

GST cuts to boost economy, aid citizens

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Shashikala paid ₹450 cr in old notes to buy sugar factory in TN: CBI

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AGENDA

SCO: Shifting Fulcrum to the East



PIONEER IN SHORT

**PM MODI MEETS PRESIDENT**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. Her office shared a picture of the meeting in a social media post. "Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan," the President's office said. The meeting comes days after Modi returned from his visit to Japan and China. He had participated in the 25th meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), held in Tianjin, China, from August 31 to September 1, 2025. The Summit witnessed productive discussions on SCO development strategy, reform of global governance, counter-terrorism, peace and security, economic and financial cooperation and sustainable development.

**SIX PERSONS KILLED IN GUJARAT**  
Six persons died after the cable wire of a cargo ropeway snapped at Pavagadh Hill in Gujarat's Panchmahal district on Saturday, officials said. The incident at Pavagadh Hill, which is famous for the Mahakalika Temple at the summit, occurred around 3pm, they said. Superintendent of Police Hareish Dudhat confirmed the six deaths and said police and fire brigade teams were at the spot for rescue and relief operations. The ropeway, meant to carry different items, was going downhill with six persons when the incident occurred, Panchmahal Collector Ajay Dahiya said.

**CHAR DHAM YATRA SUSPENSION LIFTED**  
With the State witnessing a respite from heavy rains, the State administration has lifted the Char Dham Yatra suspension it had ordered on September 1 for five days. The district authorities in Rudraprayag, Chamoli and Uttarkashi districts, where the Char Dham are situated have been authorised to take decisions on permitting or halting the pilgrimage. The Yatra to Badrinath and Kedarnath was permitted on Saturday while Yamunotri was open for local pilgrims. The Yatra to Gangotri remains suspended. Talking to *The Pioneer*, Garhwal Commissioner Vinay Shankar Pandey said that the suspension ordered on the Yatra till September 5 has been withdrawn. "The district magistrates concerned have been authorised to permit or halt the Yatra considering local conditions. The pilgrimage to Badrinath and Kedarnath was permitted while local devotees were allowed in Yamunotri on Saturday while the Yatra to Gangotri was not permitted," he said.

**STUDENTS HIRE CHOPPER TO REACH EXAM CENTRE**  
Four BEd students from Rajasthan hired a helicopter to reach their exam centre in Munsiyari here as landslides caused by heavy rain have left many roads blocked in Uttarakhand. Residents of Rajasthan's Balotra town, these students of Uttarakhand Open University had to reach RS Tolia PG College in Munsiyari to take the exam. **FULL REPORT ON P7**

# Odisha's semiconductor dream faces setback

As UK-based company shifts to Andhra Pradesh

**RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar**

The Odisha Government's efforts to attract semiconductor industries received a setback as a UK-based company, which had signed an MoU to set up a chip manufacturing plant in Chhatrapur, Ganjam district, decided to relocate the project to Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh.

The company, SRAM & MRAM, had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Odisha Government on March 29, 2023 committing an initial investment of Rs 300 crore for the first phase of the semiconductor plant, which was expected to generate 5,000 jobs. Chhatrapur was chosen

after considering multiple locations for its proximity to National Highway-16, Gopalpur Port and Rangeilunda Airport, along with adequate water availability.

During project planning, company chairman Guruji Kumaran Swami held multiple meetings with the district administration, and the then district Collector Dibya Jyoti Parida assured full administrative support. The project was expected to begin operations by 2025 with plans to expand investments to Rs 2,00,000 crore by 2027 for chip production targeting TVs, smartphones, laptops, ACs and ATMs.

However, the company has now signed a new MoU with the Andhra Pradesh Government, led by Chief

Minister Chandrababu Naidu, to set up the plant in Amaravati with an initial investment of Rs 25,000 crore. Senior officials of the company had discussions with Andhra Pradesh's Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav, MLA Prashanthi Reddy Vemireddy and MP Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy in May and June regarding the project relocation.

Officials in Odisha expressed disappointment noting that despite the State's incentives and promises, the company chose a neighbouring State to implement the project.

The relocation raises concerns about Odisha's competitiveness in attracting high-tech industries despite repeated efforts to establish a semiconductor ecosystem.

# BJP to launch mega plantation drive on Modi birthday

**RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar**

Odisha is all set to witness a major environmental initiative as the BJP plans to plant 75 lakh saplings across the country on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 75th birthday, September 17. Marked as "Seva Diwas", this year's celebrations will kick off the "Seva Paksha" running from September 17 to October 2.

BJP State president Manmohan Samal, speaking at a "One Tree for Mother Workshop" here, said the campaign, led by the BJP's

Kisan Morcha, aims to address environmental damage caused by rapid deforestation. "Planting saplings is not just an act of greenery but a step to combat climate change and preserve our environment for future generations," he emphasised.

Samal also pointed to the government's commitment to farmers noting that raising the MSP for paddy has doubled their incomes. "From irrigation to welfare schemes, the BJP government ensures that development reaches every farm and farmer," he added.

The workshop was inaugurated by Deputy Chief Minister and Agriculture Minister KV Singh Deo, who called farmers not merely food providers but architects of the nation's future. BJP workers would lead the sapling plantation drive from villages to cities spreading the message of service and environmental responsibility.

Minister Krushna Chandra Patra said local agricultural produce exhibitions would be organised, successful farmers honoured and campaigns like "Vocal for Lo-

cal" promoted. BJP Kisan Morcha State president Maheshwar Sahu urged members to plant saplings at every household during the Seva Paksha, with district-level workshops scheduled for September 9 and 10.

The workshop saw participation from senior party leaders, including State general secretary Dr Jatini Mahanty, Kisan Morcha vice-president Suryanarayan Mahapatra, secretaries Samir Patra and Manoj Sahu and treasurer Bishwajit Swain.

## Amid good monsoon State ensures timely fertiliser supply to farmers

**RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar**

Odisha is taking proactive steps to ensure farmers get timely fertiliser supply during the ongoing kharif season. Chief Secretary Dr Arabinda Kumar Padhee reviewed the availability and distribution of fertilisers with all district Collectors through a virtual meeting at Lokseva Bhawan on Saturday.

Highlighting the importance of adequate supply during this year's good monsoon, Dr Padhee directed strict monitoring to ensure fertilisers reach farmers in the required quantities. Senior officials from the Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment Department, Cooperation Department and district administrations attended the review.

As of September 5, Odisha has received 11.33 lakh metric tonnes of fertilisers, including urea, for Kharif 2025.

## Under Safe City Project Bhubaneswar to get 1,500 AI-powered cameras

**RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar**

Bhubaneswar is set to become safer and smarter with the launch of the Safe City Project aimed at strengthening crime prevention, traffic management and women's safety in the capital. The Bhubaneswar Smart City Limited (BSCL) has invited tenders to instal 1,500 AI-enabled cameras in the first phase of the project with a total of 3,000 cameras planned across the city.

The initiative comes after a survey conducted jointly by BSCL and the city police identifying black spots, crime-prone areas and congested zones. A high-level meeting last month, chaired by the Chief Minister's Advisor Prakash Mishra, laid down directions for a fear-free city, better traffic management, crowd control and women's security. Senior police officials, the Transport Commis-

sioner and Smart City representatives participated in the meeting.

The AI cameras will be installed at key locations, including airports, railway stations, bus terminals, Secretariat Road and major traffic intersections. Special focus will be given to women's safety with cameras to be installed at Rama Devi University, City Women's College, government girls' schools and Unit-2 Haat.

Equipped with facial recognition systems (FRS), the cameras will be linked to the National and State Crime Records Bureaus (NCRB and SCRB) allowing instant alerts if a criminal enters the city. The system will automatically notify the PCR and local police for immediate action.

The project also integrates traffic solutions through the Intelligent Traffic Management System (ITMS). Signals at four major intersections will automatically adjust

## In city Accused held after 8 months for woman's murder

**PNS ■ Bhubaneswar**

The Commissionerate Police, on Saturday, arrested one Debasish Bisoi in connection with the alleged abduction and murder of Nirupama Parida, a resident of Bharatpur in Bhubaneswar. The arrest comes eight months after the incident occurred.

On January 24, 2025, Parida was allegedly abducted by Bisoi from Bharatpur. The two travelled to Nayagarh, where an argument broke out between them. Following the quarrel, Bisoi took Parida to the Tapang mining area in Khordha, where he pushed her into a water body, leading to her death. Bisoi then

allegedly fled the scene and had been untraceable since.

Police said a missing person report was filed on January 27 by the father of a child who was being looked after by Parida stating that she had been missing from January 24.

Police conducted an extensive investigation over several months tracking movements, collecting evidence and reviewing witness statements. Finally, police nabbed Bisoi and took him into custody.

Following sustained interrogation, Bisoi confessed to committing the crime. He subsequently led police to the Tapang site, where authorities recovered Parida's body and reconstructed the events surrounding her death.

## In city Minor boy drowns in canal while shooting reel

**PNS ■ Bhubaneswar**

A minor boy died after drowning in a canal while shooting a reel in Bhubaneswar on Friday. The deceased was identified as Prakash Sethi (12) of Damana village.

Prakash along with some other friends had gone to the canal to take bath. Locals asked them to abstain from gimmicks as the water flow was very strong due to incessant rains.

Eyewitnesses claimed that the boys did not pay heed to warnings and wanted to film a slow motion reel of jumping into the canal. The group went ahead, and one after the other jumped into the canal. While some of them managed to come back to the canal bank, Prakash slipped into a deeper section of the water and could not swim back.

Onlookers raised an alarm realising he might have drowned. Fire Service personnel arrived at the spot and started a search operation. After an hour-long search, they found Prakash at the far end of the canal bank. Since he was unconscious, fire personnel rushed him to hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival.

## In Champua Denied mobile phone, girl hangs self

**PNS ■ Champua**

A girl of Ramla Kabragutu Sahi under the Champua police station in Keonjhar district allegedly committed suicide after she was denied to use the mobile phone by her parent on Saturday.

Kishore Kumar Hesa did not allow his daughter to use the mobile phone as she most

of the time which busy in it. As a result, she hanged herself with a scarf in their house.

After getting information, Kishore immediately reached home and rushed the girl to the Champua Sub-District Hospital. However, the doctor there declared her dead. Later, the deceased's father reported the incident to the Champua police.

## Odisha faces GST hurdles as fuel is outside tax net

**RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar**

Petrol and diesel could not be included under the GST regime in the recent GST Council meeting due to opposition from Kerala and Karnataka. While the Centre sought to compensate States for potential revenue losses, the proposal was blocked sparking concerns over rising fuel prices in Odisha instead of any reduction.

Former State Finance Minister and senior Congress leader Panchanan Kanungo on Saturday said the new GST rules could result in significant revenue losses for Odisha despite the government's claim of earning Rs 18,000 crore. He criticised the Centre for failing to implement a unified tax policy in over a decade, leaving the common people bur-

dened with complex tax structures and inconsistent fuel pricing.

Kanungo added that crude oil price fluctuations are being used to determine petrol and diesel rates benefitting corporates while ordinary citizens suffer. He also highlighted the government's failure to simplify GST over the past eight years, resulting in unnecessary complications for traders and consumers alike.

Senior journalist Rajan Kumar Mahanty recalled that Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi had earlier termed GST as a "Gabbar Singh Tax" due to its impact on the public. While some amendments have been introduced, Mahanty questioned how the government would compensate for losses caused by previous policy decisions.

## Govt fast-tracks Pipili-Konark corridor, Puri road revamp

**RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar**

The Konark greenfield corridor, a 40-km four-lane highway between Pipili and the Sun Temple town, is set to become the centrepiece of Odisha's road modernisation push with the government on Saturday deciding to fast-track the project alongside a massive revamp of Puri district's road network.

The decision came at a high-level meeting chaired by Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida and Law, Works & Excise Minister Prithviraj Harichandan, which reviewed the district's road network and connectivity plans.

The new 40-km greenfield highway between Pipili and Konark will be a 200-feet wide, four-lane corridor designed for vehicles to run at 100 km

per hour. Officials said the project would slash travel time between Pipili and Konark from the present 90 minutes to just 30 minutes boosting both domestic and international tourist flow to the heritage town. Land acquisition and preparation of the detailed project report would be taken up on priority.

The meeting also discussed widening the existing Pipili-Konark road from 7 to 10 meters besides upgrading multiple roads inside Puri town. Proposals include a four-lane road from Taj International to Jagannath Stadium via City Road, widening of Sri Chaitanya Road to Jagannath Temple via Balisahi, Dolamandap Sahi road and the stretch from Jhadeshwari Club to Medical Square.

Besides, a four-lane road will be developed from Charichhak to Astarang and Jalarpur to Charichhak in the Nimapada constituency enhancing coastal connectivity.

"The Bhubaneswar-Puri-Konark corridor is central to Odisha's tourism economy. Strengthening these links would not only decongest Puri town but also provide world-class access to the Jagannath Temple and the Sun Temple," Parida said.

Harichandan added that the government is committed to creating a robust, future-ready road network across the State. "The Pipili-Konark greenfield corridor is a game-changer. We are determined to complete it in mission mode," he asserted. The meeting was attended by Pipili MLA Ashrit Pattanayak.

# Govt mandates biometric attendance for Panchayati Raj staffs

**NALINI SAHU** ■ Bhubaneswar

The Odisha Government has made biometric attendance mandatory for all employees working under Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in a move aimed at enforcing punctuality and strengthening accountability in grassroots governance.

In a directive issued to district Collectors, the Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Department has ordered immediate installation and operationalisation of bio-

metric machines across Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad offices.

"Timely attendance is a prerequisite for efficiency, transparency and accountability in public service delivery," PR Department's Additional Secretary Surya Narayan Dash stated in the official communication.

The department said the Biometric Attendance System (BAS) is intended to instil discipline, curb absenteeism and foster a results-driven work culture. District administra-

tions have been directed to make necessary arrangements and submit Action Taken Reports (ATRs) to the department without delay.

The government pointed out that biometric attendance has already been introduced in several other departments, yielding positive results in terms of punctuality and productivity.

The move comes at a time when the State is pushing for reforms in rural administration to enhance service delivery. Officials said stricter at-

tendance monitoring would help ensure that welfare schemes and development projects at the village level are implemented more effectively.

Governance analyst Manoj Jena said, "Biometric attendance can significantly reduce absenteeism and improve accountability at the grassroots. However, the government must also ensure reliable infrastructure such as internet connectivity and power supply in rural areas; otherwise, the system may face practical challenges during implementation."

# 'Young lawyers need support'

**Ganjam Bar seeks 'Prahara**  
**Scholarship' for**  
**magistrate**  
**aspirants**

**RAJEEV RATHAN** ■ Bhubaneswar

With hundreds of young law graduates in Odisha aspiring to join the judicial services, the Ganjam Bar Association has urged the State Government to roll out a dedicated scholarship to help them sustain their preparation.

Association president Manoj Pattnayak said the demand has gained urgency after the Supreme Court made three years of professional practice mandatory for appearing in Magistrate examinations. "Many of our young colleagues come from modest backgrounds. They are keen to serve the judiciary, but financial hardship is forcing some to drop out midway," he said.

While the State Government runs an impressive bouquet of scholarships for students from

e-Medhabruti and Gopabandhu Education Aid to Fakir Mohan and Banishree schemes with support ranging between Rs 20,000 and Rs 10 lakh, no such provision exists for budding lawyers who wish to become Magistrates.

To fill this gap, the Bar body has suggested instituting a scholarship in the name of legendary linguist and barrister Gopal Chandra Prahara, creator of the monumental Purnachandra Odia Bhashakosha. On his birth an-

niversary, September 27, the government may announce a "Barrister Gopal Chandra Prahara Medhabruti" offering Rs 30,000 annually for three years to deserving law graduates preparing for the judicial service. "This initiative would honour Prahara's intellectual legacy while empowering first-generation advocates from rural and economically weaker families. Odisha's justice delivery system stands to gain from such an investment in talent," the memorandum noted.

## Assembly guest house expansion launched



**RAJEEV RATHAN** ■ Bhubaneswar

The foundation stone for expansion of the Odisha Assembly's old guest house at Unit-IV here was laid on Saturday by Speaker Surama Padhy and Deputy Speaker Bhabani Shankar Bhoi. Assembly Secretary Satyabrata Rout and senior officials were present.

The old guest house currently has 23 rooms, which has proved insufficient. To ease the crunch, a three-storey extension will be built at a cost

of over Rs 3.8 crore. The new block will add 16 rooms with modern facilities, lifts and 24x7 security, spread across 9,000 sqft. The project is scheduled for completion by March 31, 2026.

After expansion, the total capacity of the old guest house will rise to 39 rooms. Along with the 18-room new guest house near the OMC office, the Assembly Secretariat will now be able to provide 57 rooms for legislators, former MLAs and visiting dignitaries.

Officials said the upgraded

facility would also have online booking services making the stay more convenient and transparent. "The project reflects the State's commitment to provide safe, dignified and comfortable accommodation to people's representatives," an official noted. The Speaker described the expansion as both practical and symbolic. "This guest house is not just a building but a token of respect for those who have served the State. The new amenities will make stays safer, easier and more comfortable," she said.

## Governor pushes for heliports, cruise terminals



**Also stresses on**  
**EV infra**

**RAJEEV RATHAN** ■ Bhubaneswar

Governor Dr Hari Babu Kambhampati on Thursday directed departments to work in close coordination for time-bound execution of key projects spanning highways, aviation and railways. Chairing a high-level review meeting at Raj Bhavan, he underlined that big-ticket investments must deliver visible benefits to the people.

The Governor floated a series of new ideas to boost connectivity and jobs. He suggested setting up heliports in two or three locations under PPP mode, expansion of state-run airstrips and the development of short-haul cruise ter-

minals at ports to tap into tourism potential. He also called for fishing jetties at ports to protect the livelihood of fishermen.

Dr Kambhampati asked officials to update him on the Cadet Pilot Programme for tribal girls and charter flight operations from Bhubaneswar airport. He further proposed introducing driving courses in ITIs and polytechnics to equip youths for employment opportunities, including overseas placements.

On railways, the Governor reviewed redevelopment of the Bhubaneswar station and advised that alignment of new projects should be finalised in consultation with the State Government. Reviewing national highways, he stressed

that investments should translate into improved passenger facilities and electric vehicle charging stations.

Revenue & Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari, Commerce, Transport, Steel & Mines Minister Bibhuti Bhushan Jena, Forest, Environment & Climate Change Minister Ganesh Ram Singh Khuntia, Forest, Environment & Climate Change Additional Chief Secretary Satyabrata Sahu, Revenue & Disaster Management Additional Chief Secretary Deoranjana Kumar Singh, Commerce & Transport Principal Secretary Usha Padhee, Principal Secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh along with senior officials from NHA, East Coast Railway and BPIA, participated in the review.

## BBSR gears up for smooth roads ahead of Dussehra

**RAJEEV RATHAN** ■ Bhubaneswar

With the Dussehra festivities approaching, the government has stepped up efforts to ensure smooth traffic and safe commuting across the State's major cities. Law, Works Minister Prithviraj Harichandan chaired a high-level review meeting on Saturday to assess the conditions of roads in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Brahmapur, Rourkela and Sambalpur Municipal Corporations and other districts.

Harichandan emphasised the government's responsibility to repair potholes and maintain roads promptly, especially in time for the festive season. "Residents should experience safe and hassle-free travel. Our engineers must focus on building durable and well-maintained roads," he said.

Officials were directed to ensure that all major roads are

pothole-free by 20th September and fully renovated from 2nd October.

The meeting also highlighted problems arising from unauthorised utility works such as laying pipes or electrical lines without permission, which damage roads. Departments including BMC, EDC, OPTCL and WATCO were urged to coordinate better to maintain road quality. A new policy to regulate utility usage on roads will be formulated with engineers tasked to report on road conditions in the coming days.

Several dignitaries attended, including MLAs Babu Singh, Naba Kishor Mallick and Souvic Biswal, Bhubaneswar Mayor Sulochana Das, Cuttack Mayor Subash Singh, BMC Commissioner Chanchal Rana, CMC Commissioner Kirandeep Kaur Sahota and Municipal Administration Director Arindam Daku.

## BMC issues strict guidelines for disciplined Puja fest

**Complete ban on**  
**obscene dances**

**RAJEEV RATHAN** ■ Bhubaneswar

The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Thursday announced a series of strict measures to ensure that this year's Durga Puja festivities are celebrated in a disciplined, safe and culturally respectful manner.

At a high-level preparatory meeting chaired by the BMC Commissioner and attended by the Mayor, corporators and senior officials from po-

lice, WATCO and Fire Services, several key directives were finalised. A major decision is a complete ban on obscene dance performances at melody shows. The civic body underlined that such activities undermine the cultural sanctity of the festival and would not be tolerated.

It was also decided that no permission would be granted for fairs or Ravana effigy-burning in areas lacking adequate parking facilities. All puja venues must strictly adhere to plastic-free norms while construction of decorative gates on main

roads has been prohibited to avoid traffic disruptions. Control rooms and ambulances will be deployed at idol immersion points, and police will launch awareness campaigns against drug abuse in pandals. To ensure public safety, damaged electric poles and wires will be repaired on priority. The BMC earmarked Rs 5 lakh per ward for pothole and road repairs ahead of the festival, and stray dogs will be removed from puja venues.

The BMC stressed that inter-departmental coordination would be maintained to ensure

smooth water supply, sanitation and security arrangements. "Durga Puja is not just a celebration; it is a reflection of Odisha's culture and devotion. We urge all puja committees and citizens to cooperate with the guidelines so that the festivities remain safe, disciplined and meaningful," BMC Commissioner Chanchal Rana said. Mayor Sulochana Das added, "Our priority is to uphold Bhubaneswar's image as a model city. These measures are meant to safeguard tradition while ensuring public convenience and safety."

## In Angul Car ploughs into auto-rickshaw, 3 killed

**2 seriously**  
**injured**

**PNS** ■ Angul

In a horrific accident, at least three persons were killed and two critically injured after a car rammed into an auto-rickshaw near Khandahata in Angul on Saturday.

Following the accident, the auto reportedly plunged into a pool of muddy water trapping the injured victims inside. Immediate rescue operations



were launched by local authorities and emergency responders to evacuate the victims from the precarious situation.

The five injured persons were eventually rescued and rushed to the Angul District

Headquarters Hospital. However, three of them, including a couple and the auto driver, were declared dead.

The auto was going from Angul to Narsinghpur, and the car was coming from the opposite direction when the accident occurred. The car driver is reportedly on the run.

However, the exact cause of the accident is yet to be ascertained. Police have started an investigation into the incident.

## XIM Varsity welcomes new VC



**PNS** ■ Bhubaneswar

The XIM University announced the appointment of Fr Dr KS Casimir, SJ as the new Vice-Chancellor, effective from September 5.

Fr Casimir brings a wealth of experience in academic leadership and a vision for advancing the university's mission. He secured his PhD from NIT Warangal. After his stellar leadership roles in higher edu-

cation for over two and a half decades at Loyola Higher Education institutions in Hyderabad, he assumed the mantle of leadership as the Director of XLRI Delhi-NCR in August 2022.

In a ceremony held on Friday, the university community gathered to bid farewell to the esteemed outgoing Vice-Chancellor Fr Dr Antony R Uvary, SJ, who served with distinction since

2019. Under Fr Antony's leadership, the university achieved significant milestones.

The event also coincided with the celebration of Teachers' Day, honouring the dedication and contributions of our faculty members.

"I am honoured to lead the university into its next chapter, building upon the strong foundation laid by my predecessor," said Dr Casimir.

## PCCF stresses Mahendragiri's green & tourism potential

**RAJEEV RATHAN** ■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha's Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Head of Forest Force Suresh Panth undertook a two-day visit to the Paralakhemundi Forest Division and reviewed plantation activities and underlined the ecological and tourism importance of the historic Mahendragiri Hills on Friday.

Panth visited several plantation zones to check survival and maintenance of saplings. Expressing satisfaction over the care being taken, he advised forest officials to intensify monitoring and promote more economic and native species to ensure sustainable growth.

At Mahendragiri, known for its mythological significance and scenic beauty, the PCCF planted Rudraksha saplings and said tree plantation is the "truest tribute to nature". He noted that the hill



range, often described as the "second home of biodiversity after the Himalayas", holds immense ecotourism potential. "Mahendragiri is not just a forest; it is a living heritage. Preserving it with community participation will ensure both livelihoods and conservation," Panth said.

