a golden era for Indian chess," Barua said. (PTI)

IGU names six-member team for Asian Games in Japan



NEW DELHI, June 7: Yuvraj Sandhu and Aditi Ashok were among a six-member Indian golf team named on Sunday for the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, later this year.

A LPGA Tour regular, Aditi won an individual silver medal in the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

Sandhu (World No. 451), Veer Ahlawat (World No. 558) and Saptak Talwar (World No. 576) are the three male members while Aditi (World No. 135), Diksha Dagar (World No. 221) and Pranavi Urs (World No. 270) are the three female players named by Indian Golf Union (IGU).

The golf events for both men and women are scheduled from September 30 to October 3 at the Kasugai Country Club East Course.

The IGU, led by Brijinder Singh, said the entries were decided as per its selection policy for Asian Games.

"We have got a supremely talented and efficient squad which has someone like Yuvraj Sandhu, who won seven times

on the PGTI circuit last year. Then there are the likes of Aditi Ashok and Diksha Dagar who have won multiple times on the Ladies European Tour (LET). The entries were decided purely through World Rankings. I am confident that the Indian team will finish on the podium this time," Singh said in a release. India has had an illustrious history in golf at the Asian Games, clinching three gold and three silver medals so far.

The Indian quartet of Lakshman Singh, Rishi Narain, Amit Luthra and Rajeev Mohta won the team gold back in 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi. Lakshman Singh also bagged an individual gold medal.

Shiv Kapur won the individual gold at the 2002 Busan Asian Games. At the 2006 Doha Asian Games, the Indian team comprising Anirban Lahiri, Gaganjeet Bhullar and Joseph Chakola clinched silver.

In the 2010 Guangzhou Asian Games, the Indian team of Rashid Khan, Rahul Bajaj, Abhinav Lohan and Abhijit Singh Chadha won the silver medal. (PTI)

I don't have to change my personality for responsibility as a captain: Shreyas Iyer

MUMBAI, June 7: India's T20I skipper Shreyas Iyer on Sunday said he has always loved facing challenges growing up and the new responsibility of leading the country in the shortest format doesn't mean he has to change his personality.

The 31-year-old Iyer was on Saturday named the captain of the Indian T20I side, replacing Suryakumar Yadav who had led the national team to the T20 World Cup title in March.

Iyer said he would want to remain the same person who grew up in a challenging cricket environment in Mumbai.

"I don't have to change my personality. I have to be the same person how I was before, and not try to be someone else or be under someone's shadow," Iyer said at an event here.

"I obviously loved challenges growing up, especially being from Mumbai, where the cricket is pretty big, competition is high. Every other kid on the street, they want to represent Mumbai."

He said his mindset was always about winning, against everyone that he challenged.

"My mindset was always about winning, against everyone that I challenged so whether it's about learning or winning that is secondary, but more fun you have growing up, the more competitive nature you have, especially while you play cricket or any other sport in general," said Iyer.

"I think that takes you to another level and you want



to take that sort of responsibility (and) even when I've got this job right now, or a responsibility as a captain, it's a great challenge at the same time," he said.

Meanwhile, former India captain and BCCI president Sourav Ganguly said Iyer has earned the role of national team captaincy.

Iyer, who is set to lead India in Ireland for two T20Is as his first assignment as skipper, had played the last of his 51 T20Is in December 2023 before losing his spot.

The right-handed batter comes into the side and the middle-order as a like-for-like replacement of former skipper Suryakumar Yadav, who was also dropped from the Indian squad.

"Shreyas has done well, he has earned it. I would not say that the removal of Suryakumar Yadav is unfair. The selectors have made a decision," Ganguly said. (PTI)

Veer Ahlawat struggles in third round of Swiss Challenge

LUCERNE (SWITZERLAND), June 7: After setting a course record in the second round, Veer Ahlawat could not sustain the momentum, dropping 12 positions to tied 13th after the third round at the Swiss Challenge at Golf Sempach here.

Ahlawat carded 3-over 74 to be 9-under par after three rounds.

He was six shots behind the leader, George Bloor (67), who was heading into the final round with a total score of 15-under par.

