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Day after visit, Chouhan says ‘Illegal Mining Weakened Embankments, Triggered Floods’

PNS ■ Chandigarh

A day after extensively touring flood-ravaged Punjab, the Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday held illegal mining responsible for weakening embankments along the Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, and Ghaggar rivers, claiming that it allowed floodwaters to breach into villages and devastate thousands of acres of farmland. Calling the situation a “deluge”, he announced that he would submit a detailed ground assessment report to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and seek accountability for the massive damage caused. The Minister said that the Centre would roll out short, medium, and long-term plans to rehabilitate affected communities and restore Punjab's agricultural

backbone. Chouhan, who visited Amritsar, Pathankot, Kapurthala, and Gurdaspur on Thursday, said that he witnessed firsthand how weakened bundhs, once strengthened during the tenure of late Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Punjab's late Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal, had deteriorated due to rampant illegal mining. “Due to illegal mining, these embankments have been weakened and water has entered villages. We need to restore these structures to prevent such crises in the future,” he said. Reassuring farmers that they were not alone, the Union Minister emphasized Prime Minister Modi's deep concern for Punjab and asserted that the Central Government stood firmly with the state in this hour of distress. “Crops have been damaged, livestock lost,

and livelihoods shattered. But the Centre will leave no stone unturned in lifting Punjab out of this crisis,” Chouhan said, while urging the AAP-led State Government to work with “full seriousness” on ground relief and recovery measures. Highlighting looming post-flood challenges, Chouhan warned that the receding waters could bring fresh health hazards. “The threat of infections will rise once the water withdraws. Dead animals must be disposed of safely to prevent an epidemic. Fields are covered in silt, which must be cleared through a proper desilting plan so that the next crop is not jeopardized,” he cautioned. At the same time, Chouhan praised Punjab's resilience and the spirit of collective service during the disaster. “I saw thousands of social activists taking

tractors loaded with food, clothes, and medicines to villages, serving people selflessly. This is the true spirit of Punjab — service before self. The service of distressed humanity is nothing less than worship of God,” he said. He also lauded neighbouring states for extending a helping hand, stressing that unity and solidarity during calamities gave people the strength to overcome even the gravest crises. While the Centre prepares its multi-term rehabilitation blueprint, Chouhan underscored the urgent need for restoring embankments and preparing a comprehensive flood management plan. “Punjab faces a humongous crisis, but with coordinated efforts between the Centre, the State, and the people, we will rebuild and secure the future of this land and its farmers,” he concluded.

Gurugram Metro Extension Launched: ₹5,452 Cr project to transform city mobility

PNS ■ Gurugram

The long-awaited Gurugram Metro extension project has officially taken off, with Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal, and Haryana Chief Minister Naib Singh Saini laying the foundation stone on Friday in Sector-44. The ambitious project, pegged at ₹5,452.72 crore, is expected to redefine urban mobility, decongest roads, and significantly push up property values across the city.

The 28.5-km corridor will feature 27 stations, connecting Old Gurugram with New Gurugram and creating a seamless link to Cyber City and other key business hubs. The metro will run in a loop from the Millennium City Centre Metro Station (earlier HUDA City Centre) to Mouslari Avenue near Cyber City, with a 1.85-km spur to the Dwarka Expressway.

The new line will cover major locations including Subhash Chowk, Hero Honda Chowk, Udyog Vihar, Palam Vihar, Sector-45, 47, 48, 72, and Ashok Vihar. These stations have been strategically planned in high-demand areas to benefit both residents and commuters. The project, to be executed by Gurugram Metro Rail Limited (GMRL) and Haryana Mass Rapid Transport Corporation Limited (HMRTC), is expected to be completed within four years.

Experts predict a strong boost for Gurugram's real estate market, particularly in traditional localities such as Sectors 4, 5, 9, 10, 22, 23, 37, 45, 47, 48, 72, and Palam Vihar.



Improved access and reduced travel times are expected to drive demand from both homebuyers and investors. The project is also seen as a game-changer for developments along the Dwarka Expressway, SPR, and Sohna Elevated Road, where significant residential and commercial inventories are concentrated.