Officials briefed him on on-

going initiatives to develop ecotourism facilities and regulate tourist inflow while safeguarding the fragile ecosystem. Panth lauded efforts to balance environmental protection with tourism development, particularly around culturally significant sites linked to the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

The PCCF's visit also highlighted large-scale plantation drives being carried out in recent years across the Paralakhemundi division, especially in degraded hill tracts like Landa Pahad, to restore green cover.

Brahmapur Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF) Bishwanath

Nilanwar, DFO K Nagaraju, ACF Arun Kumar Sahu and Range Officer Sainashree Das accompanied the PCCF.

The visit, officials said, not only reinforced monitoring of plantation schemes but also set the tone for positioning Mahendragiri as a future hub of ecotourism and cultural tourism in Odisha.

## In Angul Woman sets self on fire over domestic feud

**Battling for life at SCB**

**PNS ■ Angul**

In yet another case of self-immolation, a 30-year-old woman from Manapur village under the Kantabania in Angul district attempted to burn herself at her home on late Friday evening. The victim was rushed to the SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack after sustaining around 70-per cent burn injuries.

Police said the woman had an argument with her husband earlier in the day, following which she poured petrol over herself and set herself on

fire.

Locals rushed her to the District Headquarters Hospital but later she was referred to the SCB Hospital for advanced care. As of Saturday morning, her condition remained critical with extensive burns requiring intensive care to stabilise her.

The Kantabania police have registered a case and are conducting an inquiry into the circumstances leading to the self-immolation attempt.

Officials have recorded statements from family members and are examining the sequence of events. No arrests have been made so far, and the investigation is ongoing.

## In Astaranga Youth's body seized from uncle's house

**Kin allege murder**

**PNS ■ Kakatpur**

The family of a deceased youth filed a murder complaint regarding the death of the youth at his aunt's house in Sansirei village under Astrang police station limits.

Budheswar Pradhan, the only son of Harihar Pradhan of Udaipur village under Astrang block, had been working as a labourer in Bombay for a long time and was supporting his family.

But suddenly Budheswar

came to his aunt's house in Sansirei village without informing anyone at home. However, his body was found hanging suspiciously at his aunt's house the next day.

Why Budheswar came to his aunt's house from Bombay without informing anyone at home, and how he died, remains a mystery.

Budheswar's maternal uncle said that Budheswar had a love affair with a girl, which could be a reason behind his killing. Meanwhile, the police reached the spot and started investigation.

## In Ganjam

### Youth beaten to death by Sapranth's supporters

**PNS ■ Brahmapur**

A youth was brutally beaten to death by a group of miscreants at Gotha village under the Shergarh police station in Ganjam district on Friday night.

The deceased was identified as Chandan Bisoi, a resident of P Jagannathpur village under the Patapur police station, who had been staying on rent in Kankarada village.

Chandan was involved in an argument with some youths in front of the house of Gotha village Sarpanch Krishna Suansia, which escalated into a violent confrontation.

A fight broke out between the Sarpanch and Chandan's

group. Knives and other lethal weapons were recovered at the scene. Police arrived at the spot, recovered Chandan's body and sent it for postmortem.

Chandan sustained injuries to his hands, legs and head. A forensic team also reached the spot to conduct further investigations. The weapons used in the attack were recovered from the spot

Police have identified the people involved in the incident and are conducting raids at multiple locations to apprehend them for interrogation.

Locals said tension was simmering between the two sides due to some dispute during the Ganesh idol immersion ceremony.

## 2 Kakatpur teachers selected for CM Award



**PNS ■ Kakatpur**

The School and Mass Education Department of the Government of Odisha has announced the Chief Minister's Education Award for the academic year 2024-2025. A total of 33 teachers from 11 blocks of Puri district have been considered eligible for the education award.



Assistant teacher Prapat Chandra Raut of Kakatpur PM Shri Nodal High School and elementary teacher Priyadarshani Swain have been selected for the award, while Shruti Smriti Sahu of Bateswar High School would be felicitated. The trio will be honored by the District Magistrate at the Puri District Magistrate's Office.

## NITR advances to 13th in NIRF 2025 Engg rankings

**AUROBINDA DAS ■ Rourkela**

The National Institute of Technology Rourkela (NIT Rourkela) has improved its standing in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2025, securing 13th position in the Engineering category, up from 19th in 2024.

The institute has also been ranked 7th in Architecture and Planning, 9th in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) category, 30th in the Research category and 34th in the Overall category.

Building on these achievements, NIT Rourkela envisions strengthening its position as a national leader in engineering education, research, innovation, societal impact, and overall growth.

It may also be noted here

that NIT Rourkela has achieved several notable distinctions in the NIRF 2025 rankings. It has secured the top-ranked engineering institute in Odisha and the 2nd position among all NITs in the 'Engineering' category. In the 'Architecture and Planning' category, the institute holds the distinction of being ranked 1st in the State. In the 'Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)' category, NIT Rourkela is the only NIT and the only institution from the State to be placed in the national top 10.

The institute is also the top-ranked institution in Odisha and top among NITs in the 'Research' category, reflecting its diverse strengths and significant position in the national and State landscape.

## By Vedanta Aluminium

### VeDakshata Skill Training Centre empowers rural youth

**87 trainees in Sundergarh got jobs**

**PNS ■ Bhubaneswar**

The Vedanta Aluminium is driving socio-economic transformation through its flagship VeDakshata Skill Training Centre in Bileimunda village of Sundergarh district. To date, 87 rural youth trained under the programme have secured employment with reputed organisations across India, reinforcing Vedanta's commitment to equipping local youth with industry-ready skills and creating sustainable livelihoods.

Launched in December 2024, the VeDakshata initiative is implemented in partnership with LearnNet Skills Limited, a joint venture of



SchoolNet India Limited and the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). The centre offers free training in 3 trades - sewing machine operation, electrical maintenance, and food and beverage service. Over the next 3 years, Vedanta Aluminium aims to train more than 700 rural youth from communities around its coal mining projects in Ghogharpalli, Jamkhani

and Kuraloi in Odisha.

So far, 36 Assistant Electricians, 31 Sewing Machine Operators and 20 Food and Beverages Service stewards have been successfully placed in jobs across sectors. By helping rural youth secure stable livelihoods, these placements have significantly augmented family incomes, while integrating the youth into the socio-economic mainstream.

Speaking on the initiative, CEO, Vedanta Aluminium, Rajiv Kumar said, "Empowering youth through skill development is key to unlocking the potential of our communities and driving inclusive growth. Through VeDakshata, we are equipping young individuals in rural Odisha with practical skills and connecting them to meaningful employment opportunities."

## Operation Prahar

### Major blow to drug peddlers in Koraput

**Large quantities of ganja seized**

**NISHAN PATTANAIK ■ Koraput**

Continuing its sustained campaign against drug abuse and contraband trade under Operation Prahar, the Koraput district police have registered a series of successful seizures over the past three days.

The operations, carried out across Jeypore, Kakriguma, and Semiliguda, led to the recovery of huge quantities of ganja and the busting of an illegal gutkha storage unit in Jeypore.

On September 4, the police teams intercepted a smuggling attempt and seized 5 kg of ganja under Jeypore town police limits.

On September 3, under Kakriguma Police Station limits, one of the largest seizures in recent months was made, including a whopping 394.900



kg of ganja being transported in a truck (RJ 20 GB 2109) and a Bolero (AP 31 CS 9896). The consignment was meant for inter-State smuggling. Similarly, in Semiliguda, acting on a tip-off, police on September 2 seized 32 kg of ganja during a raid. In the three cases, the accused were booked under relevant provisions of the NDPS Act. Further, the enforcement team of Jeypore Police and

Jeypore Municipality staff conducted a raid at Bhadraya Street, Jeypore, targeting illegal storage of gutkha and tobacco products.

The raid, carried out at multiple godowns belonging to Aman Agency, resulted in the sealing of large quantities of banned tobacco items. Preliminary estimates suggest that products worth nearly Rs 45 lakh were seized. Authorities

confirmed that legal proceedings have been initiated against the offenders.

SP Koraput Rohit Verma said, "Under Operation Prahar, our focus is to cut down the supply chain of narcotics and prohibit tobacco products in Koraput. These seizures are just the beginning. We will continue to conduct raids and take strict legal action against those involved in such activities."

## Nutrilite by Amway gets NFSU recognition



**PNS ■ Bhubaneswar**

The Amway India recently announced to have received National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU) - Nutritional Supplementation Testing for Sportspersons (NSTS) trusted recognition under its prestigious Trusted Certification Program for its key supplements from its flagship brand Nutrilite.

The recognition reinforces Amway's unwavering commitment to offering high-quality, safe, and scientifically backed nutrition products, endorsing five key products - Nutrilite All Plant Protein, Nutrilite Cal Mag D Plus K2, Nutrilite Glucosamine HCL with Boswellia, Nutrilite Salmon Omega 3Softgels, and

Nutrilite Daily Plus to be compliant with international standards set by World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

These products are thus independently verified for unsafe substances, ensuring the integrity of sports nutrition.

Managing Director, Amway India, Rajneesh Chopra said, "At a time when conversations around the safety and authenticity of nutrition supplements are gaining momentum, this recognition helps reinforce clarity and confidence on our 90-year legacy brand Nutrilite. It further strengthens our position as a trusted family brand while extending its relevance to athletes and fitness enthusiasts seeking proven quality."

## Vikram Dev Univ NCC inducts women cadets

**PNS ■ Jeypore**

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) unit of Vikram Dev University has taken a historic step forward by inducting women cadets for the very first time, marking a significant milestone in its journey of discipline, service, and nation-building.

Until recently, the NCC unit at the university was restricted to only 75 male cadets. With the introduction of women cadets, the strength of the unit has now risen to 160, comprising 107 men and 53 women.

To commemorate the momentous occasion, the university organized an inception ceremony under the leadership of Captain Lakshman Patra. The ceremony witnessed the presence of several



distinguished dignitaries.

Vice Chancellor Professor Devi Prasad Mishra graced the event as the chief guest, while Registrar Mahesh Chandra Nayak and Officer Commanding Lt. Colonel Preeti Ranjan Das attended as guests of honour.

In his address, Prof Mishra lauded the inclusion of women cadets and described it as a landmark in the implementation of the New Education Policy (NEP).

On the same occasion, Lt.

Col. Preeti Ranjan Das was felicitated with the Chancellor's Award and a commemorative plaque for his dedicated service and invaluable contribution to strengthening the 1 Odisha Infantry Company NCC Unit.

The program was well attended by eminent personalities including Subedar Praveen Kumar, Alumni Nishan Patnaik, Durga Prasad Sahu, Manaranjan Barik, Rajendra prasad and Mohammad Shaaraf

## In Jharsuguda

### 72 shops raided; huge quantities of tobacco products seized

**RAJKUMAR SHARMA ■ Jharsuguda**

In a significant enforcement drive, the Jharsuguda Police on Thursday raided 72 shops across the district for illegally selling tobacco near educational institutions.

The action was carried out under "Operation Prahar," a special initiative aimed at curbing the sale, smuggling, and consumption of intoxicants close to schools and colleges.

According to police sources, 51 shops under the jurisdiction of SDPO Jharsuguda and 21 shops under SDPO Brajrarnagar were targeted during the coordinated raids.



Large quantities of cigarettes, bidis, gutkha, khaini, and other tobacco products were seized from the premises.

As many as 72 persons were booked under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), which strictly prohibits the sale of tobacco products within 100 yards of educational institutions.

Officials said the drive was launched to prevent students' easy access to harmful substances and to enforce COTPA provisions effectively.

Jharsuguda Superintendent of Police G. Reddy Raghavendra said, "These raids were conducted under Operation Prahar, a special drive to check the consump-

tion, smuggling, and sale of drugs and other intoxicants near educational institutions. In this operation, 72 shops in Jharsuguda and Brajrarnagar were raided, and a large quantity of tobacco products was seized. A total of 72 persons were booked under COTPA for violations."

Authorities have warned

that similar enforcement actions will continue across the district in the coming days. Police have also urged shopkeepers to comply with the law and appealed to the public to report violations, stressing that collective vigilance is essential to protect students from exposure to addictive substances.



Left to right: A municipal corporation worker fumigates the area under a flyover where residents of flood-affected areas are taking shelter; residents of flood-affected areas take shelter under a flyover; a municipal corporation worker fumigates the area near a flyover where residents of flood-affected areas are taking shelter at Mayur Vihar in New Delhi



# Floods last a week but impact lasts for months, say families

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

For a lot of families displaced by the Yamuna floods this year, it is a reminder of the 2023 Delhi floods, and they dread returning home as they know what awaits them — muddy rooms, damp floors, broken electricity metres and even snakes.

Recalling the 2023 floods, 34-year-old Neelam Kumari said, “There was no electricity at that time. It was completely dark for a month. We had to rely on solar lights, candles, and battery-powered lights.”

She said, “Many times, my children found snakes in the corners or hanging from trees and we had to constantly keep a watch. In

2023, a girl was bitten by a snake.” Residents recall how earlier floods left their houses cracked, appliances short-circuited and furniture coated in mud.

“The problem starts when we return. There is no electricity for months because the meters and wires get damaged. Power is only restored after all the metres are replaced, which takes nearly a month,” Kumari added.

According to figures given by the Delhi Government, 7,200 people have been affected in East Delhi, where seven relief camps have been set up.

In North-East Delhi, 5,200 people have been affected and authorities have established 13 relief camps. In South-East Delhi, 4,200

people are affected and eight relief camps have been set up. In North Delhi, 1,350 people have been affected by the floods and are being housed in six relief camps.

In Shahdara district, 30 people have been affected and one relief camp has been set up.

People shifted to relief camps insist they are not worried about their current stay in temporary shelters. “We are not having much trouble here. At least there is food and a roof,” she said. Parents worry most about their children, who lose their school uniforms and books.

Ramesh, an auto-rickshaw driver said, “Everything? from clothes and utensils to electric appliances and furniture gets ruined. We’ll

need to buy all of it again, including groceries, school notebooks, and uniforms.”

An affected family said, “After the flood, there is no one to help us. With muddy lanes leading to our house, we have to clean everything ourselves.”

Sunita Devi, a mother of three, said, “The knee-deep mud takes days, sometimes weeks, to clear. Only then can the house be properly cleaned.”

While the camps offer temporary shelter and relief, the true cost of the flood will be felt after returning to homes caked in mud, without power, with damaged meters and collapsed wiring, she said.

“The flood stays for a week, but its impact lasts for months,” Devi said.

DISPLACED BY YAMUNA FLOODS, FAMILIES STRUGGLE TO MAKE TENTS ‘HOME’ ALONG DELHI-MEERUT EXPRESSWAY

New Delhi: As many as 70 families displaced by the Yamuna floods are now living in makeshift tents along the Delhi-Meerut Expressway near Akshardham, battling hardship as they sleep on damp floor, try to keep away mosquitoes. Sitting outside a tarpaulin tent, Ganga Devi wondered where will the poor go.

“It is either demolition, or rain, and now the flood. We hardly earn Rs 300 to 400 a day by cleaning Delhi’s garbage. Someone is a ragpicker, some clean drains, some sell flowers, where will we go now?” she asked.

The 6x8 makeshift camp

stretches along the edge of the expressway, which has been transformed into a “home” for families who recently had to be evacuated from their jhuggis or kuccha house near by the Yamuna floodplains. Inside one such tent, a small stove sits precariously on bricks.

A few steel plates and a blackened pan complete the kitchen. A string runs across the tent where damp clothes hang. “Clothes are not drying, as it rains everyday. Only a couple of clothes are left, and that’s what we wear,” said Kamlesh Kumar, who was trying to make his son sleep on his lap.

For Meena Kumari, a

mother of three, arranging life in such limited space is a daily struggle.

“At night, when one child turns in their sleep, the other wakes up too. We cook outside, but if it rains, everything gets wet. But this tent is all we have left after the water swallowed our dreams and jhuggi,” she said.

In the evenings, groups of children chase each other behind tents with families trying to remain alert so the kids do not go near the Yamuna or to the roadside.

“For parents, our children’s play carries constant fear. The camp runs parallel to the Delhi-Meerut Expressway, where heavy

trucks and speeding cars whiz past at all hours,” Harish said.

“We always fear that our children may run towards the highway while playing. Who will stop a big vehicle? What if they slip? Our eyes are never at rest,” said Kapu Mukhiya, an elderly.

Education has been another casualty as most children spend their days loitering in the camp or helping parents with small chores. As the sun sets, women in the camp gather around open stoves, preparing lentils and rice with whatever rations they have received from relief workers.

## Govt to offer free power, civic aid to Ramleela, Durga pandals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday announced a series of measures to support Ramleela and Durga pandal committees ahead of the festive season.

The measures include free electricity, single-window no-objectionable certificates (NOC) and enhanced civic facilities. The Chief Minister announced that one day during Ramleela and Durga Puja celebrations will be dedicated to honour Prime Minister Narendra Modi as part of the Seva Pakhwada beginning on September 17 (PM Modi’s 75th birthday) and continuing till 2 October (Gandhi Jayanti).

After meeting representatives of Ramleela committees, Gupta said the Delhi Government will provide 1,200 units of free electricity, while meters will be installed on just 25 per cent security deposit. “This is welcoming and happy news for all the Ramleela and Durga pandal committees,” she said.

The meeting was attended by Cabinet Ministers Ashish Sood and Kapil Mishra, along with senior officials from various departments and respected representatives of the festival committees.

For the first time, committees organising Ramleela performances will also be provided 1,200 units of electric-



ity free of cost by the Delhi Government.

She further said that public amenities such as toilets, security arrangements, healthcare services, ambulances and fire brigades will be ensured at the venues.

The Government, to ease administrative hurdles, will issue NOCs for various services through a single-window system, eliminating the need for organisers to approach multiple departments.

The Chief Minister further explained that all the NOCs required from departments such as the DDA, MCD, Delhi Jal Board, Fire Services and others would now be granted under a single-window system. This will spare organisers the trouble of approaching multiple offices. With Navratri beginning on 22 September, large-scale Ramleela performances will

take place across Delhi, and this reform ensures that all formalities will now be resolved at the district level through the District Magistrate’s office.

“The Delhi Government will also ensure cleanliness in the grounds. A committee has been constituted to immediately resolve any problems that may arise,” the Chief Minister said, adding that the city’s Diwali celebrations would be “magnificent.”

“Comprehensive arrangements at festival venues will include cleanliness drives, fogging, sanitation facilities, medical support, fire safety, police deployment, and traffic management,” she said.

In recent years, Ramleela organisers faced challenges such as delays in securing land and difficulties in obtaining various permissions.

LAV KUSH RAMLILA SET TO CREATE REPLICA OF SOMNATH MANDIR

New Delhi: Delhi’s biggest Ramleela spectacle, the Lav Kush Ramleela at the Red Fort, is set to create a replica of the Somnath Mandir and print invitation cards featuring the Indian Army, Air Force, and Navy instead of the customary Ram, Sita, and Lakshman depictions.

Durga Puja, the annual Hindu festival celebrated in honour of Goddess Durga, spans nine nights and will be observed this year from September 22 to October 3.

Backed by a three-storey setup, over one lakh LED lights, and 3D projection and light shows, the Ramleela celebrations during Navratri will also see political leaders and television actors taking centre stage in the retelling of the Ramayana.

The cards and photos this year will highlight the efforts of the army, air force, and navy, inspired by Operation Sindoor, Ramleela Committee President Arjun Kumar said.

“We wanted to dedicate the celebrations to our heroes. So, instead of the traditional cards printed with images of Lord Ram, Sita, and Lakshman, we have chosen to feature tributes to the nation’s heroes,” he said.

“This year, we also have a special light director who will handle the lighting and create an ambience as if we are in a grand palace, enhanced by the glow of one lakh LED lights,” he added.

Teams of artists and technical experts from Gujarat, Kashi, Rajasthan, and Mathura-Vrindavan have been working for the past month on this unique set. The three-storey stage, about 140 feet long and 45 feet high, has been adorned with nearly 1.25 lakh LED lights.

Kumar further mentioned that specially invited artists from Gujarat have recreated the Somnath Temple’s intricate carvings, gold-plated domes, and enchanting ambience through colourful LED lighting.

Using modern 3D effects and AI technology, certain scenes will be presented in a way that the audience feels as if they are truly sitting inside the Temple, he added.

He noted that this year’s Ramleela will feature hi-tech digital staging with a live telecast on nearly 100 national and international TV channels.

Around 40 Bollywood actors will also perform in the production.

## UK team inspects Tihar Jail conditions as India seeks extradition of fugitives

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

As India is seeking the extradition of Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi, and Sanjay Bhandari from the UK, a team of Britain’s Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) recently visited Delhi’s Tihar jail to assess the prison conditions. The UK officials had also sought a written guarantee from India that no prisoner in Tihar would be ill-treated.

The team included four people — two CPS experts and two British High Commission officials, sources said. This visit, which took place in July, was a direct response to concerns raised by British courts about the conditions in Indian prisons. The UK officials had also sought a written guarantee from India that no prisoner in Tihar would be ill-treated.

Sources said the four-member team assessed the high-security ward in Tihar jail and the facilities and security provided to prisoners. They also interacted with some prisoners, sources added.



Vijay Mallya



Nirav Modi

According to officials, the UK assessment team was generally satisfied with the prison conditions, with the members calling the prison system “good” and “close to international standards”.

The authorities also assured the team that if necessary, a separate place can be created for high-profile extraditees and their special needs would be taken care of. The authorities also assured that the extraditees would not be in any danger, sources said.

This comes months after a UK court had allowed high-profile arms dealer Sanjay Bhandari’s appeal against his extradition to India, saying that in Tihar jail, he would be

at “real risk” of extortion, accompanied by threat or “actual violence” from other prisoners and prison officials. According to the government data, a total of 178 extradition requests from India are pending in different countries at present.

Out of these, at least 20 are in the UK — which includes names of high-profile fugitives like Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi, and Sanjay Bhandari, apart from many Khalistani leaders. Mallya, accused of defaulting on over ₹9,000 crore in bank loans, and diamond merchant Nirav Modi, the prime accused in the ₹13,800 crore Punjab National Bank fraud.

## Bar Council requests coordination committee to recall advocates’ strike

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Bar Council of India on Saturday requested the coordination committees of all district bar associations of Delhi district courts to recall or defer the lawyers strike beginning from September 8.

Earlier on Thursday, the committee had condemned a letter by the police commissioner’s office to the principal district and sessions judges about the proposed means of police virtually presenting evidence in courts, and announced the indefinite and intensified lawyers’ strike from Monday, saying it was contrary to the assurance given by authorities.

The BCI’s letter by its chairman and senior advocate Manan Kumar Mishra said, “I respect the committee for its efforts in safeguarding the rights of litigants and maintaining the independence of the Bar.”

“By raising concerns on the issue of police witnesses deposing from police stations through video conferencing, the committee had highlighted a genuine concern. And as per our infor-

THE COMMITTEE ANNOUNCED THE INDEFINITE AND INTENSIFIED LAWYERS’ STRIKE FROM MONDAY, SAYING IT WAS CONTRARY TO THE ASSURANCE GIVEN BY AUTHORITIES

mation, a meeting of the committee was held with the Union Home Minister a few weeks back.”

Underlining the sequence of events, the letter said that the Delhi High Court, through its notification dated July 4, laid down the procedure for video conferencing and identified designated places, including prisons, forensic departments, prosecution offices, and police stations.

It said that subsequently, Lieutenant Governor (LG) issued a notification dated August 13 designating all police stations in Delhi as such venues, which led to widespread opposition and a strike was called in August for six days, which was suspended after the union home minister assured that

the concerns of the bar would be heard with an open mind, and the office of the police commissioner clarified that the order would not be implemented without hearing all stakeholders.

The letter said that on September 4, the commissioner’s office issued a circular making it clear that that only formal police witnesses would be examined through video conferencing, while material police witnesses may continue to depose in physical mode, and further, that if the defense requested the physical presence of a police witness, the presiding judge could consider it on merits and allow the examination in physical mode.

“These provisions show that the concerns of the bar have been addressed and a substantive part of the demand has been fulfilled,” the letter said. It said that repeated abstentions from work was causing grave hardship to litigants, including undertrial prisoners and victims of crime, and also to those advocates who were eager to discharge their professional duties.