Ahlawat began his third round with early birdies on the first and fourth holes before dropping a shot on the fifth.

He would pick up the stroke on the sixth before dropping two shots on the seventh with his

first double bogey of the day. He followed it with his second bogey on the eighth hole.

On the back nine Ahlawat dropped a second double on the 15th before picking up one shot on the 17th hole only to give it back with a bogey on the 18th.

Ahlawat, who has yet to win a title on the Hotel Planner Tour will need to find the magic from his second round once more if he hopes to challenge for the title this week.

Bloor carded a round of 4-under 67 to become the sole leader heading into the final round.

Bloor is one stroke clear of Hamish Brown and Matthew Southgate. The third round by Bloor included five birdies and one bogey. (PTI)

Priyank Panchal-led Sportsversity launches India's maiden athlete-first sports education platform

MUMBAI, June 7: Former India A skipper Priyank Panchal has helmed the launch of a unique initiative Sportsversity, an athlete-first sports education platform with focus on careers beyond the playing field. Panchal, the Strategic Advisor of Sportsversity, had a distinguished career in first-class cricket for Gujarat, scoring 8856 runs from 127 matches at an average of 45.18 with 29 hundreds and 34 fifties. "After playing more than 100 first-class matches, representing India and having the privilege of leading India A, I felt it was time to embrace a fresh challenge after retirement," Panchal, who called it a day after the 2024-25 domestic season, said in a statement. "Sport has given experiences, relationships

and perspectives that have shaped who I am. That is what attracted me to Sportsversity. The opportunity to help athletes and aspiring professionals understand the broader spectrum of careers within sport is something that genuinely excites me. "Through Sportsversity, we want to equip them with the knowledge, skills and industry exposure needed to build meaningful careers within the sports ecosystem," he added. The platform launches with five specialised programmes covering Athlete Wellness & Performance Science, Sports Media, Content & Commentary, Sports Business & Entrepreneurship, Athlete Branding, Career & Finance, and The Sports Family - Parenting & Finance. (PTI)

Nayanika Sanga lead Indian golfer in Arkea Ladies Open

MONTAUBAN (FRANCE), June 7: Nayanika Sanga played her second successive even par round to be the lead Indian golfer after second of the Arkea Montauban Ladies Open on the LET Access Series here.

Starting the day on T-21 at Golf de Montauban, Nayanika played herself into the top 20 with one round left to play. She is now T-18 with an even par score. Saanvi Somu (72-73) is the other Indian player in the field. She carded 1-over 73 to drop six places and find herself in T-27.

Saanvi has a total score of 1-over par after two rounds. She made two bogeys and one birdie in her second round.

Genevieve Ling, Sarah Skovgaard Bils, Marine Griffaut and Lucie Malchirand shared the lead heading into the final round with a score of 6-under par. Nayanika Sanga had an early bogey on her second round on the second hole before she recovered the shot with birdie on the seventh hole. (PTI)

We were superstitious, hence didn't come to watch second day's play: Suthar's father Jagdish

MULLANPUR, June 7: Jagdish Suthar, a retired Physical Education teacher from Rajasthan's Sri Ganganagar district, had travelled all the way to Mullanpur with his family to watch his elder child Manav make his Test debut but left for home without watching his son's on-field exploits on second day of the match against Afghanistan on Sunday.

Suthar made a brilliant debut as he had the Afghanistan batters tied in knots with figures of 3 for 21 in 15.5 overs.

"Yes, me, my wife and my daughter Mansi (Manav's younger sister) had come to watch his debut. I can't describe how it felt seeing him get the Test Cap yesterday. However today we had come back home as we were all nervous and a bit superstitious watching him live in action from the stadium," the soft-spoken Jagdish Suthar told PTI during an exclusive interaction on the second day of the Test.

A man of few words, Jagdish was very reluctant to take any credit for his son's success on the cricket field which has now culminated into donning the national colours.



"It is completely Manav's hard work and the hours that he has put into practice. He would leave home for training in the morning and return late in the evening. It is his

credit and his childhood coach Dheeraj Sharma to whom we are all indebted. Manav learnt all his cricket under him," Suthar senior said. (PTI)