The laying of the foundation stone for the new Gurugram metro line is a landmark step in strengthening the city's infrastructure. Improved connectivity through metro expansion will not only ease commuting for residents but also unlock immense real estate potential along the corridor. With enhanced accessibility to business hubs and residential clusters, we anticipate a strong surge in housing demand across Gurugram and neighbouring towns,” Mohit Malhotra, Founder & CEO, Neoliv said.

Union Minister Manohar Lal highlighted the rapid expansion of metro services in India, noting that in 2014, the network covered only 248 km in five cities. Today, it spans 1,066 km across 24 cities, with another 970 km

Unprecedented inflows test Punjab's defences -- BBMB chairman says Bhakra, Pong spared the state early devastation

MONIKA MALIK ■ Chandigarh

The Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) on Friday described the current flood crisis in Punjab as driven by “unprecedented” inflows — roughly 20 percent higher than last comparable measurements. At the same time, he underlined that it was the presence of large reservoirs, particularly Bhakra and Pong, that averted an even earlier and far greater catastrophe. BBMB chairman Manoj Tripathi minced no words to say that without these dams “floods would have come as early as June”, while stressed that recent water-release decisions were taken only after consultation and consent of all riparian states and on the basis of weather and forecasting data.

Tripathi said that the situation remains critical even as Bhakra's inflow has eased slightly; Pong, he

warned, continued to receive inflows in excess of one lakh cusecs. As of Friday, Bhakra's water level stood at 1,678.6 feet — about 1.4 feet below the prescribed danger mark — while Pong's level was recorded at 1,394.7 feet, above its danger threshold.

Confidence that the immediate pressure may ease is tempered by Tripathi's warning that the volume of water in reservoirs this year is exceptional and requires clear, coordinated action.

Technical data supplied by the BBMB underpinned the chairman's plea for a measured response. Pong's catchment recorded the heaviest rainfall in its history, bringing 11.7 billion cubic metres (BCM) of water this season — compared with 7.9 BCM in 1988 and 9.5 BCM in 2023. Bhakra, too, registered a very high inflow of 9.11 BCM this year (1988 saw 9.25 BCM; 2023 recorded 9.18 BCM). On peak days, Pong received as much as

2.20 lakh cusecs and Bhakra about 1.10 lakh cusecs — volumes that overwhelmed local buffers and exposed structural and management vulnerabilities along downstream riverbanks.

Tripathi emphasized that the dams' designed storage cannot be exceeded — when inflows surpass holding capacity, excess water must be released downstream, underscoring the shared responsibility of states to maintain embankments and river channels. A recurring theme in Tripathi's briefing was siltation. He warned

that silt has eaten into storage, estimating that Bhakra has lost roughly 25 percent of its live storage to silt. Deep desilting, he argued, is essential to restore capacity; BBMB has already pursued policy work with the Jal Shakti Ministry and is in talks with foreign specialists — including an Australian firm — to carry out large-scale desilting. Tripathi said that earlier efforts were hampered by local objections from mining departments, but that those hurdles are now being addressed.

CM Saini asks officials to resolve citizens' grievances timely

PNS ■ Chandigarh

Stating that the State Government is working at the grassroots level with the aim of Antyodaya upliftment, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Friday asked the officers to ensure timely redressal of citizens' grievances.

While chairing the meeting of the District Public Relations and Grievance Redressal Committee in Gurugram, he gave necessary instructions to the concerned officers regarding the grievance of public concerns.

A total of 18 complaints were placed before the committee, out of which the Chief Minister resolved 14 cases on the spot, while directing to keep 4 cases pending till the next meeting.

During the meeting, the case of Pramod Kumar, a resident of Devat Colony, came up. He had earlier in last meeting (July), complained that a 24-foot-wide street in his colony had been illegally encroached upon by a neighbor who had occupied 12 feet of the road for the past 16 years, restricting access to his home. At that time, the Chief Minister had directed the Municipal Corporation Commissioner, Gurugram, and committee member Priyavrat Kataria to visit the site, investigate, and take action as per rules.