## Advaita: The symphony music and memory united to save lives

GYANVI SHARMA ■ New Delhi

The Grand Finale of Advaita was held in the national Capital on Saturday blending music, emotion and social responsibility into one powerful evening. What began as a grieving family’s tribute has grown into a movement to raise awareness about drowning prevention.

The initiative was launched by Sudesh Verma and Renu Verma in memory of their son, Advait, who loved music but tragically drowned in Pune’s Pawa Lake in 2023.

Determined to transform personal loss into purpose, the Vermas founded Advaita, a platform that not only raises awareness on water safety but also celebrates the talent of young performers.

Addressing the audience with heartfelt candour, Verma urged society to make safety a collective priority. “Adventure is good and fun,



Pankaj Kumar

but safety is necessary,” he said. “Our children deserve joy without danger. Safety and precaution must become a real priority for both the government and society.” His words, drawn from personal tragedy, set the tone for an evening

where music carried the message of awareness.

The stage came alive with performances from 12 young contestants, each using their art to echo the campaign’s cause.

From soulful melodies to energetic numbers, the par-

ticipants showcased not only musical talent but also a shared commitment to spreading awareness. A special highlight was the spirited performance by Garam Kalakar, a popular Instagram singer, whose lively act lit up the stage and drew loud applause.

The event was further enriched by the presence of distinguished guests, including Sudhanshu, the guru of renowned singer Kailash Kher, along with Gunjan Jha and other dignitaries.

Their support lent cultural weight to the campaign, reaffirming the belief that art and advocacy can go hand in hand.

The evening’s competitive spirit culminated in the announcement of winners. Out of 12 participants, Shreya Verma claimed the first prize of ₹51,000 with a moving performance that left both the jury and audience spellbound, Jenya Vishwakarma was declared second with a

prize of ₹21,000, while Aryaman Chhabra secured the third prize, also receiving ₹21,000. Each award was a recognition not only of vocal excellence but also of a deeper contribution to the campaign’s mission.

Yet beyond the music, the message resonated clearly about how drowning is one of the leading causes of accidental deaths globally, yet it remains an under-recognised public health issue. Awareness campaigns like Advaita highlight the urgent need for precautionary measures, education, and community responsibility to ensure such tragedies are prevented.

As the finale drew to a close, the applause ringing through Azad Bhawan was more than celebration; it was solidarity. For the Verma family, Advaita stood as a promise that their son’s memory would live on, inspiring change and saving lives.

### Punjab CM Mann showing improvement: Fortis Hospital



Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, who was admitted to Fortis Hospital in Mohali after he complained of exhaustion and low heart rate, continues to show improvement and his vital signs remain stable, the hospital authorities said on Saturday.

### Rajasthan CM flags off 160 new RSRTC buses

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma on Saturday flagged off 160 new buses of the State transport corporation and launched a super luxury bus service from Jaipur to Kathgodam in Uttarakhand. The event was held at Amar Jawan Jyoti in Jaipur. Speaking on the occasion, Sharma said the State is steadily moving forward on the path of progress with expansion of safe, organised and modern transport facilities for the public.



### Arunachal Guv urges youth to join Viksit Bharat vision



Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen KT Parnaik (Retd) on Saturday called upon the youth to align their personal aspirations with the national vision of 'Viksit Bharat' 2047, stressing that individual progress strengthens society, the State, and ultimately the nation.

### Torrential rain hits restoration work on Jammu-Srinagar NH

An early morning downpour on Saturday derailed the National Highways Authority of India's (NHAI) efforts to restore traffic on the 270-km Jammu-Srinagar national highway, which remained closed for the fifth consecutive day, a senior official said.



## RSS coordination meet discusses centenary year programmes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Jaipur

The RSS has discussed in detail the programmes planned for its centenary year besides reviewing the work of affiliated organisations on women's issues, agriculture, cooperation, de-addiction and social initiatives at its ongoing all-India coordination meeting in Jodhpur, Sangh leaders said on Saturday.

According to the leaders, during the first two days of the Akhil Bharatiya Samanvay Baithak, deliberations were held on programmes for the Sangh centenary year to be observed from Vijayadashami 2025 to Vijayadashami 2026.

Various affiliated organisations shared information about their activities and future plans. RSS Akhil Bharatiya Prachar Pramukh Sunil Ambekar said the



meeting discussed ways to strengthen the spirit of cooperation in society and empower the rural economy through dairy cooperatives. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad shared details of its public awareness campaign against addiction and its harmful

effects, while Bharat Vikas Parishad outlined its campaign for an anaemia-free India.

Mahila Samanvay is conducting activities and training programmes to enhance women's participation in social life, while Bharatiya

Kisan Sangh discussed measures to encourage farmers to adopt organic farming. Swadeshi Jagran Manch presented its awareness drive to promote the use of indigenous products and economic self-reliance.

The organisation Saksham (Samadrishti, Kshamata Vikas and Anusandhan Mandal) informed the meeting about the Netra Kumbh organised during the Ramdeora fair from August 1 to September 2, highlighting its work on social harmony.

The three-day meeting (September 5-7) is being attended among others by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale. Around 320 representatives from 32 affiliated organisations are participating in the deliberations, which also cover national unity, security and social perspectives.

### Vaishnaw: GST cuts to boost economy, aid citizens



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The GST rate cuts will not only benefit the common people but also boost India's economy, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw asserted on Saturday and hit out at the Congress, alleging "heavy burden" of tax during its term at the Centre.

The GST Council's decision to bring all products, except those under the sin and luxury goods category, under five per cent and 18 per cent slabs, while reducing it to zero on a host of essential items, will come into effect from September 22, the first day of Navratri.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, Vaishnaw said, "The coming 22nd, the first day of Navratri, will bring a new happiness for all of us, for all middle-class families and for 140 crore citizens of this country." The GST reforms

will also serve as a catalyst in the economic development of the country, he said.

"This reform has brought a big relief to the lives of 140 crore people of the country. Before 2014 (during Congress rule), there was a huge burden on common people due to the web of different types of taxes imposed on every item," the Information and Broadcasting Minister said.

Vaishnaw said the latest GST reforms and income tax exemption up to ₹12 lakh announced earlier reflected Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to the welfare of common people, including middle-class families, in the country.

The BJP leader said the government was working on the GST reforms for about one and a half years, with the prime minister continuously following the exercise and giving "guidance" at every step.

## Theaterisation will happen, says Army Chief General Dwivedi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi has asserted that theaterisation — or the integration of Army, Air Force and Navy capabilities — will definitely take place and the question is only about how long it would take to materialise.

If one has to deal with multiple agencies, "theaterisation is the answer", he said.

He made the remarks on Friday here while interacting with media after launching a book titled 'Operation Sindoor: The Untold Story of India's Deep Strikes Inside Pakistan' at Manekshaw Centre here. He was asked about his stand on theaterisation, after divergent views

emerged recently on the move planned. "Theaterisation will come, today or tomorrow. We just have to see how long it will take. We have to go through certain steps to bring in theaterisation, which includes jointness, integration. A lot of things need to be discussed over for that," the Army chief said. He also explained why theaterisation is "necessary".

"When we fight a battle, an Army doesn't fight alone. We have Border Security Force and Indo-Tibetan Border Police. Then there are the tri-services, defence cyber agencies, defence space agencies, and now we are talking about cognitive warfare agencies. Besides, there are agencies such as the ISRO, Civil Defence, Civil Aviation, Railways, NCC, State and



Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi speaking during the unveiling of the book 'Operation SINDOOR: The Untold Story of India's Deep Strikes Inside Pakistan', written by Lt General KJS 'Tiny' Dhillon

Central administrations.

"If one has to deal with so many agencies, theaterisation is the answer. Because unity of command is more important. You need one commander to achieve coordination in execution. Theaterisation is absolutely necessary," he asserted.

The Army chief's remarks come nearly two weeks after chiefs of other two forces expressed their views on theaterisation.

At a two-day tri-services seminar 'Ran Samwad' held at the Army War College in Mhow last month, Indian Air Force chief Air Chief Marshal AP Singh and Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi spoke on theaterisation, making it clear that the two forces have divergent views on the plan. The Chief of Air

Staff had said that armed forces should not come under any pressure to roll out theatre commands.

At the concluding session, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan had said that "dissonance" in the military on setting up of tri-services commands will be addressed keeping in mind the best interest of the nation.

During an interaction with mediapersons, the Army chief was on Friday asked about his views on the Goods and Services Tax rate reduction on various military equipment and systems. Thanking the government for it, he said, "Our defence corridors will get a major filip, because there would be more investments. The MSMEs and start-ups face difficulties as they have less funds.

### PM may join BJP MPs' workshop

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

A two-day 'karyashala' (workshop) of BJP MPs will begin on Sunday at the Parliament complex where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to be felicitated for the GST reforms.

While the workshop was planned several days ago, sources said Modi may now participate as well.

A source said the prime minister is likely to be felicitated by the MPs for the announcement of the new

GST slabs which the BJP says will reduce the tax burden on the people and boost the economy.

The BJP and its allies are hopeful that the first flush of positive public sentiment among people over the fall in prices of a host of items will give them a boost in the Bihar elections, expected to be held in November.

The party's workshop includes several sessions, including on its history and evolution, and lessons for its parliamentarians on boosting efficiency.

## BJP plans nationwide drive on GST reforms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The BJP has planned a nationwide outreach programme to apprise people, including traders, of the latest GST reforms brought in by the Modi government.

The GST Council approved a rate overhaul for all items, except those under the sin and luxury category, by limiting slabs to five per cent and 18 per cent effective from

September 22, the first day of Navaratri.

GST tax rates on common use items ranging from hair oil to corn flakes, TVs, and personal health and life insurance policies were slashed after the all-powerful GST Council on Wednesday approved a complete overhaul of the tangled Goods and Services Tax regime.

"The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has prepared a complete action plan regarding GST reforms. We

have asked our units in the States and districts to inform the common people about the GST reforms," party chief spokesperson Anil Baluni said on Saturday while replying to a related query at a press conference at the BJP headquarters here.

"We have planned to organise 'choupals' in every district (to apprise people of the GST reforms)," the BJP MP said, adding, "We have also prepared plans to organise programmes to

inform traders about simplified GST."

Baluni said the BJP is set to organise various programmes on the GST reforms at a "very large scale" across the country.

"Press conferences of our senior Union ministers, party national spokespersons and general secretaries will also be held in every State," he said.

The party will soon share further details in this connection, the BJP chief spokesperson added.

## Finance Minister calls GST overhaul people's reform

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ New Delhi

Calling the landmark GST overhaul a 'people's reform', Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said that rationalisation of rates for a wide swath of products will benefit every family, boost consumption, and bolster the economy.

In an interview, the Finance Minister said she will personally monitor passing on of Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate cuts in the form of price reduction but hastened to add that industry has shown positivity towards such cuts.

Within days of the decision, from car makers to public sector insurance companies and shoe and apparel brands have already announced significant price



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during an interview in New Delhi on Saturday

cuts and the rest are likely to follow suit by the time new GST rates are implemented, she said.

Nearly 400 products — from soaps to cars, shampoos to tractors and air con-

ditioners — will cost less when the rejig of the GST is effective from the first day of Navaratri on September 22.

Premium paid on individual health and life insurance will be tax-free.

A third rate of 40 per cent has been earmarked for a small list of sin goods and ultra-luxury items.

"This is a reform which touches the lives of all 140 crore people. There is no individual in this country who is untouched by GST. The poorest of the poor also have something small that they buy, touched by GST," she said.

Starting September 22, the GST slab structure will change — five per cent for common use goods and 18 per cent for everything else.

The existing slab of 12 and 28 per cent rates have been done away with.

In the revamped GST structure, most daily food and grocery items will fall under the five per cent GST slab with bread, milk and paneer attracting no tax at all.

Sitharaman said the reform — the single biggest since the 2017 rollout of the one-nation, one tax regime — has been carried out with a focus on the common man.

Every tax on daily use items has gone through a rigorous review and in most cases the rates have come down drastically.

While the significant relief in income tax that she gave in her Budget in February this year left more money in the hands of common people, the GST rejig will allow for greater spending, making things more affordable.

"People do understand for example, ₹100 with which they go to the shop to buy a thing. Today, the same ₹100 they can buy one and a half of the commodity. Earlier, they bought one," she said.

## CISF inducts 332 athletes-largest sport's recruitment in history

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has successfully concluded its largest-ever sports recruitment. This has aligned the long term vision of the force with that of the country to nurture new sporting talent.

With India bidding for Commonwealth Games 2030 CISF is setting eyes on the sporting spectacle as well becoming the table topper in future editions of All India Police Games, said a CISF Press release.

The just concluded recruitment forms part of a broader push which prioritises early talent identification, professional training, gender inclu-



sivity, infrastructure development, and holistic athlete support. These reforms aim to nurture CISF's sporting pipeline and increase India's presence on global podiums including the Commonwealth Games 2030, 2036 Olympics and beyond. In line with this more than 75 per

cent of the selected athletes are in the age group of 18-22 years. Thus, they are expected to peak around 2030.

The recruitment will see CISF raise 34 new teams for both men and women, including disciplines such as archery, lawn tennis, badminton, cycling, and more.

# Mumbai bids grand farewell to Ganpati Bappa

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Mumbai

Beats of '*dhol-tasha*' and clouds of '*gula*' rose in the air as faithfuls thronged the streets of Mumbai on Saturday, braving the rains for immersion processions of Ganesh idols on Anant Chaturdashi, the last and final day of the 10-day Ganpati festival.

Scores of people were seen sitting on road dividers, terraces of buildings, balconies, trees, and poles to catch a glimpse of the grand finale as the idols made their way to the city's beaches and other water bodies.

Earlier in the day, '*rangolis*' were drawn on roads, even as parts of the city witnessed light to moderate showers since morning.

According to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, 405 Ganesh idols, including 11 belonging to Sarvajani mandals, were immersed in natural water bodies and artificial ponds created by the civic body by 12 noon.

At Lalbaug in central Mumbai, famous for its iconic Ganapati mandals, the processions began with idols of Tejukaya, Ganesh Gully, and



People taking part in a procession for immersion of idol of Lord Ganesha as part of the Ganesh Chaturthi festival celebrations in Mumbai

several other mandals.

Thousands gathered along the streets of Lalbaug and other major procession routes to bid farewell to the beloved deity, with prayers on their lips and to witness the vibrant spectacle filled with music, dance, and clouds of celebratory gulal.

Processions of the famous Ganpatis from Lalbaug, including Lalbaugcha Raja, Chinchpokli Chintamani, Ballaleshwar of Bal Ganesh Mandal, Mumbaicha Raja of Ganesh Galli, Mahaganapati of Kalachowki, Rangari Badak Chawl Ganapati, and Tejukaya Ganapati, had reached the main road by 1 pm.

Crowds assembled at Shroff Building in Lalau, from where the traditional "Pushpvrishti" (flower shower) was performed with a model of a Rafale aircraft pulled using a rope contraption.

The Seva Sadan Mandal used an icon of "Abhijat Marathi" for its procession, as Marathi has been declared a classical language this year.

The procession of the Rangari Badak Chawl was the first to receive 'Pushpavrishti' at Shroff Building, followed by the Cotton Green cha Raja Ganesh idol.

## IRCTC showcases India at Vietnam Tourism Expo 2025

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced the year 2025 to be the ASEAN-India Year of tourism and has renewed the commitment of India to enhance its cultural, economic and tourism relations with the ASEAN countries. This bold proclamation outlines the role of tourism in improving people-to-people connectivity, mutual prosperity and strengthen bonds of friendship between India and the ASEAN countries.

Under this new initiative of enhancing relations, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), Government of India, has been given the mandate to organize the Indian participation in the highly regarded International Tourism Expo (ITE) Vietnam 2025, to be held between September 4-6, 2025 in the Saigon Exhibition and Convention Center (SECC), Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

IRCTC is establishing an exclusive ASEAN-India pavilion that will showcase a wide range of tourism products that India has to offer to the world including the rich cultural heritage of the country, spiritual and wellness packages, natural scenery, adventure activities and luxury travel products in the form of IRCTC luxury trains that are the best in the



world namely the Maharajas express, the Golden Chariot and the Buddhist circuit luxury AC train besides the tourism scenery and attractions of the ASEAN nations.

Vipra Pandey, Consul General of India, opened the ASEAN India pavilion at Ho Chi Minh city. Depending on the importance of the event, Vipra Pandey, Consul General of India, Ho Chi Minh City. As the prelude to this new collaboration and the celebration of 2025 as the ASEAN-India Year of Tourism, IRCTC in coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs spearheaded a solid group of tourism sector players in India and ASEAN states at PATA Travel Mart 2025 in Bangkok, a new dawn in cross-cultural and tourism cooperation between India and ASEAN nations. The ASEAN-India pavilion located in Bangkok was opened by the Indian Ambassador to the Kingdom of Thailand, Nagesh Singh, which gave an added

momentum to the effort of MEA and IRCTC in fostering Indo-ASEAN cross-cultural and tourism relationships.

To continue with this mission a Road Show was also held in Thailand on 28th August 2025 during which the representatives of the travel and tourism industry were also present, and it was also such a big success.

The Indian delegation to ITE Vietnam is led by IRCTC, and includes leading tourism GSAs, state tourism board officers, and representatives of the ASEAN countries, both as tourism trade and tourism policy making bodies.

This collective involvement of India and ASEAN nations represents the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister to grow together and to tourism cooperate. In addition to the set-up of the ASEAN-India Pavilion, IRCTC has also been charged with the responsibility of handling the full logistics of the Indian delegation.

In addition, IRCTC is

hosting ASEAN-India Tourism Road Show in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam where, a wide range of Indo-ASEAN tourism products are going to be exhibited in front of an audience that will include various travel trade bodies, tour operators and industry stakeholders.

This road show will be timely meeting to assist the delegation to be able to interact directly with the top local travel agents and tour operators in collaboration with the trade and establishment of new business partnerships. The announcement of the ASEAN-India Year of Tourism by the Hon Prime Minister of India is a breakthrough event to endorse India as a global tourism destination among various customer segments.

The recent establishment of the ASEAN-India Pavilion in ITE Ho Chi Minh City has created new channels of promoting culture and tourism between India and the ASEAN countries and has acted as a catalyst to opening the gates of future growth and prosperity.

Not only has this initiative enhanced regional connectivity, but it has also established relationships of mutual trust, friendship and cooperation, thus providing a platform on which tourism-based development and sustainable development can be achieved by both India and ASEAN in the future.

## Arambai Tenggol backs SoO pact for peace in Manipur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Imphal

Meitei organisation Arambai Tenggol on Saturday said the re-negotiated Suspension of Operations pact between the Centre and two Kuki-Zo groups is crucial for achieving peace in Manipur and expressed unwavering support to any government initiative aimed at restoring order and tranquillity in the state.

Two prominent Kuki-Zo groups had on Thursday signed the suspension of operations agreement with the government on re-negotiated terms and conditions under which they agreed on maintaining territorial integrity of Manipur, relocating designated camps away from vulnerable areas and working for a solution to bring lasting peace and

stability in the state.

The signing of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People's Front (UPF) is also set to have a positive impact on peace efforts in Manipur, officials said.

In a statement, Arambai Tenggol said, "We stand steadfast in our dedication to fostering peace and normalcy across Manipur. Our organisation has been actively cooperating and coordinating with the efforts of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the State Administration to chart a positive path forward."

A recent point of focus has been the "re-negotiated Suspension of Operations (SoO) pact, an initiative we view as a crucial step towards achieving peace", the Meitei group said.

## CRPF to set up 30 new bases in naxal-hit Chhattisgarh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi/Raipur

Security forces will open more than 30 new forward bases and special units of the CRPF and its CoBRA battalion will further move "deep inside" to target top Maoist leaders in Chhattisgarh as part of a fresh plan drawn to meet the deadline of ending Naxalism from the country by March 2026, official sources said Saturday.

A high-level meeting was held in state capital Raipur on Friday with Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) Tapan Deka, CRPF Director General (DG) Gyanendra Pratap Singh, Chhattisgarh DGP Arun Dev Gautam and other senior officials in attendance.

The meeting on anti-Naxal operations reviewed the deployment of the forces

and their requirements for the new units, which will further go deep inside. It has been decided to open more than 30 new forward operation bases (FOBs) in the remote locations of the Bastar region after the end of monsoon rains to further intensify the offensive, the sources said.

The majority of this work will be done by the units of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) while its special jungle warfare battalion CoBRA will be further traversing into core Naxal-affected areas of the state, they said.

The meeting was held to review the progress of the operations and plan new ones, keeping in mind the Union government's declared deadline of ending the Left Wing Extremism (LWE) from the country by March 2026, according to the sources in the security



establishment

The Bastar region of Chhattisgarh remains the last bastion where some Naxalite presence and violent activities are taking place.

The forces like CoBRA and District Reserve Guard (DRG) of Chhattisgarh Police have

been directed to target the remaining leadership of Maoists, the sources said.

The results are already being achieved with the killing of a number of Naxal cadres, and "if the current pace of operations goes good, chances are that the deadline to end Naxalism

from the country can be met by December 2025 or January 2026," a top officer said.

Some new units brought in by the CRPF from Jharkhand and other states in the recent past have also entrenched themselves in the existing FOBs and they will further move forward, according to the decision of the latest meeting, the sources said.

The CRPF and other forces have created around 50 FOBs in the state over the last few years. These are bases built in remote Naxal areas meant to support security forces' operations.

CRPF DG Singh and Chhattisgarh DGP Arun Dev Gautam also held a separate meeting on the subject in Jagdalpur on Saturday.

The deliberations centred on enhancing synergy between security forces, intelligence agencies and

the administration to strengthen peace efforts and eradicate Naxalism from the state," the CRPF said in a social media post.

The CRPF DG, before this meeting, also laid a wreath at the martyrs' memorial built recently by the force at its campus in Kondagaon district, the gateway to Bastar.

The memorial honours the memory of the 460 brave CRPF personnel, including 20 officers, who were killed in the line of duty in the Bastar region between 2003 and August 15, 2005.

At least 230 Naxalites have been killed in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh so far this year, according to the state police.

Of these, 209 were eliminated in the Bastar division, which comprises Bijapur, Bastar, Kanker, Kondagaon, Narayanpur, Sukma and Dantewada districts.

## Meghalaya Police files chargesheet against 8 people including Sonam in Raja Raghuvanshi murder case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Shillong

Meghalaya Police have filed a chargesheet against eight people, including Sonam, in connection with the sensational murder of her husband, Indore-based businessman Raja Raghuvanshi, during their honeymoon to Sohra in May this year, an officer said.

Police submitted a 790-page chargesheet, supported by material evidence and enclosures, before the court of the Judicial Magistrate First

Class, Sohra Sub-Division on Friday, Superintendent of Police, East Khasi Hills district, Vivke Syiem said in a statement.

According to police, Raja Raghuvanshi of Indore, Madhya Pradesh, and his wife Sonam had travelled to Shillong on May 21 before heading to Sohra.

On May 26, the couple were reported missing, prompting a massive search operation by Sohra police, the Special Operations Team (SOT), NDRF, SDRF, trekking groups and local villagers.



After days of intensive search, the body of Raja Raghuvanshi was recovered on June 2 from a deep gorge at Arliang Riat Kunongrim, Umblai, near the famous Wei Sawdong falls in Sohra.

A case was registered at Sohra police station under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Taking into account the gravity of the crime, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) was constituted, headed by East Khasi Hills SP (City) Herbert Kharkongor, along with other senior officers.

Investigators found that Sonam was in a relationship with Raj Kushwaha.

The duo, along with three hired assailants, allegedly conspired to eliminate Raghuvanshi under the pretext of a honeymoon.

The killing was carried out by Aakash Singh Rajput, Vishal Singh Chauhan and Anand Kurmi in Sonam's presence at the gorge, police said.

Within a week of the probe, five accused, including Sonam, were traced to Madhya Pradesh and Uttar

Pradesh.

Sonam Raghuvanshi, Raj Kushwaha, Akash Singh Rajput, Vishal Singh Chauhan and Anand Kurmi have been charged under 103(1) (murder), 238 (a) (disappearance of evidence) and 61(2) (criminal conspiracy) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the statement said.

Later, three more accused - Lokendra Tomar, Balla Ahirwar and Shilom James - were arrested from Gwalior, Shadora and Dewas for their alleged role in destroying evidence.

## Govt to host Sun Rise Festival to boost tourism: Khandu

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Itanagar

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday announced the launch of a five-day 'Sun Rise Festival' at Dong in Anjaw district, the easternmost village of India.

Khandu, in a post on X said, "Landed in Walong, Anjaw district, and will be heading towards Dong, the place where the first sun ray touches Indian soil."

The chief minister said the festival will be held from December 29 to January 2, offering visitors a unique opportunity to welcome the first dawn of the New Year in the 'Land of the Rising Sun'. "To boost tourism and create new opportunities for adventurers and nature lovers, I am delighted to announce that from this year onwards we will be hosting a 5-day 'Sun Rise Festival at Dong," Khandu said in the post.



Arunachal CM Pema Khandu landed in Walong and will be heading towards Dong

PIONEER PHOTO

Highlighting the natural and cultural richness of the region, Khandu invited people from across the country to experience the breathtaking landscape of Anjaw.

"Come, witness the first dawn of the New Year in the Land of the Rising Sun!" he added.

Officials in the state

tourism department said the festival is expected to feature local cultural performances, adventure activities, eco-tourism events, and community participation to showcase Anjaw's pristine environment and traditions.

Situated at an altitude of about 1,240 meters, Dong village lies at the tri-junction of India, China, and Myanmar.

It is the first place in the country to receive the sun's rays every morning, making it a symbolic and picturesque attraction for tourists, trekkers, and researchers alike.

In recent years, the state government has made efforts to improve connectivity to this remote area to tap its tourism potential.

## MoSPI begins domestic tourism survey in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Port Blair

To develop better tourism policies and world-class infrastructure facilities, the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has started Domestic Tourism Expenditure Survey (DTES) in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The main objective of the survey is to understand expenditure on domestic tourism along with information on household, visitors' profile and trip characteristics in relation to domestic overnight trips, required for preparation of Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) by the Ministry of Tourism (MoT).

A senior official at the Directorate of Information, Publicity and Tourism Office (IP&T) said, "The DTES will

help us understand better about tourism patterns and expenditure by travellers and their profile. It will also help us understand where we are lacking and what more needs to be done to make this archipelago a world-class tourism destination."

"The Directorate of Economics & Statistics is participating in this survey along with National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), Field Operation Division in Port Blair. We would like to urge all the tourism stakeholders to extend their cooperation to enumerators and supervisors during the data collection exercise. We will keep all information confidential," he said, while adding that the survey will continue till June 2026, but in Andaman and Nicobar Islands it may take some more time due to difficult

terrain and remoteness.

While elaborating more on DTES, he said the objective is to collect data on household expenses on domestic travel and tourism activities.

Besides, we will also collect information on visitors' profiles, the kind of trip they are opting for, and the amount they are spending on overnight, same-day leisure trips, on accommodation, local transport, food, and other services.

Once the DTES is done, it will feed all the data to the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), which measures the economic contribution of tourism to a national economy. In 2024, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands recorded a growth of 120 per cent in domestic travellers and 27 per cent rise in foreign tourist footfall.

Major tourist attractions, such as the National Memorial Cellular Jail (in Port Blair) and Baratang Limestone Caves at North and Middle Andaman district, experienced higher footfall in 2024. The number of visitors attending the Sound and Light Show at the National Memorial Cellular Jail saw a substantial rise, with 4,17,944 people witnessing the show in 2024, compared to 2,67,327 in 2023, the IP&T official said.

As per the tourism department, a total of 2,35,061 domestic and 4,461 foreign tourists travelled to Andaman and Nicobar Islands in 2022, while in 2023 the figure went up to 3,23,619 (domestic) and 9,025 (foreign) travellers.

In 2024, the domestic travellers rose to 7,10,397, while foreign tourists were 11,497.

## States Focus



### MATA VAISHNO DEVI PILGRIMAGE LIKELY TO RESUME NEXT WEEK

The pilgrimage to the Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine atop the Trikuta hills in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district is likely to resume next week after a fresh review of the weather advisory, officials said on Saturday. The yatra remained suspended for the 12th consecutive day on Saturday with the weatherman forecasting the possibility of moderate rain or thunder showers over a few districts of Jammu division towards late night or early morning hours on September 7 and 8. "A decision to resume the yatra will be taken next week. The track is cleared of the debris and is getting a facelift after the recent damage due to landslides triggered by heavy rains," an official of the shrine board said.



### PUNJAB: WATER LEVEL IN PONG DAM DIPS marginally

The water level in the Pong dam marginally dipped to 1,394.19 feet on Saturday, though it remained four feet above its upper limit of 1,390 feet, officials said. On Friday evening, the water level in the dam was 1,394.8 feet. The water inflow also declined to 47,162 cusecs from 99,673 cusecs on Friday, while the outflow remained unchanged at 99,673 cusecs, according to the officials.

## Students hire chopper to reach exam centre in Uttarakhand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Pithoragarh (Uttarakhand)

Four BED students from Rajasthan hired a helicopter to reach their exam centre in Munsiyari here as landslides caused by heavy rain have left many roads blocked in Uttarakhand. Residents of Rajasthan's Balotra town, these students of Uttarakhand Open University had to reach RS Tolia PG College in Munsiyari to take the exam. One of these students, Omaram Jat, said, "When we reached Haldwani on August 31, we came to know that all the roads leading to Munsiyari were closed due to landslides. We thought we would not be able to take our exam."



He said then they came to know about a company which provides helicopter service between Haldwani and Munsiyari. However, they found that the service was temporarily unavailable due to bad weather. "Then we spoke to the CEO of Heritage Aviation

and requested him to take us from Haldwani to Munsiyari. We told him that we would lose a year if we do not reach the examination centre. After this, he dispatched two pilots and a helicopter who safely took us to Munsiyari and brought us back to Haldwani," Omaram said. The one-way fare for the helicopter ride was ₹5,200, he said. Besides Omaram, the other three students are Mangaram Jat, Prakash Godara Jat and Narpat Kumar. Somesh Kumar, in-charge of BED examination of Uttarakhand Open University, said the examination centre was selected by the candidates themselves.

### NDA-ally AGP to move SC, seek exemption of Assam from immigrant foreigners' directive

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), part of the BJP-led Government in Assam, on Saturday said it will approach the Supreme Court (SC) to exempt the Northeastern State from the Centre's recent directive on immigrant foreigners. The party asserted it was in Opposition to any step that goes against the spirit of the Assam Accord, including the recent order. The Assam Accord was signed on August 15, 1985 after a violent anti-foreigner movement, which claimed the lives of thousands. "We have decided to file a writ petition before the Supreme Court, asking for

exemption of Assam from the order," AGP vice-president and former MP Kumar Deepak Das told a press conference here. "Any step that seeks to dilute or is against the Assam Accord will be protested vehemently by our party," he said. The Centre's order, issued under the recently implemented Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, allows Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who entered India on or before December 31, 2024, to stay in the country without valid travel documents, if they fled religious persecution. In a departure from the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 that earmarked December 31, 2014 as the entry deadline for non-Muslim immigrants to India as eligibility for granting of citizenship, the latest order extends the entry date for such immigrants by another 10 years as grounds for their non-prosecution. Asked whether the AGP will continue to remain part of the NDA, Das said no decision has been taken in this regard. "Last evening, we had a party meeting in which it was decided to approach the apex court. We have full faith in the judiciary and believe it will rule in our favour," he said. The AGP had earlier filed another writ petition before the Supreme Court, seeking similar exemption.

## BJP leader demands apology from Kerala CM before Ayyappa event

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Kochi

Senior BJP leader V Muraleedharan on Saturday said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his Government should apologise to Ayyappa devotees before organising the Global Ayyappa Sangamam. He also condemned the Travancore Devaswom Board's (TDB) decision to invite DMK ministers to the summit, calling them opponents of "Sanatana Dharma." "The state government and Chief Minister should first apologise for taking a stand to alter traditions at Sabarimala earlier. They should also apologise for calling some



Sabarimala temple

devotees fake after they had to return without completing the pilgrimage," he told reporters here. He wanted the state government to initiate steps to implement the Sabarimala master plan. "The state government, which has done nothing in the last nine to ten years, has now

come up with an Ayyappa summit. Devotees can clearly understand the intention behind it," he added. Muraleedharan also slammed the Travancore Devaswom Board's (TDB) decision to invite DMK ministers to the summit, calling them "opponents of Sanatana Dharma."

## 13.79-km Shimla ropeway approved: Deputy CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Shimla

Himachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Mukhes Agnihotri on Saturday said that the final approval has been granted for a 13.79 km ropeway project in Shimla, terming it a step towards turning the state into a tourism hub like Switzerland. The project to be built at ₹1,734.70 crore will take four years to complete, he said, according to a statement. Agnihotri said the Shimla ropeway, as others like it, will help reduce traffic congestion, cut greenhouse gas emissions and will be modern, eco-friendly mode of transport. The ropeway will have three lines, 14 sections and 13 stations, linking the state Secretariat, hospitals, schools, the railway station, and the main bus stand in the State Capital. Agnihotri said that under the Smart City Project, 19 infrastructure projects worth ₹50 crore and three more projects worth ₹25 crore would be built in Shimla by next December. Other ropeways under construction in the state, he said, were the ₹65-crore Baba Balaknath temple



ropeway, the ₹278.62-crore Bijli Mahadev ropeway and the ₹76.50 crore Mata Chintpurni Temple ropeway. All these projects have been envisaged to be built by June 2027. The country's first rural ropeway, the Baglamukhi ropeway, was inaugurated in December 2024. The ropeway, built for ₹53.89 crore, caters to 69,000 passengers and presents itself as a lifeline for

locals and relief operations during disasters. Agnihotri said the work on the 120-km Dhalpur to Peej ropeway in Kullu was apace. This ₹80-crore project is expected to be completed by June 2027. He said the state government has plans to connect Shimla to Parwanoo through a 38-km ropeway. The public-private partnership project will cost ₹5,602.56 crore.

## Sasikala paid ₹450 crore in old notes to buy sugar factory in TN during demonetisation: CBI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

VK Sasikala, a close aide of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, had allegedly paid ₹450 crore in old high-denomination currency notes to buy a sugar factory during demonetisation in 2016, according to an FIR lodged by the CBI. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had registered the case on the Madras High Court's directions against Padmaadevi Sugars Limited (PSL) for allegedly causing a loss of ₹120 crore to the Indian Overseas Bank (IOB). The account was declared fraud in 2020. Sasikala is not named as an accused in the FIR. The sugar factory of PSL (formerly known as SV Sugar Mills) that the bank had taken as collateral was attached by the income-tax department under the Benami Properties Transactions Act, according to the FIR. It is alleged that the I-T department's searches in connection with a case against Sasikala in 2017 resulted in a seizure of documents and loose sheets. The documents show that "during the period of demonetisation, an amount of ₹450 crore was paid for the purchase of a sugar mill



belonging to the Patel Group", the bank has alleged in its complaint to the CBI. The complaint is now part of the FIR. Jayalalithaa passed away on December 5, 2016 at a private hospital in Chennai. The IOB complaint has alleged that Hitesh Shivgan Patel, who was managing the financial affairs of PSL and was also the in-charge of Prabhat Group, had stated on oath that he had received a total of ₹450 crore in old high-denomination notes towards the sale of the sugar factory at Kancheepuram. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding the sale of the factory was entered into by Hitesh Shivgan Patel, his father Shivgan Patel and brother Dinesh Patel, the

complaint has alleged. The MoU and original share certificates of SV Sugar Mills Limited, which were held by the Patels and entities of the Patel Group, were seized by the I-T department during searches on November 18, 2017. The tax department termed it benami property as the Patel Group was holding it even after the payment of ₹450 crore towards the sale of PSL, along with shares and assets, for the alleged benefit of Sasikala, who paid the amount for the purchase. The complaint alleges that Sasikala is the beneficial owner and the property in the instant case — the sugar factory of the PSL in Kancheepuram, along with the land, all the machinery,

installations etc — is benami. After taking over the investigation in July, the CBI conducted searches at six locations in Tamil Nadu on August 12 in connection with the case, officials said. "The allegations in the FIR include fraudulent availing of various credit facilities from the Indian Overseas Bank, misappropriation of property, diversion of bank funds to sister concerns and unrelated entities, siphoning of funds to related parties and interest-free advances to private firms," a CBI spokesperson had said. The charges also include cash deposits of suspicious origin during the period of demonetisation in 2016, the spokesperson of the agency had said in a statement. The company and its associate entities are also suspected of transferring funds to shell or benami concerns to conceal the end use of the borrowed amounts, she had said. Spanned across six locations in Tamil Nadu, including Tenkasi, Chennai and Tiruchirapalli, the search operation was conducted at residential premises of the company's directors and officers as well as at Appu Hotels Limited and Otium Wood Industries, which allegedly had suspicious transactions with PSL.

## DOMESTIC TOURISM EXPENDITURE SURVEY BEGINS IN ANDAMAN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Port Blair

To develop better tourism policies and world-class infrastructure facilities, the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has started Domestic Tourism Expenditure Survey (DTES) in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, an official said. The main objective of the survey is to understand expenditure on domestic tourism along with information on household, visitors' profile and trip characteristics in relation to domestic overnight trips, required for preparation of Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) by the Ministry of Tourism (MoT). A senior official at the Directorate of Information, Publicity and Tourism Office (IP&T) said, "The DTES will help us understand better about tourism patterns and expenditure by travellers and their profile. It will also help us understand where we are lacking and what more needs to be done to make this archipelago a world-class tourism destination." "The Directorate of Economics & Statistics is participating in this survey along with National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), Field Operation Division in Port Blair. We would like to urge all the tourism stakeholders to extend their cooperation to enumerators and supervisors during the data collection exercise. We will keep all information confidential," he said, while adding that the survey will continue till June 2026, but in Andaman and Nicobar Islands it may take some more time due to difficult terrain and remoteness. While elaborating more on DTES, he said the objective is to collect data on household expenses on domestic travel and tourism activities.

## Opposition term Forest Conservation Amendment Act 'serious threat' to Mizoram

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Aizawl

Opposition parties and several organisations in Mizoram have termed the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act (FCAA), 2023, adopted by the Assembly, as a "serious threat" to the State and demanded the repeal of the resolution endorsing the amendment act. The Mizoram Assembly during its recent monsoon session adopted a fresh resolution to extend the FCAA, 2023, to the State with effect from this year, following a

motion introduced by Environment, Forests and Climate Change minister Lalthansanga on August 27. Main Opposition Mizo National Front (MNF), Congress, Zo Re-Unification Organisation (ZORO) and Joint Civil Society Mizoram (CJM), a coalition of several organisations, have blamed the Mizoram Government for endorsing the new law, which they called a "serious threat" to the State. MNF media cell secretary Lallianmawia Jongte said on Friday that the party, following the joint meeting of the



FROM THE  
WORLD

UNITER STATE

Judge blocks  
Trump move

A federal judge on Friday ruled against the Trump administration from ending temporary legal protections that have granted more than 1 million people from Haiti and Venezuela the right to live and work in the United States. The ruling by US District Judge Edward Chen of San Francisco for the plaintiffs means 600,000 Venezuelans whose temporary protections expired in April or whose protections were about to expire September 10 have status to stay and work in the United States.

BRAZIL

Bolsonaro's trial  
gets expends

The Brazilian Supreme Court on Friday added an extra day to sessions planned next week to decide whether former president Jair Bolsonaro and seven other close allies are guilty of attempting a coup. Justices had initially planned hearings on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, but Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who is overseeing the case, asked for an additional day, which court Chairman Cristiano Zanin granted. There will now also be proceedings on Thursday.

AUSTRALIA

Defence Minister  
visits frigate

Australian Defence Minister toured a Japanese Navy frigate of the same Japan-made model that Australia has chosen for its new fleet, as the two countries step up military ties to deter China's growing influence. Japanese Defense Minister hosted Marles for the visit aboard the JS Mikuma, a month after Australia chose Mogami-class frigates produced by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to replace Australia's aging fleet of ANZAC-class warships.

Israel calls Gaza City residents to leave

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Deir Al-Balah

Israel's Army called on Saturday that all the Palestinians in Gaza City to move to a humanitarian area it designated in the south as it expanded its operations in preparation for seizing the famine-stricken city, including targeting high-rise buildings. Parts of the city, home to nearly 1 million people, are already considered "red zones," where evacuation orders have been issued ahead of the expected offensive. Aid groups have repeatedly warned that a large-scale evacuation of Gaza City would exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation, after the world's leading authority on food crises declared the city to be gripped by famine, Palestinians have been uprooted and displaced multiple times during the nearly two-year-long war, with many being too weak to move and having nowhere to go. Israeli military spokesperson Avichay Adraee wrote in X that the army declared Muwasi — a makeshift tent camp in southern Gaza Strip — a humanitarian area and urged everyone in the city, which it called a Hamas stronghold and specified as a combat zone, to leave. The army said they could travel in cars down a designated road without being searched. The military, in a statement, provided a map showing the area in Khan Younis that the humanitarian area encompasses,



FILE PHOTO

which includes the block where Nasser Hospital is located. The area around the hospital has been considered a red zone, though not the medical facility itself. Last week, Israel struck the hospital, killing 22 people, including Mariam Dagga, who worked for The Associated Press and other media outlets. The hospital was not under evacuation. The designated safe zone would include field hospitals, water pipelines, food and tents, and relief efforts "will continue on an ongoing basis in cooperation with the UN and international organisations," the statement said. The declaration of a so-called "humanitarian zone" in southern Gaza was done by the Israeli authorities unilaterally, and the UN

and the wider humanitarian community are not part of that designation, said Olga Cherevko, a spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Israeli forces have struck such humanitarian areas throughout the war, including Muwasi, which they previously declared a safe zone, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. Israel on Saturday issued warnings for two high-rises in Gaza City and the tents around them, saying Hamas had infrastructure inside or near them. It comes a day after after Israel struck another high-rise building in Gaza City, saying Hamas used it for surveillance, without providing evidence. Despite Israel's warnings many Palestinians in Gaza

City say they won't leave. "They only order us to leave from one town to another? What are we going to do with our children? Those who have an ill person, or an elderly or a wounded, where are we going to take them?" said a woman who identified herself as Um Haitham. Israel's offensive has also sparked widespread protests among Israelis who fear it will endanger hostages still held in Gaza, some of whom are believed to be in Gaza City. There are 48 such hostages, 20 of them believed by Israel to be alive. Hamas released a propaganda video Friday of two hostages in Gaza City. The video shows Guy Gilboa-Dalal in a car, at one point joined by another hostage, Alon Ohel. Families

of the hostages say the government isn't prioritising their loved ones, with most looking to US President Donald Trump to get the captives out. On Saturday, families of the hostages thanked Trump and his envoy Steve Witkoff for their "unwavering determination, courage and compassion" in advancing ceasefire negotiations. The statement, released by the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, said Trump demonstrates that "true leadership is measured by bold decisions." A lasting ceasefire has so far been elusive. Last month Hamas said it had accepted a proposal from Arab mediators for a ceasefire. Israel has not yet responded and says it is still committed to defeating the militant group.

Imran Khan slams  
Army Chief Munir



Former PM Imran Khan and Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir FILE PHOTO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Lahore

Pakistan's jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday launched a fresh attack on Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, accusing him of "inflicting oppression" on the people to prolong his rule. The patron-in-chief of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) has accused Munir of imposing an undeclared martial law, installing a puppet Government under Shehbaz Sharif by stealing people's mandate in last February's election, and committing atrocities against his party workers. "Today Asim Munir is inflicting oppression on the people of Pakistan to prolong his own rule, thus weakening the country," Khan said in a post on X. The 72-year-old cricketer-turned politician has been in jail for over two years in multiple cases. "Those (Munir and company) who have stolen the people's mandate are gripped by fear. It is because of this fear that oppression against us is increasing," he said. Khan also alleged that he and his wife Bushra Bibi are being kept in "solitary confinement" and being subjected to "mental torture only in the hope that I will break down and abandon my ideology".

The rise of an independent State — Bangladesh. "The only difference between 1971 and today is that now the people are more aware. Social media has exposed all the facts before the public, and the people have learned to stand up for their rights against tyranny," he said. "That is why this oppressive system will soon come to an end. The time has come for the people's voice to be heard," said the former premier, who was ousted from power in April 2022 through a vote of no-confidence. Khan also strongly condemned the bomb blast at a rally in Balochistan held in connection with the death anniversary of Sardar Attaullah Mengal, in which at least 15 people were killed this week. "I express my condolences to (Balochistan National Party chief and Mengal's son) Akhtar Mengal. The situation in Balochistan is worsening by the day because elected representatives are not allowed to govern," he said. Khan called his party to "fully participate" in the strike called by Mahmood Achakzai in Balochistan on Monday. "The people of Balochistan deserve to be freed from terrorism and the hybrid system imposed on them," he said. Khan said that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, an operation has been launched to weaken the PTI Government. "This must be immediately stopped by the provincial Government. I direct KP CM Gandapur in particular to strongly resist and halt this operation, as the people of the province are already suffering due to the floods" he said.

Women dominate UK's top Cabinet posts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ London

British PM Keir Starmer is on Saturday finalising a major reshuffle of all levels of ministerial jobs, which has resulted in women members of Parliament being appointed to the senior-most Cabinet posts. Pakistani origin Shabana Mahmood's promotion to the post of Home Secretary, and the former incumbent at the Home Office, Yvette Cooper, being appointed Foreign Secretary means that along with Chancellor Rachel Reeves, the top three Government jobs are now being steered by



British PM Keir Starmer

women for the first time. It follows the exit of key Labour Government figure, Angela Rayner, who was forced to step down from the Cabinet as deputy prime minister and housing secretary after a breach of the ministerial code of ethics over

underpayment of tax on a new home. "It is the honour of my life to serve as Home Secretary. The first responsibility of Government is the safety of its citizens. Every day in this job, I will be devoted to that purpose," said Mahmood, as she took charge as Home

Secretary on Friday evening. The former justice secretary is widely seen as a no-nonsense minister who took a hardline approach in the Ministry of Justice to tackle a crisis of shortage in prison places. Her move to the Home Office is being viewed as a sign that the Starmer-led Government intends to get tougher on the illegal migration crisis amid a growing challenge from the anti-immigration Reform UK party led by Nigel Farage. Yvette move to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, replacing David Lammy.

TEAR GAS FIRED  
AT PROTESTERS  
IN SERBIA

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Novi

Baton-wielding riot police in a northern Serbia town fired tear gas and charged at thousands of peaceful protesters who were demanding free elections and justice after months of demonstrations against the autocratic rule of President Aleksandar Vucic. The protest led by university students came more than 10 months. The disaster ignited a wave of public outrage over alleged State corruption and negligence, which demonstrators cite as causes of the collapse.

Earthquake in Afghanistan's east wipes  
out homes, generations and livelihoods

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Jalalabad

Ahmad Khan Safi had a good life in Afghanistan. The farmer raised livestock in the Dewagal Valley of Kunar Province and people travelled from across the country to visit the area. Tourists marvelled at its verdant landscape, winding paths and formidable slopes. The valley appeared untouched. It was hard to reach, so inaccessible that people had to change cars four times from the city of Jalalabad, in neighbouring Nangarhar province and walk the rest of the way for several hours or ride a mule. Safi had built a 10-room house from mud and stone because wood and cement were too expensive and impractical to transport. The



home collapsed as soon as a major earthquake that killed at least 2,000 people struck on August 31. His shock was quickly replaced by fear and panic. "I was trapped in the mud and couldn't breathe," he told The Associated Press

from a Jalalabad hospital. "I struggled a lot to get out, but was hit by rocks and fell so hard that my leg was injured." He spent the night under the rubble, not knowing if his family was alive or dead. Help came the following morning, around 10

am, when people arrived on foot from other districts. Region's remoteness complicating rescue efforts The devastating quake was not the strongest or deadliest in Afghanistan's recent history. But remote and rugged Kunar has defied rescue efforts.