Sigh of Relief as Rains Subside; Ludhiana on Alert; No More Lives Lost

PNS ■ Chandigarh

Punjab, battered for weeks by the fury of swollen rivers and relentless rain, finally witnessed a day of respite on Friday as rainfall subsided in the upper hilly regions and within the state. The relief, however, comes with caution. While no new casualties or additional rise in the affected population were reported in the last 24 hours, the threat of the Sutlej river breaching the Sasrali embankment in Ludhiana has left authorities and residents on edge.

The state Revenue, Rehabilitation and Disaster Management Minister Hardeep Singh Mundian said that Punjab has not recorded any fresh human loss in the past day, though flood waters continue to impact agriculture and threaten habitation. “The situation is relatively stable with no new deaths or rise in the affected population in the last 24 hours. Our focus remains on safeguarding lives, providing shelter to the displaced, and preventing further crop damage,” said Mundian.

The scale of devastation remains immense. Since the onset of floods in August, 21,929 people have been evacuated from marooned villages across Punjab. Districts like Gurdaspur (5,581 evacuees), Ferozepur (3,840), Fazilka (3,953), and

Amritsar (2,734) saw the largest movements. Relief camps have been a lifeline — 196 such facilities are currently operational, sheltering 7,108 people. Fazilka alone is housing over 2,500 inmates, while Hoshiarpur, Ferozepur, Pathankot, and Jalandhar are among the other districts where thousands continue to depend on government support.

A formidable force of 24

PUNJAB FLOODS

NDRF teams, two SDRF units, and 24 contingents of the Army, Navy, and Air Force are actively engaged in rescue and relief operations. Around 35 helicopters have been pressed into service, alongside 144 boats and a state helicopter, to reach marooned settlements. The Border Security Force (BSF) has also lent its support, particularly in Ferozepur.

If the human displacement is staggering, the agrarian loss is crippling. Fresh reports confirmed that 504.16 hectares of crops were damaged in the last 24 hours alone, with Fazilka (286.5 hectares), Patiala (208 hectares), and Kapurthala (10 hectares) among the worst-hit districts. This pushes the total extent of farmland lost to floodwaters to a staggering 1.72 lakh hectares across all districts.

For a state where farming sustains millions, the blow to paddy, cotton, and fodder crops is devastating. Farmers have not only lost standing crops but also tube-wells and pump houses along riverbanks, many of which were swept away by the force of the Sutlej.

SASRALI EMBANKMENT: LUDHIANA ON ALERT

While statewide figures tell a grim story, all eyes remain fixed on Ludhiana's eastern belt where the Sasrali embankment on the Sutlej is dangerously eroding. Day-long inspections on Friday revealed a 16-foot wide breach, swallowing tubewell structures and washing away nearly seven feet of soil in places. Over 50 trees along a two-kilometre stretch have collapsed into the river, a visible reminder of the embankment's weakening condition.

The administration, backed by the Army and NDRF, is racing against time

to fortify the embankment. A secondary ring bundh, 700 metres behind the main structure, is being constructed to divert water flow. However, the threat is real — official estimates suggest that if the embankment gives way, 14 villages including Sasrali, Bont, Rawat, Hawas, Seera, Boothgarh, Mangli Tanda, and Mattewara could be inundated. Low-lying urban pockets of Rahon Road, Tibba Road, Tajpur Road, and Samrala Chowk also face the risk of waterlogging, potentially impacting more than 50,000 residents.

Deputy Commissioner Himanshu Jain, who inspected the site personally, denied reports of the embankment's collapse but acknowledged the criticality of the situation. “The administration is fully alert and prepared to tackle any emergency. People must remain vigilant and follow advisories issued,” he stated.