Iran paves over mass grave of 1979 revolution victims

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Dubai

A desert-like patch of sand and scrawny trees in the largest cemetery in Iran's Capital has been the final resting place for decades for some of the thousands killed in the mass executions that followed Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

FINAL RESTING  
PLACE FOR DECADES  
FOR SOME OF THE  
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IN THE MASS  
EXECUTIONS THAT  
FOLLOWED IRAN'S  
1979 REVOLUTION

Now, Lot 41 at the sprawling Behesht-e Zahra cemetery in Tehran is becoming a parking lot, with their remains likely beneath asphalt. Images from Planet Labs PBC show the parking lot being laid over the site, where opponents of Iran's nascent theocracy and others were rapidly buried following their executions at gunpoint or by hanging. The site, long monitored by surveillance cameras searching for any sign of dissent or remembrance at what officials have referred to as the "scorched section,"

has seen State-sponsored demolition in the past, with grave markers vandalised and overturned. Iranian officials have acknowledged the recent decision to build the parking, without going into detail about those buried there. That's as a United Nations special rapporteur in 2024 described Iran's destruction of graveyards as an effort to "conceal or erase data that could serve as potential evidence to avoid legal accountability" over its actions. "Most of the graves and gravestones of dissidents were desecrated, and the

trees in the section were deliberately dried out," said Shahin Nasiri, a lecturer at the University of Amsterdam who has researched Lot 41. "The decision to convert this section into a parking lot fits into this broader pattern and represents the final phase of the destruction process." Last week, both a Tehran deputy mayor and the cemetery's manager acknowledged the plans to create a parking lot on the site. "In this place, hypocrites of the early days of the revolution were buried and it has remained without change for years," Tehran's deputy mayor Davood told journalists in footage aired by State television. "We proposed that the authorities reorganise the space. Since we needed a parking lot, the permission for the preparation of the space was received. The job is ongoing in a precise and smart way." The satellite

photos show the work began in earnest at the start of August. An August 18 image shows about half of Lot 41 freshly paved over, with construction material still on site. Trucks and piles of asphalt can be seen at the site, suggesting work continued. The reformist newspaper Shargh quote Javad Tajik, who oversees the Behesht-e Zahra cemetery, as saying the parking lot would help people visit a neighbouring lot, where authorities plan to bury those killed in the Iran-Israel war in June. A major airstrike campaign by Israel killed prominent military generals and others. The decision to re-purpose the graveyard appears to clash with Iran's own regulations, which allow for a cemetery to re-purpose land where internments took place after more than 30 years as long as families of the dead agree with the decision.

5 killed in suspected family  
dispute case in Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Peshawar

Five family members including two women were shot dead by armed assailants in a case of suspected family dispute in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, officials said on Saturday. The incident occurred late Friday night in the Malakand district's Dheri Kundako area, according to officials of the Rescue 1122 emergency services. Five members of the same family, including three men and two women, were killed. The ages of those killed ranged from 18 to 85. According to the police, the family's son-in-law allegedly shot the family members dead. Upon receiving information, Rescue 1122 teams reached the scene and shifted the bodies of the deceased to DHQ Hospital Bathkela. Police launched a search operation and raided various suspected hideouts of the culprits in the area.



Separate mob violence  
incidents chill Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dhaka

Bangladesh witnessed two chilling incidents of violence when an Islamist mob burnt the corpse of a spiritual figure desecrating his grave, while another group set on fire the central office of Jatiya Party, an ally of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League. Police and media reports said a group of people claiming to be Muslim "monotheistic mass" burnt the body of Nura Pagla, known as a Sufi dervish, nearly two weeks after his death, desecrating his grave, exhuming the corpse and vandalising his shrine in western Rajbari district after Friday prayers. A subsequent clash between Pagla's followers and the Islamists left one person dead and over 100 wounded when vehicles of police and that of the local administrative chief were set on fire.



# PM to skips general debate at high-level UNGA session

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ United Nations

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not address the general debate at the annual high-level session of the United Nations General Assembly later this month, according to a revised provisional list of speakers issued here.

The 80th session of the UN General Assembly will open on September 9. The high-level General Debate will run from September 23-29, with Brazil as the traditional first speaker of the session, followed by the US. US President Donald Trump will address world leaders from the iconic UNGA podium on September 23, his first address to the UN session in his second term in the White House. According to a revised provisional list of speakers for the high-level general debate of the 80th session of the General Assembly released Friday, India will be represented by a 'minister'. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will address the session on September 27.

According to a previous provisional list of speakers issued in July, Modi was scheduled to address the general debate on September 26. The heads of Government of Israel, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh are scheduled to address the UNGA general debate on September 26. Modi had travelled to the US in February this year for a bilateral



meeting with Trump at the White House in Washington. Trump has imposed tariffs totalling 50 per cent on India, including 25 per cent for Delhi's purchases of Russian oil.

The UNGA list of speakers for the general debate is provisional and there is always possibility of changes in schedules and speakers ahead of the commencement of the high-level week. The list will continue to be updated accordingly.

Considered the "busiest diplomatic season" of the year at the United Nations Headquarters, the high-level session opens in September annually. The session this year comes amid the continued Israel-Hamas war as well as the Ukraine conflict. The theme for the 80th session is 'Better together: 80 years and

more for peace, development and human rights'.

The session will open with a meeting to 'Commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the United Nations' on September 22. Marking the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, the UN General Assembly will convene a high-level meeting centred on the theme "Recommitting to, resourcing and accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls". The meeting will reflect on progress since the landmark 1995 conference in Beijing and highlight achievements, best practices, gaps, and ongoing challenges in advancing gender equality worldwide,

the UN said. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will convene a Climate Summit on September 24 to serve as a platform for world leaders to present their new national climate action plans and seize the benefits of the new clean energy era.

Other high-level meetings to be held during the week include Summit for a Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Global Economy, Non communicable Diseases and Mental Health and Well-being 30th Anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth, Launch of the Global Dialogue on AI Governance, International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and Situation of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar.

# London Police detain demonstrators supporting banned group Palestine Action



ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ London

Police on Saturday arrested some of the hundreds of protesters who gathered outside Parliament in London on Saturday to defy a ban on the group Palestine Action, which has been deemed a terrorist organisation by the Government.

Defend Our Juries, the campaign group organising the protest, said 1,500 people were taking part, holding signs

reading "I oppose genocide, I support Palestine Action." Within minutes, police began arresting the demonstrators, as bystanders chanted "Shame on you" and "Met Police, pick a side, justice or genocide." "Expressing support for a proscribed organisation is a criminal offence under the Terrorism Act," the Metropolitan Police force said on social media. "Where our officers see offences, we will make arrests." More than 700

people were arrested at earlier protests, and 138 have been charged under the Terrorism Act. Mike Higgins, 62, who is blind and uses a wheelchair, was arrested last month but returned to demonstrate on Saturday.

"And I'm a terrorist? That's the joke of it," he said. "I've already been arrested under the Terrorism Act and I suspect I will be today. "Of course I'll keep coming back. What choice do I have?" The

Government proscribed Palestine Action in July after activists broke into a Royal Air Force base and vandalized planes to protest against what they called Britain's support for Israel's offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The activists sprayed red paint into the engines of two tanker planes and caused further damage with crowbars. The group is challenging the ban in court, saying it is a peaceful protest organisation.

# Floods kill 50, impact 4 million in Pak's Punjab province: Official



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Lahore

Floods in Pakistan's Punjab province have killed 50 people and impacted around four million others since August 23, officials said on Saturday.

The province with a population of 130 million people has been witnessing torrential rainfall since mid-August, resulting in almost all rivers and tributaries flowing over danger levels.

"Around four million people in Punjab have been affected/displaced by the floods so far. Around 1.84 million people trapped in floodwaters have been relocated to safety, while 1.34 million animals have been relocated," Punjab's Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Director General Irfan Ali Kathia told a press conference here. "The floods have claimed 50 lives in the affected areas of Punjab and financial assistance of PKR 1 million each will be provided to the fam-

ilies of the deceased," Kathia said. He said 3,900 villages have been submerged in floodwater from three rivers -- Ravi, Chenab and Sutlej -- and crops on thousands of acres have also washed away. Kathia said Sialkot and Gujrat are the worst-hit districts by floods, and added that more rainfall is forecast across various divisions of Punjab. "The flood situation remains critical, with water levels at dangerous highs at Ganda Singh Wala, Head Sulaimanki, Head Qadirabad, Khanki, and Muhammadwala," he said. He, however, said that no new alert has been issued for any river in the last 18 to 22 hours, and water levels in the Sutlej have been receding over the past 24 hours. "At Ganda Singh Wala, the water level is also decreasing," he said.

"Currently, 71,000 cusecs are flowing at Jassar, 110,000 cusecs at Ravi Siphon, 107,000 cusecs at Shahdara, and 170,000 cusecs at Sadhnai," he said, adding that water levels at Multan

and Sher Shah have also dropped. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has said a low-pressure system is currently located over Madhya Pradesh and is likely to move west-northwest, and may reach Rajasthan and adjoining parts of Sindh on Saturday.

Under the influence of this weather system, Punjab, Sindh and Islamabad may face heavy to very heavy rains, it said. Train operations in Pakistan are also affected as five rail sections in the Punjab province have been suspended due to the damage caused to the railway tracks by floods.

Because of floods and heavy rains, power distribution companies, including the Lahore Electric Supply Company (Lesco) and Gujranwala Electric Power Company also faced a massive loss of electricity supply infrastructure. According to NDMA data, between June 26 when the monsoon rains started till August 31.

# NEPAL'S INDRA JATRA FESTIVAL BEGINS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Kathmandu

The biggest festival of Kathmandu Valley, Indra Jatra, began on Saturday with the worshipping of Indra, the King of Heaven, also known as the God of rains. Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, Kathmandu Mayor Balendra Shah and other dignitaries visited Basantapur to observe the festival and offer prayers.

Chariots of living deities Kumari, Bhairav and Ganesh were also pulled at Hanumandhoka, Basantapur and other parts of Kathmandu. President Paudel amidst a special ceremony worshipped Goddess Kumari and received her blessings as per centuries old tradition.

The eight-day festival starts on Bhadra Shukla Chaturdashi as per the lunar calendar. On Thursday, two days before the festival, a wooden pole known as Indradhwoja with flags on its top, was erected in Hanumandhoka.

On Sunday, the second day of the festival, known as Yanya Punhi, the Newar community of Kathmandu enjoy a traditional feast consisting mainly of beaten rice, meat, egg, beans and bara, a kind of bread made of black lentil.

In addition to Kathmandu, the festival is also observed in Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Dhulikhel and Dolakha districts in central Nepal. During the festival, various cultural items -- including Mahakali dance, Lakhe dance, Pulukisi dance and Bhakku dance -- are performed and Dasavata is shown in the core areas of Basantapur and Hanumandhoka complex. There is a legend behind the Indra Jatra festival.



Japanese Prince Hisahito, son of Crown Prince Akishino, wearing ancient ceremonial costume, leaves for a ceremony by a carriage at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo Saturday as he celebrated his 19th birthday and attended the coming-of-age ceremony at the palace

# Oncologist welcome proposal for cancer notification

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ New York

An eminent New York-based oncologist has welcomed the recent recommendation by a parliamentary committee that cancer should be declared a notifiable disease across India, saying it marks a turning-point in the fight against cancer.

Last month, a parliamentary committee recommended that cancer should be declared a notifiable disease across all States and Union Territories.

Headed by Narain Dass Gupta, the Committee on Petitions, Rajya Sabha, in its 163rd report, said reliable data is vital for assessing public health issues, particularly cancer, where comprehensive information is essential to track trends, design policies and plan infrastructure. "The recent

## PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED THAT CANCER SHOULD BE DECLARED A NOTIFIABLE DISEASE

recommendation by the Rajya Sabha committee is both timely and essential. It marks a turning-point in India's fight against cancer," Dr Dattatreya Nuri said.

"As an Indian-American cancer doctor, I firmly believe this step will catalyse stronger surveillance, targeted prevention, fairer resource distribution, and ultimately -- better outcomes for millions," he said.

Padma Shri awardee Nuri has held various academic, clinical, research, and administrative positions at Memorial Sloan Kettering

Cancer Centre and as Professor and Director of the Cancer Centre at New York Presbyterian Hospital, Cornell University.

Currently, he is an advisor to the Governments of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for cancer care services. He said that mandating the reporting of cancer cases would dramatically enhance the quality and authenticity of incidence data, a foundational step for informed policy. "This step has already been taken by several state Governments in India, but a national step has been anticipated by many," he said.

Nuri added that in India, the National Cancer Registry Programme (NCRP), managed by ICMR-NCIDR, currently covers just 16-18 per cent of the population. Without legal backing, data collection remains fragmented and opaque, he

said. "Only through a notifiable disease framework -- legally obligating hospitals and practitioners to report cancer -- can we hope to build a truly comprehensive national database," he said. He further said that enhanced surveillance yields immediate dividends and robust, realtime epidemiological data enable precise identification of high-incidence regions, detection of changes in demographic patterns (such as the concerning rise of oral cancer among those under 40), and the ability to link emerging trends to risk-factor exposures.

"These insights empower policymakers to deploy targeted prevention strategies -- tobacco control, HPV vaccination, anti-pollution measures, and regionally tailored screening programmes -- with real confidence," he said.



# Argentina's Milei embroiled in bribery scandal

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Buenos Aires

Argentines are so used to the corruption in their political system that even Peronists -- supporters of the populist movement that dominated Argentina's politics for decades -- employ a fatalistic maxim to describe their politicians: "Roban, pero hacen," or, "They steal, but they get it done." But for the past two weeks, Argentines have been riveted by a ballooning graft scandal drawing in close associates of libertarian President Javier Milei, the wild-haired economist who won Argentina's 2023 election in part by campaigning as an outsider against the corrupt, Peronist-dominated elite -- "the caste," he calls it -- whose unbridled spending helped precipitate Argentina's economic crisis. At a time of extreme fiscal austerity, the allegations that his powerful sister and chief of staff, Karina Milei.



# Thousands pay tribute to Giorgio Armani

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Milan

Hundreds of ordinary admirers and VIPs paid their last respects on Saturday to Giorgio Armani, remembered by Milan's mayor as a "man of extraordinary elegance" who left an indelible mark on the city and the global fashion world. Armani died Thursday at 91 at his home in central Milan surrounded by loved ones. His fashion house said he worked up to the end. One of his final projects was a runway show marking 50 years of his signature Giorgio Armani brand, which is due to close Milan Fashion Week later this month. Mourners filed into the Armani Theater, where Armani regularly showed his ready-to-wear runway collections. Rows of candles in paper bags cast a shimmering light and piano music by Italian composer Ludovico Einaudi played softly in the background.



Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, MD of Pride East Entertainment at the poster release ceremony of movie 'Koka Deuta Nati aru Hati- 2' in Guwahati

## PROSPECT

### INDIAN BANK MIGRATES TO SECURE WEB PORTAL



Public sector Indian Bank has successfully migrated its corporate website to 'www.Indianbank.Bank.In' domain, in line with the Reserve Bank of India directive, aimed at providing stronger safeguards against fraud and enhancing public confidence in digital banking solutions. The Chennai-headquartered bank has taken up the initiative under the Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT) which is the exclusive registrar for this domain. According to a press release issued by the bank on Saturday, the '.Bank.In' domain is reserved exclusively for banks, and provides stronger safeguards to combat fraud, strengthen the cybersecurity framework and enhance public confidence in digital banking and help customers identify genuine banking websites. The bank has migrated to a secure domain, reaffirming its commitment to customer safety and secure digital banking solutions, the release added.

### PNB SIGNS ₹21,000 CRORE MoU WITH RAJASTHAN GOVERNMENT

Punjab National Bank (PNB) on Saturday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Rajasthan Government to extend '21,000 crore in financial support under the State's rising Rajasthan initiative. PNB MD and CEO Ashok Chandra said the bank was "delighted to partner in Rajasthan's ambitious growth story", adding that its wide presence and digital capabilities would help drive socio-economic progress. During his Jaipur visit, Chandra also distributed 2,000 loan sanction letters to women entrepreneurs at a self-help group loan distribution ceremony attended by nearly 3,000 SHG members. He urged MSMEs to leverage PNB's digital platforms for easier access to Government schemes.



**AVG LOGISTICS LIMITED**  
Regd Office: 25, DDA Market, Savita Vihar, Delhi-110092  
Corporate Office: 102, 1st Floor, Jhilmit Metro Complex Delhi-110095  
CIN: L60200DL2010PLC198327; email- praveen@avglogistics.com  
Website: www.avglogistics.com; Ph: 011-22124356

**NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given that the 16th Annual General Meeting ("AGM") of the Company scheduled to be held on September 30, 2025 at 10:00 A.M. (IST) at Bliss and Blessings Banquet, Near Jhilmit Metro Station, Delhi-110095, and resolution set out in the notice are proposed to be passed by the members of AVG Logistics Limited ("the Company") by way of remote e-voting process ("e-voting"), pursuant to the provisions of Section 108 and all other applicable provisions, if any, of the Act, read together with Rules 20 of the Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 (including any statutory modification(s) or re-enactment(s) thereof, for the time being in force) ("Rules"), Regulation 44 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 (the "SEBI Listing Regulations"), Secretarial Standard on General Meetings ("SS-2") issued by the Institute of Company Secretaries of India and any other applicable law, rules and regulations (including any statutory modification(s) or re-enactment(s) thereof, for the time being in force), and as amended from time to time:  
The Company has engaged the services of InstaVote MUFG Intime (<https://instavote.linkintime.co.in>) as the agency to provide e-voting facility. In accordance with the MCA Circulars, members can vote through the remote e-voting process. Accordingly, the Company is pleased to provide remote e-voting facility to all its members to cast their votes electronically. Members shall update their mobile number/contact number/address/e-mail address with the relevant Depository Participant and Company at all times.  
Members are requested to read the instructions in the Notes in the AGM Notice to cast their vote electronically **which will commence at 9:00 A.M. IST on Saturday, 27 September 2025 and conclude at 5:00 P.M. IST on Monday, 29 September 2025**, (the last day to cast vote electronically).  
During this period, Members holding equity shares as on Tuesday, 23 September 2024 ('Cut-Off date/Record Date') may cast their vote by remote e-voting before the AGM. The remote e-voting module shall be disabled by InstaVote MUFG Intime for voting thereafter. Once the vote on a resolution is cast by the Member, he/she shall not be allowed to change it subsequently. The voting rights of the Members shall be in proportion to their share in the paid-up equity share capital of the Company as on the Cut-Off date.  
Notice will be available at the Company's Website [www.avglogistics.com](http://www.avglogistics.com) and Stock Exchanges Website [www.bseindia.com](http://www.bseindia.com) and [www.nseindia.com](http://www.nseindia.com).  
The voting rights of Members shall be reckoned on the paid-up value of shares registered in the name of Shareholder/Beneficial Owner as on **September 23, 2025**.  
The results of the remote evoting and voting at AGM will be announced within two (02) working days of the end of the e-voting period and will be displayed on the Company's website <https://avglogistics.com/> and will also be communicated to the Stock Exchanges, MUFG Intime India Private Limited.  
In case of any queries relating to evoting, one may email to RTA of the Company at [enotices@in.mpps.muvg.com](mailto:enotices@in.mpps.muvg.com) or contact on: - Tel: 022-4918 6000.  

For AVG Logistics Limited

Sd/-  
Mukesh Nagar  
Company Secretary

**Date: 06.09.2025**  
**Place: Delhi**

## Adani to launch ₹6,000 crore hydro project in Bhutan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Adani Power on Saturday said it has inked a pact with Bhutan's State-owned utility Druk Green Power to set up a 570MW hydro project entailing investment of ₹6,000 crore, in the Himalayan Kingdom. As per the pact, Adani Power and Druk Green Power Corp Ltd (DGPC), will initiate the the peaking run-of-river Wangchhu hydroelectric project on a BOOT (Build, Own, Operate, Transfer) model.

A power purchase agreement and a concession agree-

ment were signed in this regard in the presence of Prime Minister of Bhutan, Dasho Tshering Tobgay and Gautam Adani, Chairman, Adani Group, a company statement said.

The Wangchhu project will see an investment of about ₹6,000 crore in setting up the power plant and related infrastructures.

With the detailed project report already completed, construction work is expected to begin by the first half of 2026, and the completion is targeted within five years of ground-breaking.

"The Wangchhu hydroelec-



tric project will critically meet Bhutan's peak winter demand, when hydro power generation is low. During the summer months, it would export power to India," said SB Khyalia, CEO, Adani Power.

The Wangchhu is the first hydroelectric project to be taken up under an MoU signed in May 2025 between Adani Group and DGPC for jointly developing 5,000 MW of hydropower in Bhutan.

Adani Group and DGPC are engaged in further discussions for future projects under this strategic partnership. Adani Power is the largest private

thermal power producer in India.

DGPC is the sole generation utility of Bhutan with a current generation portfolio of a little over 2,500 MW and growing fast with Bhutan's aspirations to achieve 25,000 MW in generation capacity by 2040. Druk Holding & Investments, the commercial arm of the Royal Government of Bhutan, is DGPC's shareholder.

Established in 2008 to take a lead role in developing Bhutan's hydropower resources, it has recently diversified beyond hydropower into tapping solar resources also.

### Central Zoo authority conducts workshop for wildlife and zoo officials of North East



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Guwahati

The Central Zoo Authority, in collaboration with the Assam State Zoo cum Botanical Garden, successfully organised a two-day workshop for Chief Wildlife Wardens and Zoo Directors/Managers of the North-Eastern States on 4-5 September 2025 at Radisson Blu, Guwahati. The inaugural session was graced by MK Yadava, Special Chief Secretary, Government of Assam; Dr V Clement Ben, Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority; Dr Vinay Gupta, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam; and Dr Ashwini Kumar, Director, Assam State Zoo cum Botanical Garden.

The workshop featured a series of insightful technical sessions by distinguished experts. Dr Sindura Ganapathi (PSA Fellow, Government of India) spoke on One Health and Collaborations, highlighting the importance of cross-

sectoral partnerships in wildlife health. Lakshminarasimha R (Director, Research and Conservation, GaiaMitra Collective Foundation) presented on Evidence-based Collection and Population Management and later on Modern Approaches to Zoo Animal Nutrition. PC Tyagi (Retd IFS, Former PCCF & CWLW, Tamil Nadu) delivered sessions on Zoo Master Planning and Species-specific Environmental Enrichment along with Dr Sulata Maity (West Bengal Zoo Authority). Shri Hemanth Kumar (Retd. IFS, Uttar Pradesh) led a session on Disaster Management in Zoos.

Healthcare and genetics were also key themes, with Padmashree Dr KK Sarma (Professor, College of Veterinary Science, Khanapara) addressing Challenges and Clinical Practices in Captive Animal Healthcare and Dr Uma Ramakrishnan (NCBS) presenting on Genetics and Genomics of Endangered Big Cats.

Dr Bhaskar Choudhury

(Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation, Kaziranga) shared experiences on Managing Rescued Animals and Wildlife Emergencies, while Dr. Debabrata Phukon (Veterinarian, Assam State Zoo) spoke on Optimising Reptile Care through Science-based Practices.

In addition, Dr. Ashwini Kumar shared insights on Best Practices in Zoo Management, and Dr. Parag Deka (Project Director, Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme) presented on Captive Breeding of the Pygmy Hog. The two-day event concluded with a working group discussion between Zoo Directors and Chief Wildlife Wardens on Sustainable Zoo Management and a valedictory address by PC Tyagi. The workshop provided a dynamic platform for the exchange of knowledge and best practices, reaffirming the commitment to sustainable zoo management, animal welfare, and wildlife conservation across Indian zoos.

### UNLOCK INLAND STATES' SEAFOOD EXPORT POTENTIAL TO DIVERSIFY PORTFOLIO: FISHERIES MINISTER



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Fisheries Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh on Saturday called for unlocking the export potential of inland states to diversify the country's seafood export portfolio, while urging stakeholders to boost fish productivity.

Speaking at a virtual stakeholders' consultation meeting, Singh said collective efforts were needed to increase fish productivity from 5 tonnes per hectare to 7 tonnes per hectare to remain globally competitive.

The minister emphasised export market diversification, produce certification, technology integration in fish processing, cold chain infrastructure development and establishing robust traceability systems to meet global standards, an official statement said. Singh said the fisheries sector directly and indirectly supports over 80 million livelihoods in India.

## Modi's next-gen GST reform: A Diwali gift that reshapes Bharat's economy



DR ASEERVATHAM ACHARY

September 3, 2025, will be remembered as a landmark day in Bharat's economic journey. The Modi Government has once again demonstrated its commitment to the welfare of the common man by delivering on its promise of a true Diwali bonanza through the announcement of bold and visionary Goods and Services Tax (GST) reforms.