43 LIVES LOST, NEARLY FOUR LAKH AFFECTED

Despite the recent lull, the floods have already extracted a heavy price. Since August 1, a total of 43 people have lost their lives across 14 districts, with Hoshiarpur (7 deaths), Pathankot (6), Barnala and Amritsar (5 each), and Ludhiana and Bathinda (4 each) reporting the highest casualties. In addition, three people remain missing in Pathankot. Overall, 1,948 villages across 22 districts have been hit by the floods, directly affecting 3.84 lakh residents. Just in the last 24 hours, 46 new villages — including 20 in Patiala, 12 in Ludhiana, and 10 in Jalandhar — joined the list of those grappling with floodwaters.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has deployed gazetted officers to every flood-hit village for real-time coordination of relief and rehabilitation. He has ordered a special girdawari to assess damages to crops, property, and infrastructure, promising swift compensation to farmers and households.

The Bhakra Dam too remains under watch, with its water level standing at 1,678.74 feet — just below the danger mark of 1,680 feet. Four gates have been opened to regulate inflow and outflow, with nearly 80,792 cusecs of water being discharged..

450 for Haryana and 100 for Gurugram, supported by a mobile app for last-mile connectivity.

Calling it a “historic day”, Chief Minister Naib Singh Saini said the project will reduce traffic congestion, cut pollution, save travel time, and generate employment. He further revealed that future corridors are planned, including Rezangla Chowk to Dwarka Sector-21, Sector-56 to Pachgaon, and the “Namo Metro Corridor” connecting Delhi to Karnal, Neemrana, and Faridabad via Noida.

Gurugram, already home to over 250 Fortune 500 companies and a majority of Haryana's unicorn startups, is poised to further strengthen its status as a leading business and residential hub with this metro expansion.

BRIEFS

RANA GURJEET DEMANDS JUDICIAL PROBE INTO PUNJAB FLOOD DISASTER

Chandigarh: Former Minister and Congress MLA from Kapurthala Rana Gurjeet Singh has launched a scathing attack on the AAP Government, accusing it of “complete failure” in handling the recent floods in Punjab. He asserted that the devastation was not merely a natural calamity but the outcome of serious administrative lapses. Calling for accountability, Rana Gurjeet demanded that the Punjab and Haryana High Court appoint a sitting judge to investigate the causes behind the disaster. He blamed the BBMB for poor planning and reservoir mismanagement at the Bhakra, Pong, and Ranjit Sagar dams, holding it jointly responsible for the catastrophe. The MLA urged compensation for affected people, a comprehensive overhaul of water resource management, and de-silting measures for inundated farmlands. Stressing the role of local expertise and climate change impacts, he pressed for systemic reforms to prevent such crises in the future.

HARJOT BAINS LEADS EFFORTS TO SAVE ANCIENT TEMPLE IN NANGAL

Nangal: Punjab Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains spearheaded efforts to protect the historic Sri Lakshmi Narayan Temple in Nangal after it was partially damaged by Sutlej's strong currents. Along with volunteers and officials, Bains reinforced the premises with revetment, while also proposing Rs 1.27 crore through Nagar Council for permanent protection. He said that preserving cultural heritage alongside aiding flood victims was a top priority. Bains shared that Bhakra Dam's water level has receded to 1678.66 feet, easing pressure on flood-hit areas. He also reinforced embankments in Hariwal using jumbo bags to prevent erosion.

PUNJAB GOVERNOR FLAGS OFF RELIEF TRUCKS FOR FLOOD VICTIMS

Chandigarh: Punjab Governor and Chandigarh Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria flagged off nine trucks of relief material from Raj Bhawan for flood-affected districts including Ferozepur, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Ludhiana, and others. Sent through district Red Cross units, the aid includes tents, tarpaulins, kitchen sets, blankets, sanitary pads, ration, and 100 tonnes of animal fodder. Kataria emphasized society's moral duty to assist victims and lauded Punjab's tradition of service and resilience. He recalled visiting seven affected districts recently and urged collective support to help families rebuild lives. Yesterday, Chandigarh Red Cross dispatched two additional trucks to Amritsar with 500 kits of household supplies and utensils.

SUKHBIR BADAL PLEDGES GHAGGAR CHANNELIZATION, EXTENDS RELIEF

Shutrana/Lehra/Moonak: SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Friday vowed to prioritize channelization of the Ghaggar river with concrete embankments to safeguard Patiala and Sangrur villages from recurring floods. Touring bundhs in Shutrana, Lehra, and Moonak, he disbursed Rs six lakh cash and 13,000 litres of diesel to village committees, pledging tractors and equipment for clearing sand once waters recede. Farmers played the AAP Government for blocking their attempts to strengthen bundhs by removing silt. Sukhbir criticized both Centre and State for abandoning people, asserting SAD will complete unfinished Ghaggar works.