After an extensive day-long deliberation attended by all members of the GST Council, significant reforms were unveiled with the clear objective of moving to a simplified two-slab rate structure of 5 percent and 18 percent. The intent behind these reforms is beyond question: to ease the burden on the common man, empower domestic industries, and strengthen Bharat's economic foundation.

Introducing such sweeping changes at a time when the global economy is under socio-economic pressures is a testament to the foresight and courage of the Modi Government.

This bold move reflects the emergence of a confident and resilient Indian economy, underlining the fact that Bharat is firmly set on the path of progress and growth. The Government has invested enormous effort to ensure that essentials such as food, agriculture, fertilizer, renewable energy, textiles, health, education, items of daily use, consumer electronics, and transportation reach the common man.

#### Relief for Households and Common Man

The most visible impact is on everyday essentials. Products like Ultra-High Temperature (UHT) milk, Pre-packaged and labelled chena or paneer, all the Indian Breads will see NIL rates.

Food and FMCG items such as dairy products, packaged snacks, soaps, shampoos, toothbrushes, toiletries and bicycles now attract just 5 per cent GST, directly reducing household expenses. Health care receives a huge boost with life-saving drugs, diagnostic kits, and medical devices either exempted or moved to the 5 percent slab. Education becomes

more affordable with zero GST on exercise books, pencils, erasers, and other basic learning materials. For millions of families, this means direct savings and higher disposable income.

#### Healthcare and Insurance Made Affordable

In a landmark decision, the Modi Government has extended massive relief in the healthcare and insurance sectors through GST rationalisation. GST on 33 life-saving drugs and medicines has been completely removed, dropping from 12 per cent to 0 per cent, while 3 critical drugs used in the treatment of cancer, rare diseases, and other chronic ailments have also been exempted from the existing 5 per cent. Several other essential medicines have seen their GST rate reduced from 12 per cent to just 5 per cent, making healthcare more accessible and affordable for millions.

In parallel, the Government has taken a historic step to make insurance truly affordable for the common man by exempting all individual life insurance policies whether term life, ULIP, or endowment from GST, along with reinsurance. Similarly, all individual health insurance products, including family floater plans and senior citizen policies, now carry zero GST. These reforms not only ease the burden of medical expenses but also expand financial protection, strengthening the vision of "Insurance for All by 2047."

#### Aspirational Goods Made Affordable

A key highlight of the reforms is the reduction in rates for aspirational goods. Small cars, two-wheelers, televisions, and dishwashers have all moved from 28 percent to 18 percent. This means passenger vehicles are now cheaper by ₹50,000 to ₹1 lakh depending on the model. Motorcycle prices have dropped by ₹5,000 to ₹15,000. Auto experts project a 10 percent rise in small car sales this financial year. Consumer durables like ACs and large TVs are now more affordable, boosting demand and expanding the domestic electronics market.

#### Agriculture and Rural Bharat Empowered

For farmers, the benefits are unprecedented. Tractors have moved from 12 percent to 5 percent, tires and parts from 18 percent to 5 percent. Harvesters, threshers, sprinklers, drip irrigation equipment, poultry and bee-keeping machines, and bio-pesticides are now taxed at just 5 percent. Fertilizer inputs have been corrected under the inverted duty structure, boosting domestic production and reducing import depen-

dence. These changes will reduce costs for farmers, enhance productivity, and fuel rural demand.

#### Benefits of GST Rationalisation for MSMEs

The next-generation GST reforms provide a direct boost to India's MSMEs by lowering costs, improving liquidity, and enhancing competitiveness. With GST rates on key raw materials like paper, packaging, textiles, leather, wood, and handicrafts reduced from 12-18 per cent to just 5 per cent, small businesses now face lower input costs, making their products more competitive both in domestic and international markets.

The correction of inverted duty structures in textiles, food processing, and other MSME-intensive sectors will smoothen refund procedures and ease cash flow pressures that often hinder small manufacturers. The removal of the value threshold for GST refunds on low-value e-commerce consignments ensures that even small exporters can claim timely refunds, unlocking working capital and allowing them to scale their businesses with confidence.

Simpler compliance and faster refunds reduce working capital blockages, freeing resources for expansion, innovation, and job creation. With GST on delivery vans and trucks reduced from 28 per cent to 18 per cent, logistics and freight costs for MSMEs are significantly lowered, strengthening supply chains and improving efficiency.

#### Digitalisation and Compliance Ease

Equally transformative are the structural reforms in compliance. Small traders, startups, and MSMEs will now face less paperwork and lower compliance costs, thanks to the integration of GST filings with the Government's digital platforms. AI-driven invoice matching, faceless assessments and automatic refunds will reduce harassment, plug leakages, and improve ease of doing business. The threshold for GST registration has been raised, freeing lakhs of small traders and street vendors from cumbersome filings. These measures directly support the Government's goal of "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance."

#### States Empowered, Cooperative Federalism Strengthened

The reforms are also a triumph of cooperative federalism. For the first time, every state supported the GST Council's recommendations, cutting across political divides. This consensus underlines the political

maturity and strong leadership of Prime Minister Modi, who has united diverse states under a shared vision of growth.

#### Global Signal of Confidence

At a time when advanced economies are facing stagflation, Bharat has chosen to unleash domestic demand, empower households, and boost industry through tax rationalisation. Global investors view this as a bold structural reform that improves competitiveness and simplifies the business environment.

Ratings agencies and global trade bodies are already hailing Bharat's reform as a model for emerging economies. The move sends a clear signal that Bharat under Modi is determined to stay on the path of high growth, innovation, and resilience.

#### Congress's Lost Decade, VAT Confusion, and Modi's Decisive Leadership

It must not be forgotten that GST was first proposed in 2006 by the UPA, but for nearly a decade, the Congress-led Government failed to build consensus, draft a workable framework, or show the political will to implement it. Instead, they imposed a chaotic VAT system where every state had its own tax rates, creating a maze of multiple levies, cascading taxation, and corruption. Goods would get taxed at checkpoints across states, trucks wasted hours at inter-state borders, and ordinary consumers ended up paying higher prices because of double taxation.

VAT became a symbol of inefficiency and red tape. It was only under Prime Minister Modi's leadership that GST became a reality in 2017, transforming Bharat into a unified market. Where the UPA drowned GST in indecision, Prime Minister Modi built consensus with all states and delivered "One Nation, One Tax."

Today, Modi has gone even further - implementing the most far-reaching reforms in GST's history, simplifying its structure, empowering every sector of the economy, and bringing relief to every household. The contrast is stark: where Congress delayed, Modi delivered; where Congress created confusion, Modi created clarity; where Congress sowed division, Modi built consensus.

The writer is a former Civil Servant and presently the National Coordinator for Digital Library, Library & Documentation, BJP

BRIEFLY

INDIA SHINES AT WORLD WUSHU CHAMPIONSHIP IN BRAZIL



India produced a strong show at the 17th World Wushu Championship in Brazil with three women entering the finals and two men advancing to the knockout stages. In the women's category, Aparna showcased brilliant skills, defeating Tharisa Dea Florientina from Indonesia in 52 kg category to secure her place in the final, according to a release shared by Wushu Association of India. Aparna will next face Ngo Thi Bhuong Nga from Vietnam in the gold medal bout on Sunday. In 60kg category, Kareena Kaushik displayed exceptional strength and strategy to overcome Nathalia Briguesi Silva from Brazil in her semifinal clash. She will battle against China's Xiaowei Wu for the title. Shivani stunned Ekaterina Valchuk from Russia with her dominant performance and confirmed her spot in the 75kg final, where she will battle with Shahrbanou Mansouriyaan Semiromi from Iran.



On Teachers Day, BCCI General Secretary Devajit Lon Saikia during a match with Trainees & Coaches of Assam Cricket Association in Guwahati

PIONEER PHOTO

SHUBHANKAR'S STRUGGLES, MAKES EARLY EXIT IN IRELAND



Indian golfer Shubhankar Sharma shot another disappointing round on the second day to make an early exit from the Amgen Irish Open at the Palmer North Course here. Sharma shot 7-over 79 to follow up on his first day score of 6-over 78 at The K Club. This took Sharma to a total of 13-over par on the DP World Tour event. It has been an agonising run for Sharma, who has failed to make any cut on the DP World Tour since the Hero Indian Open in March this year. After a first round of 78 which had five bogeys and a triple bogey against only two birdies, Sharma had three birdies against three bogeys and three doubles in his second round 79. Meanwhile, Lagergren continued his love affair with the K Club as he shot a phenomenal second round of 10-under 62 to move into the lead by one stroke. Lagergren had 70 in the first round at the par-72 course. He is at 12-under for 36 holes. The 33-year-old Lagergren won the Irish Challenge on the HotelPlanner Tour last season which was played on the K Club's Palmer South, and he is now targeting another victory at the County Kildare venue at the North Course.

Shreyas to lead India A in 4-day games against Australians

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Mumbai

Left out of the Test scheme of things as well as the upcoming Asia Cup T20Is, Shreyas Iyer was on Saturday entrusted with leading the India A team in the two unofficial four-day games against Australia A in Lucknow. Senior India players KL Rahul and Mohammed Siraj will be available for the second fixture. Iyer, not picked even among the reserves for the Asia Cup beginning Tuesday, is currently turning out for West Zone in the Duleep Trophy semi-final against Central Zone in Bengaluru. The first unofficial Test will be played from September 16-19 and the second from September 23-26 at the Ekana Stadium. Karun Nair, who had suffered an injury while batting in the fifth and final Test at The Oval against England and had also missed the Maharaja Trophy (KSCA T20 tournament), has not been named in the side. India wicketkeeper-batter Dhruv Jurel, who played the fifth Test

THE SQUAD

Shreyas Iyer (c), Abhimanyu Easwaran, N Jagadeesan (wk), Sai Sudharsan, Dhruv Jurel (vc & wk), Devdutt Padikkal, Harsh Dubey, Ayush Badoni, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Tanush Kotian, Prasidh Krishna, Gurnoor Brar, Khaleel Ahmed, Manav Suthar, Yash Thakur.

in England, has been named Iyer's deputy. Rahul and Siraj will join the squad for the second multi-day match as they will get quality match practice ahead of home Test series against the West Indies and South Africa. India's home season begins with a two-match Test series against the West Indies, with the first match to be played at Ahmedabad from October 2. The India A squad includes Tamil Nadu wicketkeeper-batter N Jagadeesan, who was called up as a cover for the fifth Test in England. Jagadeesan scored a brilliant 197

(352 balls, 16 fours and 2 sixes) for South Zone in their Duleep Trophy semifinal against North Zone. Mumbai's Tanush Kotian, who had received a maiden Test call up during the tour of Australia earlier this year, also finds a place in the India A side along with two players from Vidarbha — Harsh Dubey and Yash Thakur. Dubey had set the record for most wickets for any bowler in the history of the Ranji Trophy last season when he took 69 wickets for Vidarbha in their title-winning run. Among batters, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Sai Sudharsan and Devdutt Padikkal have been named along with Delhi skipper Ayush Badoni, who received his maiden call-up, while India all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy has also been named in the A side. The fast bowling line-up includes India pacers Prasidh Krishna, Khaleel Ahmed, Thakur and Punjab's lanky pacer Gurnoor Brar, who has also been a regular nets bowler for the national side. Dubey, Kotian and Rajasthan's Manav Suthar are among the spinners.

The Australian A squad includes several Test players from the country as young batters Sam Konstas, who had a fiery debut against India last season, has been named along with Nathan McSweeney for the tour. These two batters had competed for the second opening slot for Australia during their Border-Gavaskar Trophy series win over India. The Australian A side also includes Test players Cooper Connolly and Todd Murphy.



We are well-placed to handle every condition: Alyssa Healy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Sydney

Australian captain Alyssa Healy is confident her team will be able to overcome the "different challenges" posed by rivals in the upcoming Women's ODI World Cup in the Indian subcontinent, given the depth and strength of her side. The seven-time 50-over World Cup winners will look to defend their title in the eight-team event, being held in India and Sri Lanka from September 30 to November 2. "I'm looking forward to that obviously but the cricket conditions pose a different challenge to our group, which I think we are really well placed for," Healy was quoted as saying by the ICC. "We've got so much depth in every area that whatever conditions are thrown at us, we'll be well placed to handle that. So, I'm really excited for the strength of the squad," the 35-year-old Australian wicket-



keeper-batter added. Australia recently announced a 15-member squad for the showpiece event bringing back left-arm spinner Sophie Molineux after a long injury layoff. The spin duo of Sophie and Georgia Wareham will be vital to Australia's prospects in the Indian subcontinent as they look to defend the title won in New Zealand in 2022. "It's a great place to play cricket, also a great place to tour. The culture is very differ-

ent but I think the way they (India) just love their cricket, approach it and are fanatical about their cricket, think it's a great place to go as a cricketer," Healy said. Australia will also play a three-match ODI series against India ahead of the 50-over showpiece event. The batting stalwart added that winning back-to-back World Cup tournaments would be great and it is a milestone her team would be chasing.

Afghan fast bowler Ahmad denies UAE consolation win in tri-series

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Sharjah (UAE)

Afghanistan defeated the United Arab Emirates by a nail-biting four runs in the Twenty20 tri-series on Friday. UAE needed 17 runs from the final over for a consolation first win in four games and power-hitter Asif Khan brought down the target to five runs off the final three balls. But left-arm fast bowler Fareed Ahmad kept calm and didn't concede a run off the next two fuller balls. On the last ball, Khan holed out at long-off on 40 and the home team finished short at 166-5. Afghanistan rested six frontline players, including captain Rashid Khan, ahead of Sunday's final against Pakistan. It made 170-4 with Ibrahim Zadran missing out on his third successive half-century on 48



and Rahmanullah Gurbaz striking 40. Pakistan and Afghanistan won three games each by successfully defending the targets, while UAE lost all of its four games while chasing down the totals. Gurbaz and Zadran combined in a 98-run opening stand off 72 balls. Both perished off consecutive deliveries. Afghanistan scored 56-1 off the final five overs with cameos from Karim Jannat,

28, and Gulbadin Naib, 20 not out. Left-arm spinner Haider Ali took 2-23. UAE skipper Muhammad Waseem began the chase with a lot of intent against pace in the powerplay. He smashed three sixes and two fours in his 44 off 29 balls. Waseem was caught behind when he tried to ramp debutant fast bowler Abdollah Ahmadzai's short ball in the 11th over.

Starc longing for more success in longest format of cricket

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Sydney

Australia's frontline pace bowler Mitchell Starc believes he still has a lot left in him to play Test and ODI cricket, saying he is ready to "milk" his body to achieve more success in the longest format of the game. Starc, 35, recently announced his retirement from T20Is in a move to keep himself ready for the Ashes, IPL, an away Test series in India and the ODI World Cup in two years' time. The decision means the left-handed quick, who has in the past skipped the Indian Premier League to preserve energies for international assignments, will not play the T20 World Cup which is scheduled to be held in India and Sri Lanka early next year. "For lack of a better term, I

want to milk my body as much as I can for as much Test cricket as possible. That was never going to be off the table," Starc was quoted as saying by cricket.Com.Au. "I just felt like one of the other (formats) had to give. I feel like I've got plenty to offer the ODI team and with that goal of getting my body to 2027 — but also being good enough to be in that team for the World Cup in 2027. I felt like this was my best opportunity to prolong my Test career and get to that World Cup (in 2027)." Starc had played a pivotal role in the 2021 T20 World Cup in the UAE where Australia won their maiden world title in the format. "I umm-ed and ahh-ed about which was the right (format) to put to the side. If I wasn't going to be in the frame for 2027 then I didn't



want to hold up the spot. I still feel like I've got plenty to offer that ODI team. I'd thought about it for a while. I feel like it was probably a good time. I'm 35 now, Tests have always been my priority and they will remain my priority," he said. If Starc lasts till the 2027 World Cup in South Africa, he could finish his career as one of the greatest ODI World Cup bowlers of all-time. Only Glenn McGrath (71 scalps in four World Cups - 1996, 1999, 2003 and 2007) and Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan (68 wickets from five tournaments from 1996 to 2011) have more World Cup wickets than Starc's 65 (2015, 2019 and 2023). Starc felt he was leaving the T20 side at the right time, given that the team was in a good place with new faces coming in.

"The T20 team seems pretty settled with the guys that have come in, they've done some great stuff. Nathan Ellis is flying, Ben Dwarshuis has played a great role, Spencer (Johnson) has done some good stuff when he's played, Sean Abbott as well. I feel like that team is in a great spot and I don't need to interrupt that," he said. He is now looking forward to the three-match home ODI series against India and a potential Sheffield Shield appearance before the Ashes. "The three one-dayers (against India) are a nice, controlled lead-in to five Test matches, 10 overs a game, time on the legs, they're not a day after each other. There's some Shield games that can be added to that schedule. (But) I think it's important not to have a concrete way of thinking," he said.

Mbappé gives France winning start in World Cup campaign

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Geneva

Kylian Mbappé was back in World Cup action on Friday, scored again and this time France won. France beat Ukraine 2-0 in neutral Poland to open their qualifying group for the 2026 World Cup. It was Les Bleus'and Mbappé's first game in the competition since his hat trick in that epic loss to Lionel Messi and Argentina in the 2022 final when they were defending champions. Mbappé used pace and skill to elude Ukraine defender Illia Zabarnyi in the 82nd minute to extend a lead earned in the 10th by Michael Olise, and navigate what looks the toughest of France's six qualifying group games. "We had a lot to lose so it's very good to begin the qualifying campaign with this victory," France coach Didier Deschamps told broadcaster TFI. Also in the group, Iceland won at

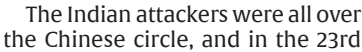


home to Azerbaijan 5-0 and next goes to Paris to play France on Tuesday. Mbappé has never played at a World Cup that Italy qualified for, and the four-time champion got an essential 5-0 home win over Estonia seeking to end its absence from the biggest stage since 2014. Italy avoided losing more ground to group leader Norway, which did not play Friday, though it took until a 20th goal attempt and 58 minutes to break the deadlock through a Moise Kean header. In the same group, Israel won at Moldova 4-0. Switzerland and Greece got off to fast starts to their qualifying campaigns, racing to four-goal leads at halftime. Switzerland ended as a 4-0 winner over Kosovo and Greece beat Belarus 5-1 after highly touted 17-year-old Kostas Katsaras took less than three minutes to score in his World Cup qualifying debut.

Sweden was twice pegged back in a 2-2 draw at Slovenia — which leveled for the second time in the 90th — while leaving Liverpool's record new signing Alexander Isak on the bench after his delayed start to the season. Croatia, a beaten finalist and semifinalist at the past two World Cups, won at the Faeroe Islands by just 1-0 for a third straight win. The group-leading Czech Republic won at Montenegro 2-0. Denmark was held to 0-0 at home by Scotland in the group that Greece now leads. Only first-place teams in the 12 European qualifying groups in November advance direct to the finals tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Runners-up go to playoff brackets in March. ITALY PLAYS CATCHUP: In new coach Gennaro Gattuso's first game in charge, since the firing of Luciano Spalletti, the 2006 World Cup-winning midfielder

looked to be facing another embarrassment in World Cup qualifying for the Azzurri. Italy finally broke the resistance of Estonia goalkeeper Karl Jakob Hein when Moise Kean rose to score with a header just before the hour. Mateo Retegui, the Argentina-born forward, made it 2-0 on his return to the Atalanta stadium that was his home last season and got a second in the closing minutes. Italy plays Israel in neutral Hungary on Monday, one day before Norway hosts Moldova aiming for a fifth straight win. The one guaranteed ticket to North America next year could yet be decided in the last group game — Italy-Norway on November 16 in Milan. FLYING SWISS: The start of a finely balanced qualifying group went perfectly for Switzerland — a first-half rout of a tricky Kosovo opponent, while Slovenia and Sweden took points off each other in Ljubljana.

Harmanpreet's initial flick was



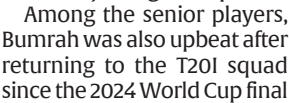
But it didn't take long for India to find the net again with assist from Dilpreet. The goal was set up by Vivek Sagar Prasad, who found Shilanand on the left. Shilanand passed it on to Dilpreet, whose high ball from the left was neatly tapped in by Raj Kumar in the 37th minute.

That was the impetus Korea needed as they pumped in two quick goals in the final quarter to seal the match in their favour.

India are currently ranked 10th in the world while Japan are placed at 12th.

■ Dubai

The 25-year-old from Punjab attracted plenty of attention during fitness drills and net ses-



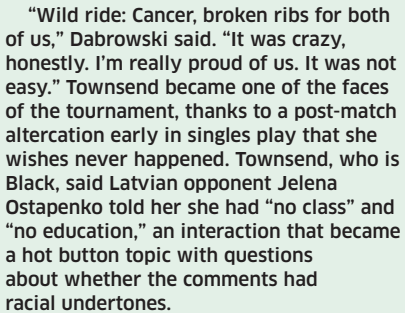
Group A comprises India, Pakistan, UAE and Oman, while Group B features Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Hong Kong.

## AP/PTI

Meanwhile, Aryna Sabalenka will be seeking her fourth Grand Slam title overall and second straight at the US Open when she faces Amanda Anisimova in the women's final.

"It's great for the sport having rivalries, having hope-

No one has repeated as the men's champion in New York



■ Bengaluru

The 27-year-old Jaipur shooter, who recently claimed his maiden individual gold at the Asian Championships in Kazakhstan, believes the athlete winning an Olympic quota should represent the country at the Games, effectively challenging the federation's policy of holding trials months before the quadrennial event. The victory came

"I think the highest point has just started in my career. I am really interested in my sport. Every morning when I am waking up, I am like, 'okay, I need to go and shoot,'" said Naruka in an interaction with PTI on his return from

Here's where Italian coach  
Ennio Falco's guidance came

Explaining the challenges of increasing the bodyweight, Naruka said, "In 2020, I told my trainer that I need to work on my body. I gained 12-13 kgs. And when I started shooting back in 2021, I saw the change. I could train for

"For a few months, I was regretting everything. I could have done better, we could have performed better. It (final) happened so quickly. It was like it started and

stopped. It hits you that you lost a big opportunity. But I told myself that if we were so close, maybe next time we can get the medal. I am grateful to be in the final."

■ New Delhi

Chopra, the reigning world champion, is leading a 19-member Indian team in the September 13-21 show-piece while Nadeem is the lone athlete from Pakistan. Nadeem had beaten Chopra for gold at the Paris

Since then, the two rivals have not met each other on a javelin arena, but after more than a year, they are set to have a showdown in Tokyo in what will be a clash between Olympic and world champions.

The 27-year-old Chopra is a wild card entrant in the men's javelin event by virtue of being the defending champion. He has also thrown past the 85.50m direct qualifying mark many times during the qualifying period.

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## SCO: Shifting Fulcrum to the East

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is emerging as a stage where a new world order quietly takes shape — one less tethered to the influence of the United States. Through the convergence of India, China, Russia, and Central Asian nations, the SCO signals a shift towards multipolarity, where trade, security, and diplomacy are negotiated on shared interests rather than dictated by a single power. In its unfolding, the SCO reflects not just strategic realignments, but a poetic reimagining of global balance — a space where diverse voices collectively script the rules of tomorrow, heralding a world of interwoven ambitions beyond traditional hierarchies



**THE RIC MOMENT**  
A picture-perfect moment occurred when PM Modi, President Putin, and President Xi were seen conversing jovially, creating the “RIC moment”

“  
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BECOME A GUIDE TO  
MULTILATERALISM  
AND AN INCLUSIVE  
WORLD ORDER  
— Narendra Modi,  
Prime Minister of India  
”

## Modi-Xi Kazan Meet: Resetting India-China Ties Amid Tensions and Global Shifts

On October 23, 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping, on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan, decided to bury the hatchet and work expeditiously and sincerely to resolve various bilateral issues, especially the breach of trust stemming from China's unsuccessful incursion in Galwan in 2020. Since then, frequent interactions between India and China have been conducted at the level of foreign and defence ministers, Special Representatives (NSA), and through institutionalised arrangements like the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC). Incremental progress regarding de-escalation has been made along the borders, with gradual easing of restrictions envisaged.