PUNJAB ALLOCATES FUEL, LPG RESERVES FOR FLOOD EMERGENCIES

Chandigarh: To address fuel shortages amid floods, Punjab's Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department has allocated 33,000 litres of petrol, 46,500 litres of diesel, and 1,320 LPG cylinders across districts. Minister Lal Chand Kataruchak said that this step ensures uninterrupted supply for relief operations. Amritsar received the highest share with 4,000 litres each of petrol and diesel plus 50 cylinders, while other districts including Ludhiana, Patiala, Rupnagar, and Tarn Taran were allotted reserves proportionate to needs.

PUNJAB GOVT EXTENDS SPECIAL FLOOD SAFETY MEASURES FOR ELDERLY

Chandigarh: Punjab Government has initiated special measures for elderly citizens impacted by floods. Social Security Minister Dr Baljit Kaur on Friday said that a total of 479 elderly persons have been identified across Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Ferozepur, Kapurthala, Tarn Taran, and other districts. With support from Red Cross and district administrations, temporary accommodation, food, and healthcare have been arranged in Old Age Homes, which collectively can house 700 residents. Dr Baljit assured that no elderly person would be left neglected and appealed families to avail shelter if needed.

POLICE OFFICERS ASKED TO RECORD REASONS FOR ARMS LICENCE REJECTIONS IN HARYANA

Chandigarh: Haryana Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Sumita Misra on Friday said that the Government has issued strict directions to ensure transparency in matters related to arms licences. Misra has directed all Commissioners of Police and District Commissioners that reasons for rejection of applications for grant, renewal, or extension of arms licences must be recorded in writing and furnished to the applicants. Misra emphasized that under Section 14 of the Arms Act, 1959, licensing authorities are required to record reasons in writing for any refusal and provide the same to the applicant on demand, except where it is not in the public interest to disclose such reasons. She directed all licensing authorities to strictly comply with the provisions of the Arms Act, 1959 and the Arms Rules, 2016. Further, periodic reports on refusals and rejections are to be sent to the Government for review to ensure accountability in such matters.

91 SUSPICIOUS BANK BRANCHES IDENTIFIED IN HARYANA

Chandigarh: Haryana DGP Shatrufjeet Kapur on Friday said that the State Police has identified 91 bank branches across the state suspected of operating mule accounts used for large-scale fraudulent transactions. Four such branches have been found in Panipat district alone. Police have marked these branches and initiated stepwise verification, inspection, and legal action. He urged citizens to immediately report any suspicious bank accounts, fake companies, or illegal transactions to the Cyber Helpline 1930 or at www.cybercrime.gov.in.

Corporate indifference to Punjab Floods a Human Rights Violation: Punjab Panel Orders Chief Secy to Act

MONIKA MALIK ■ Chandigarh

Corporate indifference to Punjab's devastating floods has been called out as a violation of human rights, with the Punjab State and Chandigarh (UT) Human Rights Commission on Friday directing the Chief Secretary to ensure mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions from all registered companies in the State.

The directive came from a Bench headed by PSHRC chairperson Justice Sant Parkash and member Justice Gurbir Singh while hearing a complaint filed by Chandigarh college's professor Dr Punditrao

Dharenavar. The complainant alleged that despite the scale of destruction — lives lost, crops submerged, livestock perished, and homes destroyed — “not a single registered company in Punjab” had extended financial support to the victims. He urged that companies be compelled to contribute at least one percent of their net income to the Punjab Chief Minister's Flood Relief Fund, as part of their CSR obligations.

The Commission noted that CSR has been mandatory since April 2014 under Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013. Eligible companies must spend at least two percent of their average net profits

from the preceding three financial years on CSR activities, with disaster relief and rehabilitation explicitly listed under Schedule VII.