China permitted and facilitated the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra for Indian pilgrims, while India agreed to ease visas for Chinese businesses and resume direct flights between the two countries.

The last major interaction before this summit was held between Chinese Foreign Minister and Politburo member Wang Yi (August 18–19) and Indian External Affairs Minister and National Security Adviser, co-chair of the Special Representatives Mechanism, less than two weeks prior to Prime Minister Modi's visit to Tianjin for the 25th SCO Summit (August 30–September 1). Three working groups were established to deal with border issues and management, and additional cross-border points were agreed upon to expand trade. While the Summit was the largest gathering with over twenty leaders and

ten international organisations — providing Beijing an opportunity to showcase the efficacy and outreach of alternative non-Western institutional mechanisms — the bilateral dimension between India and China remained at the forefront. Apart from giving PM Modi a red-carpet welcome with an Indian touch, the first interaction between the two leaders happened almost immediately. President Xi described the relationship as a “vital partnership” in the 21st century.

Both sides agreed to proceed with developing trust and confidence-building measures and to address concrete issues such as trade imbalance, market access (especially NTBs), border management and resolution, river water management and data sharing, and maintaining overall peace and tranquillity. They also discussed further de-escalation and disengagement, given that both sides

still maintain at least 50,000 forces each in a face-to-face deployment. Both leaders exchanged views on potential cooperation to navigate an uncertain and unpredictable global situation, particularly in the context of the Global South. President Xi also criticised bullying behaviour and practices, obliquely referring to Trump-era tactics.

In his opening remarks, PM Modi reiterated: “Last year in Kazan, we had very productive discussions, which gave a positive direction to our relations. After the disengagement at the border, an atmosphere of peace and stability is now in place. Our Special Representatives have also reached an agreement on border management.



Our cooperation is linked to the interests of 2.8 billion people in our two countries. This will also pave the way for the welfare of all humanity. We are committed to advancing our relations based on mutual trust, respect, and sensitivity.”

A picture-perfect moment occurred when PM Modi, President Putin, and President Xi were seen conversing jovially and intensely, creating what many observers termed the “RIC moment,” while Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif appeared alone in the backdrop.

This, however, does not diminish the reality that the Sino-Pak axis remains a significant challenge for India. The policy of competition coupled with cooperation, while avoiding conflict, will likely continue in India-China relations in the near future. The camaraderie between PM Modi and President Putin in Tianjin, including a private ride in Putin's limousine to avoid eavesdropping — likely to discuss the Putin-Trump Alaska meet — was also on full display. PM Modi once again urged President Putin to work towards ending the Ukraine war, emphasising that humanity longs for its conclusion.

CONTINUED ON >> PII

## World Trade Turbulence: India-US Relations Tested Amid Tariffs and Geopolitical Shifts

World trade is navigating turbulent times, with the global landscape appearing increasingly unpredictable. The past week, in particular, has witnessed a series of significant events directly affecting India-US trade relations, highlighting the growing complexity of global commerce and strategic alignments.

### Heavy Tariffs on Indian Exports Over Russian Oil

Another significant development occurred on August 27, 2025, when the US imposed an additional 25 per cent tariff on India for purchasing Russian oil. Combined with earlier tariff increases, the total tariff burden on Indian goods now exceeds 50 per cent. This places India among the most heavily tariffed US trading partners — a status that threatens core Indian export sectors, particularly labour-intensive industries such as textiles, apparel, leather, footwear, gems and jewellery, and shrimp. Many of these sectors, already grappling with rising operational costs and post-pandemic recovery challenges, now face severely reduced access to the US market. Consequently, India risks ceding market share in critical categories to competitors such as Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Indonesia, who benefit from significantly lower tariffs

### Judicial Blow to US Presidential Tariff Authority

In a landmark ruling, the US government suffered a setback in federal court concerning the scope of presidential authority to impose tariffs under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). Historically, IEEPA has been widely used by US Presidents to implement trade sanctions and tariffs, most notably during the Trump administration. The federal court's decision casts doubt over the US's ability to use tariffs as a strategic tool — not only for economic purposes but also for foreign policy objectives. Should the Supreme Court uphold this verdict, the era of leveraging tariffs as a blunt instrument of national policy may be nearing its end. Such a development would have far-reaching consequences for the international business commu-

nity, compelling companies and countries to rethink investment and supply chain strategies centred on the US market.

### Trade Talks Still Alive

Despite rising tensions, there are signs of ongoing diplomatic engagement. Indian Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal recently reaffirmed that the long-negotiated India-US trade deal could be finalised by November 2025, offering reassurance that dialogue continues. The willingness of both nations to persist in negotiations reflects a shared recognition of the mutual benefits of restoring stability and expanding bilateral trade. It demonstrates that, even amid heated rhetoric and protectionist measures, both democracies remain committed to maintaining open channels for negotiation and compromise.

The months ahead remain fraught with uncertainty. If the US Supreme Court upholds limitations on presidential authority under IEEPA, it could signal the end of tariffs as a quick-fix tool for strategic pressure. Such a precedent would reshape US trade policy and undermine a key Trump-era tactic, requiring investors and global exporters to recalibrate risk and investment strategies.

CONTINUED ON >> PII



## Trans-Himalayan Corridors: India's Answer to China's BRI

BY RITIKA JOSHI

At the recent SCO Summit, India once again refused to endorse China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). To many, it may have appeared as just another diplomatic gesture. But for India, it was more than that. It was a statement — a reminder that Asia's future cannot be built on debt and dominance, but must rest on trust, memory, and shared history.

When India says “no” to BRI, it is also reminding the world of something much older. Long before Beijing drew maps of corridors, the Himalayas were alive with trade and pilgrimage. They were not barriers. They were bridges. Ask an old man in Munsiyari — a remote Uttarakhand town bordering China — what he remembers

about Tibet. He will tell you about caravans: mules packed with jaggery and cloth climbing the steep trails, returning months later with backs heavy with wool and salt. In the bazaars, people recall how Tibetan traders stayed in stone houses, bringing turquoise, borax, and wool. The air was filled with the smell of roasted barley and butter tea. In return, Kumaoni families sent rice, grains, and jaggery, which sustained Tibetan households through winter.

These were not faceless transactions. They were personal exchanges. Traders tied knots of friendship. Families remembered each other's festivals. For the people of Kumaon, Tibet was never “foreign.” It was part of their rhythm of life. The same was true elsewhere. In Ladakh, Leh's market was a bustling crossroads. Pashmina wool arrived from the high plateau,

while silk and carpets came from Central Asia. The streets echoed with Persian, Tibetan, Kashmiri, and Hindi. A traveller could walk through Leh and feel the pulse of half of Asia. In Sikkim, the Nathu La pass tied Lhasa to Gangtok and Calcutta. Wool and gold dust travelled south; rice, salt, and cloth went north. Pilgrims joined these caravans as well — Hindus walked to Kailash-Mansarovar, while Buddhists crossed over to Bodhi Gaya.

The mountains did not divide; they connected. They carried goods, but also gods. Then came 1962. The border war froze these arteries. Caravans vanished. Families in Almora and Ladakh still speak of the silence that followed. For them, the loss was not only of trade but of kinship. A world they belonged to had shut its doors.

### WHY INDIA SAYS NO TO BRI

Now consider China's Belt and Road. On paper, it looks ambitious: roads, pipelines, railways, ports, maps filled with arrows. But behind the gloss lie harsh realities. In Sri Lanka, loans for Hambantota Port became a burden. When Colombo could not repay, the port was leased to China for 99 years — an asset turned into a liability. In Pakistan, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) promised jobs and growth.

But today, Baloch voices speak of exclusion, while Islamabad faces mounting bills it cannot pay. Even in Nepal and Myanmar, governments tread carefully, having seen what debt can do. India's objections are clear. Sovereignty comes first — BRI cuts through Pakistan-occupied

Kashmir, disregarding India's claims. Transparency matters — Chinese projects are negotiated behind closed doors, sidelining local communities. And development must be sustainable — debt is not growth. So when India rejects BRI, it is not out of stubbornness, but principle. It is the conviction that true connectivity should not come with chains.

### INDIA'S OWN CORRIDORS

India does not oppose connections; it opposes coercion. Its own initiatives show the difference. Take Chabahar in Iran.

With Indian support, the port provides Afghanistan and Central Asia with access to the sea. Afghan traders no longer rely solely on Karachi. For them, Chabahar is freedom.

CONTINUED ON >> PII





Tom Schuman,  
American jazz pianist



Arenlong Longkumer, guitarist



Abhay Nayampally,  
Carnatic classical guitarist



Jerrod Sullivan,  
musician



Seb Read, bass player

## Between Carnatic Strings and Tribal Memory

Strings breathe, chants rise, and global grooves converge — *Treekam* is music crossing borders & time

### TEAM AGENDA

There are moments in music when sound ceases to be entertainment and becomes something deeper — a living, breathing invocation. *Treekam*, released last week under the Namma Music label, is one such moment. An immersive, all — instrumental album, it is a sonic journey that binds the intricate grammar of Carnatic ragas with the earthbound soul of Naga chant-inspired guitar, carried on expansive global soundscapes. Crafted with cinematic precision and spiritual depth, *Treekam* emerges as a rare convergence of traditions, where ancestral voices are channelled through modern strings and rhythms that cross continents.

The name itself draws from the Sanskrit root *Trikam*, meaning a triad or convergence, and the album embodies this perfectly, the mathematical elegance of South Indian Carnatic music, the ritualistic pulse of Naga tribal chants, and the fluid global groove of jazz, soul, and ambient textures. At its heart lies the vision of two cultural architects. Co-Produced by Sandeep Chowta, celebrated for his genre-bending productions. “My goal was to create a space where ancient voices could speak in modern tongues,” he reflects.

Alongside him, cultural catalyst Arpito Gope co-conceptualised the project, bringing his deep understanding of tribal traditions and cultural policy, he has worked with North East Indian governments for over 15 years, preserving regional heritage. He has built brand communities for global names like Harley Davidson, Jack Daniel’s, Ray-Ban, Raymond, and Taj, and created IPs such as Harley Rock Riders, Never Hide Sounds, RS Metal Awards, and Kasauli Rhythm & Blues Festival. As Chief Consultant to Nagaland’s Task Force for



Music & Arts, he drives innovation and cultural enterprise through design thinking. As he notes, “*Treekam* is not about fusion — it is about dignity, dialogue, and deep listening.”

At the centre of this collaboration stand two guitarists whose contrasting styles illuminate the album. From Mumbai, Abhay Nayampally translates Carnatic precision into the emotional language of the guitar. A senior disciple of the late Mandolin Vidwan U Srinivas, Abhay has carried the revered U Srinivas Bani onto the electric guitar, his raag-based playing flowing like a meditative current throughout the record. In 2021, his debut solo Carnatic Guitar album reached the number one spot on iTunes India, marking his presence as a pioneering voice. He has also made his mark as a film background scorer, with his work recognised at the Delhi International Film Festival. “I wanted each note to feel like a breath-both rooted and free,” he says.

From the mountainous state of Nagaland comes Arenlong Longkumer, whose guitar playing channels the oral



chant traditions of his tribe. His sound is percussive, layered, and deeply soulful, evoking forest rhythms, spirit dances, and fireside storytelling. A recipient of the prestigious TaFMA Award, he now endorses Strandberg Guitars, SIT Strings, and Hotone Audio. “Our chants are not melodies. They’re memories. I tried to play from that place,” he says, anchoring the album in a sense of cultural continuity.

The global dimension of *Treekam* is amplified by collaborators who bring their own brilliance. Jerrod “J-Rod” Sullivan, the powerhouse drummer from the United States and a regular in Janet Jackson’s touring band, injects groove and dynamic fire. Seb Read from the UK provides subtle, grounding basslines that give cohesion and emotional weight.

And on the luminous track *Swan Song*, jazz fusion legend Tom Schuman of Spyro Gyra brings his signature fluidity on keyboards, layering atmosphere and jazz harmony with sunrise optimism. A founding member of Spyro Gyra, with over sixty compositions and thirteen Grammy nominations to his credit, Schuman’s presence elevates the album to a space of timeless resonance.

Together, these musicians create a record that feels like a conversation across cultures and centuries. Each track carries its own character, from groove-driven energy to meditative stillness, yet all are united by a sense of reverence — for land, for memory, for sound itself. With nearly fifty albums already produced under Namma Music, Chowta’s vision for non-film music finds one of its most compelling



Arpito Gope, Cultural  
catalyst and producer

### TRACKS WITH DETAILS

#### SPUNKY TOWN

Abhay Nayampally, Arenlong, J Rod Sullivan, Seb Read

Composed and Arranged by Abhay Nayampally

#### SWAN SONG

Abhay Nayampally, Arenlong, J Rod Sullivan, Seb Read, Tom Schuman

Composed by Abhay Nayampally and arranged by Tom Schuman and Abhay Nayampally

#### BLENDING TUNES

Abhay Nayampally, Arenlong, J Rod Sullivan, Seb Read, Mengsuokhrie and Nagaland folkloric

Composed and Arranged by Arenlong

#### DIVINE DIRECTIONS

Abhay Nayampally, Arenlong, J Rod Sullivan, Seb Read

Composed and arranged by Abhay Nayampally

#### ZARTO TSSOA

Abhay Nayampally, Arenlong, J Rod Sullivan, Seb Read, Mengsuokhrie and Nagaland folkloric

Composed and Arranged by Arenlong

expressions here. And with Gope’s cultural stewardship, *Treekam* transforms into music as a document of listening, respect, and renewal. In a world where global sounds often blur into sameness, it asks to be heard deeply, from the soul to the ear. Each note carries roots and memory, inviting reflection, presence, and connection. Listening to *Treekam* is a journey into the self, a space where music becomes anchor, horizon, and a companion for the inner voyage.

## Surviving the Chaos: One butterfly flap at a time!



Are we, as a human race, doomed?

No, I do not think so!

What we are witnessing happening around the world, around us in our country, in our cities, within our families, and even within our own minds, might be chaotic, frightening, sad, and depressing, but humanity has endured and survived worse circumstances.

Circumstances brought about by ignorance, lack of modern scientific and technological solutions (and later due to some of the very same solutions which earlier appeared magical!), and by the greed and deceit of powerful people and powerful nations. Humanity survived all of that, and without doubt, we will live through the present chaos also!

The war and destruction going on and on is not self-sustaining — it cannot be! It is being fed by a war-mongering mentality which seeks power and profits, and domination at any cost, by any means fair or foul — mostly foul. However, I feel this phase of so much kinetic violence will get reduced in a decade or two to manageable levels. The struggle for domination, however, will metamorphose into unique ways of control and subjugation — some of which must already be developed and on trial here and there. We have to be prepared for them and then for some more.

But how? Addressing the survival concerns of the last denomination of a nation — the individual human being — is very important. A great amount of work is yet to be done to eliminate abject poverty, debilitating disease, and to counter the ill effects of modernity. The fury of monsoons which we see in the Himalayan rivers and valleys is just a symptom of unplanned and unscientific growth. Development has to be designed to be environment-friendly. Moreover, eventual return to our philosophical moorings to distil age-old wisdom into relevant strategy for the future is too crucial to be neglected. How the population can be organised, motivated, and mobilised, and their inherent potential harnessed for national good needs to be kept in mind by all echelons of leaders within their respective domains.

Is it too much to ask for?

Under the prevailing circumstances, yes, it definitely appears to be too much to ask for!

However, we have no choice but to continue to educate, motivate, and elevate them; eventually the efforts will bear fruit. The Butterfly Flap illustrates a core principle of Chaos Theory: That unnatural flapping of wings by a butterfly anywhere in the universe can have a disproportional effect on the overall world environment.

So the efforts have to go on to change the world — one butterfly flap at a time!



BALRAJ MEHTA  
Major General, Sena Medal

WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO CONTINUE TO EDUCATE, MOTIVATE, AND ELEVATE THEM; EVENTUALLY THE EFFORTS WILL BEAR FRUIT



## Modi-Xi Kazan Meet: Resetting India-China...

Earlier, President Zelensky had also reached out to PM Modi on this issue. Despite Trump’s accusations against India, PM Modi has consistently played a constructive role as a facilitator, aiming to bring an end to this devastating Eurasian conflict. New Delhi could potentially serve as a neutral venue for negotiations between the warring parties. The SCO Summit itself was a statement of intent, articulating a new vision of development strategies for the Global South and global governance with multipolarity and strengthened multilateral institutions. SCO sought to expand its remit from security to include trade, investment, AI, technology, and people-to-people connectivity across the Eurasian landscape. Several new mechanisms were announced, and the proposed establishment of an SCO Bank and related financial architecture gains significance as US unilateralism, particularly regarding tariffs and sanctions, continues.

In his intervention, PM Modi redefined the contours of SCO: S stands for Security, with zero tolerance for terrorism without double standards; C stands for Connectivity, respecting sovereignty while subtly critiquing BRI and fostering the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC); and O stands for Opportunities for all, proposing a new Civilisational Dialogue Forum to showcase the richness of ancient civilizations, art, literature, and traditions on a global stage. India, during its 2023 SCO Presidency, had already promoted start-ups and innovation, tra-

ditional medicine, youth empowerment, digital inclusion, and shared Buddhist heritage, adopting a “beyond government” approach.

Countering terrorism remains one of SCO’s top priorities. In the presence of Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, whose complicity in cross-border terrorism against India is well-documented, PM Modi directly called out Pakistan: “For the past four decades, India has borne the grave scars of ruthless terrorism. Countless mothers have lost their children, and innumerable children have been left orphaned. Recently, we witnessed the most heinous face of terrorism in Pahalgam. I express my deep gratitude to all friendly nations that stood by us during this moment of grief. This attack was not only an assault on the conscience of India but also an open challenge to every nation and every individual who believes in humanity. In such circumstances, it is natural to ask: Can the open support for terrorism by certain countries ever be acceptable to us?”

Indeed, Rawalpindi has been emboldened by global complicity and double standards. It is imperative to expose such hypocrisy, as with prevailing myopic geopolitical interests, the fight against terrorism risks being undermined. India, however, must remain vigilant and respond decisively to safeguard its people and security.

For now, India-China relations appear to be on a positive trajectory, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Both sides must make a realistic assessment of the benefits of cooperation over conflict, especially as global disorder persists and unilateral, hegemonistic approaches remain the preferred strategy of major powers.

## FROM AGENDA COVER

## World Trade Turbulence: India-US Relations...

Countries deemed “strategic threats” might find themselves with fewer avenues for ad hoc US retaliation.

For India, the newly imposed tariffs threaten the viability of key export sectors that employ millions and rely on seamless access to the US market. On the broader diplomatic stage, the SCO Summit highlights India’s growing engagement with multipolar frameworks — a consequence partly driven by escalating trade tensions. Yet, public reassurances from Indian officials regarding a potential bilateral trade deal suggest that India-US relations may bend under pressure, but are unlikely to break.

The events of the past week illustrate the intricate intersection of commerce, geopolitics, and law. India-US trade relations, once seen as a cornerstone of global economic integration, now face formidable challenges. Yet, each crisis also presents opportunities — for diplomacy to prevail, for commerce to discover new pathways, and for both nations to reaffirm the common ground underlying their partnership.

For India, these developments underscore the urgent need to accelerate domestic reforms: reducing red tape, lowering manufacturing costs, fostering innovation, and building resilient local supply chains. Strengthening homegrown industries, reducing import dependence, and creating jobs will not only buffer India against external shocks but also position it as a more competitive force in global trade. Amid continuing

turbulence, India’s long-term interests will be best served by balancing external engagement with an inward focus on transformative, growth-oriented policies.

## Trans-Himalayan Corridors: India’s...

Or look at the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). A train from Mumbai can now reach Moscow faster and cheaper via this route than any existing alternative. This is not a dream; goods are already moving along it.

In the Himalayas, small revivals are taking place. Nathu La reopened in 2006 after forty-four years. Pilgrims now travel through Lipulekh to Kailash.

Cross-border railways with Nepal are being built. With Bhutan, India’s hydroelectric projects light up homes. These projects are not flashy. They don’t make global headlines like BRI. But they matter. They are steady. They involve border communities. They respect sovereignty. They are partnerships, not traps.

The SCO is often described as China’s platform. But it is also India’s stage. By rejecting BRI there, India delivers a wider message: Asia does not need one master-plan dictated from Beijing. It needs many corridors, shaped by local voices and rooted in history.

Central Asian states are listening. They know the burden of debt. They also remember their historic ties with India. From Bukhara to Banaras, merchants and mystics once crossed paths. Spices and ideas moved alongside caravans. India’s civilisa-

tional influence still resonates. The question is: how can India turn memory into policy?

### THE PATH FORWARD IS CLEAR

First, reopen more border passes for trade: Lipulekh, Shipki La, Nathu La — where caravans can return, this time with trucks and digital networks. Not just pilgrims, but traders too. Border families will benefit, and trust will grow.

Second, scale up regional partnerships. Chabahar should not remain a token project. INSTC must evolve into the backbone of Eurasian trade. Central Asia should see India not as a hesitant participant but as a reliable partner.

Third, invest in soft infrastructure. Highways are important, but so are universities, cultural exchanges, and digital corridors. Connectivity is not just about moving goods — it is about moving people, knowledge, and ideas.

This is how India can stand apart. China’s BRI is about concrete and control. India’s corridors can be about trust and roots. By tying modern projects to ancient trade routes, New Delhi can offer Asia something better. The Himalayas remind us of that. They were never just mountains; they were bridges. Reviving these arteries means restoring that legacy.

So when India says no to BRI, it is not shutting the door. It is opening another. It is stepping forward with an alternative — one where connectivity means cooperation, not coercion. One where the past inspires the future. One where the trans-Himalayan corridors live again, not as relics, but as routes of renewal.

(The writer is an Assistant Professor at Gautam Buddha University, Noida)

# Himachal Pradesh: Imposing Landscape, Heritage and Cuisine!



ANIL  
RAJPUT

It's the abode of the Gods — the 'Dev Bhoomi'. The region has been given a special place in our sacred texts, and is home to numerous ancient temples, sacred sites, having a strong cultural connection with spirituality and peace. Himachal Pradesh is indeed a jewel that occupies a deeply historical position in Bharat's journey through the ages. The earliest prehistoric evidence (nearly two million years ago) in Himachal Pradesh points to human settlement in the Bangana Valley (Kangra), Sirsa Valley (Nalagarh), and Markanda Valley (Sirmour), with stone tools from the Paleolithic era found there. These valleys, particularly Bangana, provided resources like fertile soil and water, which attracted early hunter-gatherer communities for habitation. In the pre-historic times, the Indo-Gangetic plains were inhabited by the Proto-Australoid or Munda — speaking 'Kolarian' people (Kol or Munda tribe), and when the people of the Indus valley spread through the Gangetic plains, they pushed northwards — towards the Kolarian people in the Himachal valleys.

The greatest sages in our history have been associated with this expanse, Rishi Jamdagni is associated with the Renuka lake in Sirmaur, Rishi Vashisht with the Vshisht Kund in the Kullu valley, Parshuram is associated with Nirmand in Kullu and Sage Vyas with the Beas cave in Bilaspur. One of the most prominent relationship of the state with our ancient history is through Hatkoti in the Jubbal area of Shimla, and Hidimba Goddess temple in the Kullu valley, both of which are associated with the Pandavas of the epic Mahabharata. According to the Mahabharata, the Himalayan region that now forms Himachal Pradesh was divided into a number of small tribal republics called 'Janapadas', which was a type of 'Sangha Janapadas' or 'Ayudhajivi Sanghas'— meaning those that lived by the profession of arms.

In fact, the legendary grammarian 'Panini' in his iconic work 'Ashtadhyayi' which was written in the 6th-5th century BCE, mentioned the 'Trigarta Janapada', located in the foothills of what is now Himachal Pradesh. This is one of the first historical mentions of Trigarta, highlighting its significance in ancient Indian history. These Janapadas included 'Audumbras' — the most prominent ancient tribes of Himachal who lived in the lower hills between Pathankot and Jwalamukhi, and formed a separate state in 2 BC, 'Trigarta' — the state lay in the foothills drained by three rivers, which included, Ravi, Beas and Satluj and hence the name, it is believed to have been an independent republic. 'Kuluta' — the kingdom of Kuluta was situated in the upper Beas valley which is also known as the Kullu valley, with its capital at Naggar, 'Kulinda'— this kingdom covered the area lying between the Beas, Satluj and Yamuna rivers, the region of Shimla and Sirmour hills. Their administration resembled a republic with members of a central assembly sharing the powers of the king. During the Mauryan period (322 BCE- 185 BCE), Chandragupta Maurya slowly subdued most of the republics of



HIMACHALI CUISINE IS INDEED A TREAT FOR ALL FOOD LOVERS. IT OFFERS A VARIETY OF DISHES THAT APPEAL TO EVERY TASTE BUD, AND LIKE IN MANY OTHER STATES — THE CUISINE IS IN COMPLETE HARMONY WITH THE CLIMATIC CONDITIONS OF THE REGION

Himachal by show of strength or use of force though he usually did not rule them directly. Ashoka, the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya, extended his boundaries to the Himalayan region. He introduced Buddhism to this tract and built many stupas, one of which was in the Kullu valley — this is stated in the account of the Chinese traveller, Hsien Tsang. Moving on, after the collapse of Gupta empire (320 CE- 550 CE), and before the rise of Harshavardhana of the Pushyabhuti dynasty, this area was again ruled by local chiefs known as Thakurs and Ranas. With the rise of Harshavardhana in the early 7th century CE, most of these small states acknowledged his overall supremacy, though many local powers remained with the local chiefs. In the medieval era, Himachal Pradesh comprised independent and tributary hill states like Kangra, Chamba, and Bushahr, which were often caught between larger empires like the Mughals and later the Sikhs. British influence grew after the Gurkha War of 1814-15, culminating in their control of the region by the mid-19th century.

Post-independence, the region evolved from a Chief Commissioner's Province to a Union Territory, and finally became India's 18th state on January 25, 1971. When talking about Himachal Pradesh, I would also like to deep dive into something that is as lofty as the mountains that define its landscape — the state's cuisine! And what better to start off with, than the absolutely smashing and sublime 'Dham', a gastronomic delight that displays the wide spectrum of Himachali cuisine- signifying celebration and hospitality in the state's culture. Different regions of the state have separate elements that are reflected in the Dham, I will focus on what is usually found in this 'crown jewel' from the hill state. The feast generally includes plain rice,



a flavourful dal (lentil) curry like 'Sepu Badi' (made from black lentils), a vegetable curry such as 'Rajma Madra' and 'Chana Madra' (kidney beans/chickpeas in yogurt), a spiced buttermilk soup called 'Himachali Redu', and a sweet dish called 'Meetha Bhaat' (sweet rice). It is traditionally cooked by community cooks called 'Botis', and slow-cooked over wood fires in special brass vessels called 'Charoti or Batloi'. The food is finally served on leafy plates known as 'Pattal' or 'Pattul'. Rice is served thrice, first with 'Madra'- sometimes two or three types of Madra is cooked and served, then with 'Teliya Maah' — a very old and a traditional recipe from Himachal Pradesh that is almost lost. It is a delicious and a creamy lentil (black gram or urad dal) curry made of whole green gram, yogurt, milk, cream and much more cooked in mustard oil. The flavour treat of 'Mahni' follows — a traditional sweet and sour dish, primarily a tangy curry made from ingredients like raw mangoes, tamarind, or black chickpeas (kala chana). The blend of spices, from degi mirch to turmeric, creates a sweet and sour taste that elevates any meal. The string of dishes, continue with another flavour treat, the 'Himachali Chana

Dal' — it is prepared using split chickpeas as the main ingredient, along with mustard oil, turmeric, and various whole and ground spices such as coriander seeds, fennel seeds, cumin, cloves, green and black cardamom, and cinnamon. It also often includes other aromatic spices like bay leaves, ginger, green chillies, and sometimes kasoori methi (dried fenugreek leaves) and hing (asafoetida). 'Himachali Redu' comes next, it is also called 'Kheru' or 'Dahi Tadka', it is a simple, quick, and comforting yogurt dish featuring dahi (yogurt) tempered with whole and ground spices like fenugreek seeds, cumin seeds, coriander seeds in mustard oil — sometimes onions and garlic are added for extra flavour. This versatile dish serves as a side dish for rice or parathas and can be a satisfying meal, especially during warmer months. The balance of flavours reflected through this thali are substantially complemented by 'Mittha' or 'Himachali Meetha Bhaat' — an integral part of the state's celebrations, it's a sweet rice prepared with rice, milk, jaggery or sugar, flavoured with cardamom, saffron, raisins and other dry fruits, along with a touch of turmeric powder for colour.

The most tantalising 'Babru' is yet another dish that highlights the exquisite flavour profile of the state. Similar to kachoris in taste, Babru is a distinctive culinary treat. It differs from kachoris in that it may be made both savoury and sweet. The kneaded dough is filled with ground black gram paste, giving it the appearance of a deep-fried poori. The sweet variation contains a jaggery filling. It is a well-liked breakfast item with a distinctive flavour and aroma. It is typically served with mouth-watering tamarind chutney, making for a much-loved regional dish. A signature offering from the state is 'Kaddu Ka Khatta' — it is prepared with chunks of pumpkin tempered in mustard oil and aromatic spices. It is then topped with tamarind or 'amchur' powder and jaggery for a tangy and sweet flavour. 'Patrode' is a dish that incorporates arbi (Colocasia)

leaves, it is one of the most well-known afternoon tea snacks in the hills, you may even enjoy the snack with your evening meal. Colocasia leaves and besan (gram flour) are used to prepare this. The besan and spice mixture is wrapped around the leaves, formed into little rolls, steamed, and then sliced into slices for deep or shallow-frying. 'Taro' or "Colocasia esculenta" is thought to be a native plant of Southern India, and over time this dish has been adopted by various states in India. Another distinctly flavoured dish is 'Bhey' — it involves thinly slicing and washing the lotus stems, then boiling and stir-frying them with ingredients like ginger, garlic, onion, gram flour, and spices to create a flavourful and crunchy vegetable preparation. The food of this area is incomplete without mentioning 'Siddu'- it is prepared with wheat flour, the flour is set aside after being kneaded, which gives the dough time to rise. The bread is then placed directly over the flames of a campfire to partially cook and then steam it. Siddu generally has a lentil or potato filling, and this ghee-based Himachali side dish goes great with mutton or veggies as a main meal. Although the preparation of this is intricate and time-consuming, the taste is worth every effort.

The most interesting 'Patande' cannot be missed in any food article related to the state. It is a breakfast dish which originates in the Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh. Also referred to as the pancake of India, patande is prepared by cooking a batter made of wheat flour, sugar, milk, baking powder in spices like cardamom and cinnamon.

Now, let's shift our focus towards the non-vegetarian Himachali dishes. It's the 'Kullu Trout Fish' that makes quite a big flavour splash. It is one of the best traditional dishes of Himachal Pradesh, in which marinated trout fish (found only in the waters of the state) is cooked with raw spices like crushed coriander seeds, dill leaves (fresh or dried), chilli flakes, lemon, salt, and sometimes mustard seeds. The goal is to use minimal spices to highlight the trout's fresh and mild flavour, a little lemon-onion sauce is drizzled on top after the fish has been pan-fried in mustard oil — to enhance flavour. 'Chicken Anardaana' is another dish relished in the state, it is characterised by its sweet, tangy, and sour flavour profile from dried pomegranate seeds (anardana), and often has a distinctive pinkish-red colour. In this the Chicken pieces are typically marinated with a mixture of spices like coriander, cumin, red chillies, yoghurt, and anardana powder before being cooked in a gravy with onions, ginger-garlic paste, and yogurt cooked in a fragrant gravy- offering a unique blend of flavours influenced by the Persian cuisine. And finally, 'Chha Gosh' is considered a classic and traditional Himachali dish, it is known for its rich flavours of marinated mutton cooked slowly in a gravy of yogurt and gram flour with aromatic spices like coriander, green and red chilli powder and cardamom. It is a prominent part of Himachal Pradesh's culinary heritage, often prepared for special occasions, and is characterised by its unique sweet, savoury, and tangy taste.

Himachali cuisine is indeed a treat for all food lovers. It offers a variety of dishes that appeal to every taste bud, and like in many other states — the cuisine is in complete harmony with the climatic conditions of the region. Its sad, that our most important food ambassadors, the children and youth, are even today, not well-informed about the state's immense food offerings. Our focus undoubtedly has to be on getting them familiarised with our regional (in this case Himachali) cuisines, ensuring that in the times to come — it reflects naturally and strongly with the current and future generations food choices!

(The writer is Secretary, Cuisine India Society)

# Baked with love, served with warmth

Step into a Tokyo like bakehouse with complete pastel walls, desserts as light as cotton and coffee for your boost, says ABHI SINGHAL

Japan café's aesthetic charm has found a new home in West Delhi, as Harajuku expands with its Bakehouse in Punjabi Bagh. It has been designed with the dreamy flair of a cloud café, the interiors are a visual delight with pastel shades of pink and blue dominate the space, with soft lighting that makes it instantly Instagrammable.

The décor feels playful yet calming, blending the whimsy of Japanese pop culture with the comfort of a neighbourhood café. Walls adorned with Dragon Ball Z artwork and comic-inspired graphics make it a family-friendly destination, where parents can happily bring their children to soak in the ambience while indulging in treats.

## The Seal Deal

The showstopper or the seal deal here is the Japanese Cotton Cheesecake. Light as air, this delicacy offers a perfect balance between flavour and texture. With every bite, it melts almost instantly on the tongue, leaving behind a subtle sweetness and a pillowy softness that feels more like a cloud than cake. Few desserts achieve that level of finesse, and Harajuku executes it beautifully.

## Cute and Chewy

Equally mouth-watering is the Mochi, a Japanese rice cake made from steamed glutinous rice, sugar, water, and a touch of cornstarch. The preparation is both traditional and playful: Rice is pounded into a smooth paste before being moulded into adorable shapes — think teddy bear faces and cute round dumplings. This makes them not just a



tasty indulgence but also visually delightful for younger visitors. It's no surprise that kids walking in with their parents gravitate towards these sweet, chewy treasures.

## Beyond Sweets

But Harajuku Bakehouse doesn't stop at cakes and mochi. The menu is vast and inventive, offering a line-up that spans Japanese street-style bakes to European-inspired comfort food. Mochi Pancakes, Rainbow Slice, and

Sakura Yuzu Basque Cheesecake all make their presence felt, while savoury lovers can dig into Yakisoba Buns, generously stuffed with stir-fried noodles, or the crisp Curry Pan, fried golden with a rich, spiced filling.

The Croque Monsieur adds a French twist, layered with cheese and ham, while the Chicken Floss Buns deliver a sweet-savoury balance unique to Asian bakeries. The Miso Chicken Puffs, flaky and filled with umami depth, are another

standout. For a heartier meal, the fluffy baos, steamed gyozas, and refreshing poke bowls ensure the menu offers something filling and flavourful.

Bubble Teas and Brews To complete the experience, their beverage selection stands out as much as the food. Bubble tea remains a crowd favourite, with chewy tapioca pearls adding fun texture to every sip. Flavours range from classic milk teas to fruity options, making it a versatile choice for both kids and adults.

Artisanal coffee caters to purists who enjoy their brews strong and aromatic, while the ceremonial matcha blends bring earthy bitterness balanced with creaminess — an authentic Japanese touch.

For those seeking something soothing, the roasted richness of the hojicha lattes delivers a comforting depth. On warmer afternoons, signature coolers such as Tokyo Blue, with its vibrant, citrusy profile, and Lychee Lemongrass Ginger, offering a sweet yet zesty punch, provide refreshing contrasts to the richness of desserts and savouries alike.

Each drink is crafted to complement the bakes, ensuring no element feels like an afterthought. Harajuku Bakehouse is about experiencing a slice of Tokyo in Delhi.

THE SHOWSTOPPER OR THE SEAL DEAL HERE IS THE JAPANESE COTTON CHEESECAKE. LIGHT AS AIR, THIS DELICACY OFFERS A PERFECT BALANCE BETWEEN FLAVOUR AND TEXTURE

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## FACT SHEET

### New Outlet Alert

Harajuku Bakehouse  
Location: Central Market, West Punjabi Bagh, New Delhi 110026  
Average Cost for Two: ₹1200

# Invoke the Valour: Know that you are Needed

There’s nothing one can do after a loved one has already taken his/her life, but we can definitely prevent suicide by giving them the right wisdom, the right support, at the right time. We need to show them the big picture

BY SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

Life is very precious, and we must learn to value it. When we don't do that, we either turn to depression or get into aggression and violence. We have to prevent suicides from happening and protect those vulnerable to them.

One takes this extreme step when they feel alone and defeated. We have to give people a larger context for life. Human values are still present on this planet, and there are a lot of good people here who support each other. No problem is insurmountable.

There's nothing one can do after a loved one has already taken his/her life, but we can definitely prevent suicide by giving them the right wisdom, the right support, at the right time. We need to show them the big picture. Let us help people to get to know themselves and find out who they really are. We are connected to the Universal Spirit. When we know this, we realise we are much bigger than our physical body.

## Let's Talk Mental Health

Often, people do not speak openly about their experience of depression or other mental health challenges. Just as one would discuss physical ailments like diabetes or hypertension without hesitation, it is equally important to talk about mental health without any reluctance. We must encourage people to speak about their mental well-being.

## You are not Alone

We need to assure everyone around us that they are not alone. Humanity and human values are abundant in our society, and many are ready to offer their support. Even if others do not speak about their problems, we can still be of help by being vigilant on this matter. When you sense someone might not be happy, don't just pass them by. Stop and ask, "Is everything okay? Can I help you in any way?" Connecting with people and offering help is essential. By doing so, we can lighten the hearts and minds of many, to begin with. Back in 2014, we initiated a Happiness Survey. Our volunteers went door to door, asking people one simple question: Are you happy? Many people shared that this was the first time someone had asked them whether or not they were truly happy or if they needed anything. So, this is something that the entire society should be ready for-supporting one another and being there for each other.

## Why Suicide is a Mistake

People commit suicide to escape misery, but they do not realise it puts them in greater misery. It is like someone who is already shivering in the cold, further removing their jacket. Will the cold become any less? No!

Obsession, restlessness, and desires can create intense agony, and it is only through your body that you can dispel agony and get rid of misery. Instead, you destroy the very instrument by which you can get rid of agony.



“EVERY CHALLENGE OR MISERY THAT YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED HAS MADE YOU STRONGER AND MORE SENSITIVE, AND THE PLEASANT EXPERIENCES HAVE GIVEN YOU A SENSE OF EXPANSION”

— GURUDEV

## Do you know why suicides really happen?

Now, how do you feel when someone compliments you? You feel a sense of expansion, and you feel happy. And when someone insults you, you have a shrinking feeling. This is something which expands and contracts in you and is worth knowing! I am talking about our subtle body, which expands and shrinks. In the normal state, the subtle body is bigger than the physical body. When the subtle body keeps shrinking and becomes smaller than the physical body, you feel that you are unable to carry your body, and you just want to get out of it. So what can you do to get out of this feeling? The answer lies only in increasing your prana level.

## Ways to get the Prana Level up

Multiple things can enhance the prana. Firstly,

the age-old practices of yoga and meditation have consistently been shown to be powerful tools. They not only revitalise our energy but also offer a deeper understanding of our inner selves. Music, too, can elevate the prana. The rhythmic patterns, melodies, and harmonies resonate with our mind and heart, inducing a sense of well-being.

Spending time in the company of happy people or spending time with children can significantly uplift one's spirit, too. When we as adults connect with children, it uplifts us, giving an instant boost to our energy levels.

Spiritual knowledge is like the manual for life. Just as we learn to use a car's steering, clutch, and brake, we need to study and use this understanding of our life energy to retain a calm mind in the midst of chaos. This is what pranayama teaches us. When our energy isn't steady, our feelings can be all over the place.

Spending just a few minutes understanding how our breath works can be life-transforming. Techniques like Sudarshan Kriya help balance our energy, which then helps steady the mind. When we meditate, it positively impacts every part of our lives. As our energy increases, we naturally begin to feel better, think creatively, and have better control over our feelings and thoughts.

## Ask, “What can I do for you?”

Whenever you feel low or negative, see if you can go out and help others. Go out and ask someone, “What can I do for you?” and see the shift in your emotions. Getting involved in some type of seva or service is a powerful way to increase one's life force and turn the negative feelings on their head.

## Know that you're needed

Remember that you are here for a unique purpose and cause that are far bigger than just to eat, sleep, or talk. You have all come here to do something very specific. You don't need to be concerned about anything. Life is like a movie that has already been shot. What you experience in the present moment is only a replay.



FIRSTLY, THE AGE-OLD PRACTICES OF YOGA AND MEDITATION HAVE CONSISTENTLY BEEN SHOWN TO BE POWERFUL TOOLS. THEY NOT ONLY REVITALISE OUR ENERGY BUT ALSO OFFER A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF OUR INNER SELVES

When we serve and commit to a larger mission, it changes our life's perspective. This eliminates small personal worries and broadens the canvas of our life, putting the focus on the bigger picture. Societies where service, sacrifice, and community participation are valued see fewer incidences of depression and suicides.

## Invoke the valour in you

Come on, wake up! You have been afraid many times in the past. Life still goes on. Invoke the valor inside you. Remember, you faced many difficulties in the past when you thought this was the end of it. You overcame those challenges, and you are here, complete.

Every storm that has come into your life has widened your horizon and brought you more depth. When things that you don't like happen to you, they make you stronger somewhere. Every challenge or misery that you have experienced has made you stronger and more sensitive, and the pleasant experiences have given you a sense of expansion. And life is a blend of both pleasant and unpleasant situations. Take life in its totality.

Prevention of suicide, much like any public health problem, requires a systematic approach, and imparting people with tools to manage stress and uplift their spirit is the way forward. Just as we teach children dental hygiene, it is equally essential to introduce mental hygiene from an early age.

# Pitru Paksha: Genetics, Gratitude, and Cosmic Balance

Pitru Paksha or Shraad originates from the word Shraddha. This sacred fortnight, dedicated to honouring our ancestors, has long been viewed through a spiritual lens. Yet, when examined closely, these rituals also reflect profound insights into biology, psychology, ecology, and astronomy. What our sages intuited thousands of years ago is increasingly echoed by modern science.

## Genetics and Ancestral Memory

We are living embodiments of our lineage. Science tells us that our DNA is not merely a blueprint for physical traits but also carries predispositions to health, behaviour, and even resilience.

- Epigenetics, a field studying how life experiences alter gene expression, has shown that trauma, stress, and lifestyle habits can be passed down through generations (Yehuda & Lehrner, Biological Psychiatry, 2018).
- This means the “memories” of our ancestors live within us — not as metaphors, but as biological imprints.

Pitru Paksha, in remembering and offering gratitude, can be seen as a cultural acknowledgment of this genetic continuum.

## Gratitude as Emotional Healin

- Rituals of remembrance serve a deep psychological function.
- Family systems theory (Bowen, Family Therapy in Clinical Practice, 1978) highlights that unresolved ancestral conflicts can influence present generations. Honouring ancestors allows for emotional closure and healing. Our connection with our ancestors is not limited to those of DNA and genes but is far deeper, an invisible connection of Karma, of past unpaid debts.
  - Modern psychology affirms that gratitude practices improve mental health, reduce anxiety, and enhance well-being. Pitru Paksha thus becomes a structured form of collective gratitude-releasing burdens



MEENA MAHAJAN  
Spiritual Leader

while cultivating peace.

## Cosmic Balance and Lunar Rhythms

Pitru Paksha aligns with the Krishna Paksha (waning moon) of Bhadrapada. This is not incidental

- Chronobiology research shows that lunar phases influence human sleep cycles, mood, and metabolic changes (Cajochen et al., Current Biology, 2013).
- Ancient seers designed tarpan (water offerings) during this time of natural withdrawal, harmonising inner human cycles with outer cosmic rhythms.
- Seasonal transition from monsoon to autumn (Ritu Sandhi in Ayurveda) is also critical. Fasting and satvic eating during this period detoxify the body and strengthen immunity (Dopico et al., Nature Reviews Immunology, 2015).

## Ecological Wisdom in Rituals

The materials used in Pitru Paksha rituals — water, rice, sesame, and seasonal fruits — are all biodegradable and drawn directly from nature. Unlike modern excess, these offerings teach ecological balance, reminding us that reverence for ancestors goes hand in

hand with reverence for the Earth.

## Beyond Rituals: A Science of Continuity

Pitru Paksha is not a superstition but a sophisticated synthesis of genetics, gratitude, and cosmic awareness. By remembering our ancestors, we acknowledge the invisible threads that connect past, present, and future. We honour not only our lineage but also the universal balance in which we exist. It is a reciprocal relationship, whereby in honouring our ancestors, we seek blessings of health and protection from our forebears.

In the end, Pitru Paksha teaches us this timeless truth: We are not isolated individuals, but living bridges-carrying forward the legacy of those who came before us while shaping the world for those who will follow.

## Astronomical Alignment and Human Physiology

Pitru Paksha coincides with the waning moon, when gravitational influences of the sun and moon are known to affect water cycles on Earth.

For the complete story please  
see our website  
[www.dailypioneer.com](http://www.dailypioneer.com)

(The writer, Meena Mahajan, fondly called  
Guru Maa, is a spiritual leader)

# Mastering Healthspan: Lessons from ‘Outlive’

Peter Attia’s *Outlive* presents health and longevity concepts, explores major diseases with clarity, and offers actionable strategies to improve lifespan, healthspan, and overall well-being

Most people have something that they pursue with an almost obsessive passion: For me it is basketball. While I loved the game and played as often as I could, I relied on my ability to ‘power through’ rather than on my skills to continue playing.

With age, I noticed that the ‘powering through’ was getting decreasingly intense. As 2025 rolled in, I decided to finally work on getting fitter off the court so that I could do better on it.

As I embarked upon this journey, the sheer volume of information (and contradictions) available from various sources left me clueless about where the starting point even should be. To cut a long story short, I anchored myself (on a friend’s recommendation) to this book on health and longevity by Peter Attia: *Outlive*.

I found the book’s approach refreshing: The first few pages underlining how one should approach health and longevity, the next section talking about the workings of the major diseases plaguing modern mankind in a ‘biology for non-biologists’ manner; and the last section detailing actions that individuals can/should take to prevent, recover and/or delay disease.

This note talks about Part 1: Concepts and frameworks that should form the basis of our outlook on health and longevity. The book obviously does a much better job of this than the next few paragraphs would; I am only putting down concepts and thoughts that strongly resonated with me.

## LIFESPAN... HEALTHSPAN... WHAT IS (OR SHOULD BE) THE GOAL?

Most folks are familiar with lifespan: The number of years one lives. The book introduced a very interesting vector to this: Healthspan. Healthspan can be thought of as the quality of one’s life,



in terms of what their body can afford them.

When I am X years old (as X keeps increasing), can I climb up a flight of stairs, can I hold a spoon and eat cereal by myself, can I play basketball for 30 minutes and still have a grand old time?

While most of medical science focuses on extending lifespan, maintaining healthspan as life progresses is something that is slowly coming to the forefront. This evolution can be thought of as three phases of medicine:

## THE EVOLUTION OF MEDICINE CAN BE UNDERSTOOD IN THREE PHASES:

- **Medicine 1.0 (Until early 19th century):**
  - Relied on philosophical thinking and observation.
  - If the doctor, healer, or elder had seen, heard, or read about an ailment and its management, that is what they would prescribe.
- **Medicine 2.0 (Mid-19th century - Present):**
  - Relies on the scientific method.
  - A hypothesis is formed (based on

philosophies, observations, or even a hunch) and then tested to prove or disprove it.

- This experimentation leads to proven methods of diagnosis, treatment, and cure.
- It has been highly effective for acute illnesses (such as flu and cholera) and for injuries.
- **Medicine 3.0 (Future of medicine?):**
  - Relies on root cause analysis and early prevention.
  - Instead of waiting for a problem to appear, the focus is on finding out why it occurs and solving it at the source, thereby preventing its emergence.
  - Considered more effective for long-horizon diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.

## Note

• If you are tempted to criticise a particular phase after learning of its shortcomings, do keep in mind that the next phase was possible only because of its predecessor. Part 1 did a great job in piquing my interest towards the question What are the root causes of ‘long-term diseases’ and is there anything I can do about it?

For the complete story please  
see our website  
[www.dailypioneer.com](http://www.dailypioneer.com)

(The author is a health and fitness enthusiast)