“Corporate Social Responsibility is both a legal and ethical obligation, aligning business operations with the welfare of society, especially in times of crisis,” the Commission observed. “By failing to contribute their mandatory CSR shares towards disaster relief, companies not only violate the law but also undermine the human rights of disaster victims, who are entitled to timely aid and rehabilitation.”

Termin non-compliance with CSR provisions in the current context as a “grave

human rights violation”, the Commission directed the Chief Secretary to urgently examine the issue, coordinate with relevant authorities, and secure compliance from all corporate houses registered in Punjab.

The matter has been adjourned to October 1 for submission of the compliance report. Copies of the order have also been forwarded to the Registrar of Companies, Chandigarh, and other concerned authorities.

By linking CSR defaults to human rights violations, the Commission has sent out a powerful signal — corporations cannot remain silent spectators while Punjab reels under one of its worst flood disasters.

BORAJ POND WATER GUSHES INTO LOCALITIES IN AJMER

Damage to the embankment of the Boraj pond in Rajasthan’s Ajmer district triggered flash floods that inundated hundreds of homes across multiple localities, leaving behind a trail of destruction and sparking protests by people, officials said on Friday. The incident occurred on Thursday night when the earthen embankment of the pond, located on the outskirts of Ajmer city, gave way after days of heavy rainfall.

Classifieds

CHANGE OF NAME

I hitherto known as Sneh Bala Wife of Sh. Sohan Lal Sharma Resident of Flat No. 04, Ground Floor, Simran Apartment, Ekta Vihar, Baltana, Zirakpur, Tehsil Derabassi, District S.A.S. Nagar (Mohali) Punjab 140604 India, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as BALA KUMARI.

I, **Ranjit Mandal** F/o NK Utpal Mandal serving in unit 339 Med Regiment C/o 56 APO have changed my name from Ranjit Mandal to Ranjit Kumar Mandal.

I, **Gajendra** Chandra Sarkar F/o L/Nk Utpal Sarkar serving in unit 52 Engineer Regiment C/o 56 APO have changed my name from Gajendra Chanda to Gajendra Chandra Sarkar.

I, **Swapna Rani** Sarkar F/o L/Nk Utpal Sarkar serving in unit 52 Engineer Regiment C/o 56 APO have changed my name from Sapna Rani Sarkar to Swapna Rani Sarkar.

I, **Bimla Devi** m/o Nb Sub Rughubir Singh serving in HQ 11 Corps Camp C/o 56 APO have changed my name from Smt Bimla Devi to Bimla Devi.

I, **Lovdeep** S/o Surjit Kumar R/o Vill. Pawen, P.O. Jhinger Kalan, Teh.Dasuya, Distt. Hoshiarpur, Punjab have changed my name from Lovdeep to Lovdeep Kumar (Surname as Kumar)

I **Tejinderpal** Singh S/O Gurnek Singh R/O Vpo. Mor Karima, Distt. Ludhiana Punjab Have Changed My Minor Daughter's Name Avneet Kaur Dhaliwal To Avneet Kaur.

I **Kamal Kishore** Yadav S/O Raj Kumar R/O St.No.5 Near Baba Farid Public School Faridkot Have Changed My Name To Kamal Kishore.

I **Harpreet** Kumar Manchanda S/O Gurcharan Dass R/O St.No.-6 Bhan Singh Colony Faridkot Punjab Have Changed My Name To Harpreet Kumar.

I, **Mohit** S/O Buta Ram R/O Near Water Tenki, Vpo. Rampur Sunran, Tehsil Phagwara, District Kapurthala Have Changed My Name From Mohit To Mohit Kumar.

I, **Satvir Kaur** W/o Surjit Singh Sidhu R/o Hamirgarh (Bathinda) Have Changed My Name As Satvir Kaur Sidhu.

I, **Simranjot Kaur** W/o Prabhjit Singh R/o Pheruman Road Guru Nanak School Wali Gali Rayya Teh-Baba Bakala Distt. Amritsar have changed my name to Simranjot Kaur to Simranjot is my given name and Kaur is my surname.

I, **Rajendra** Singh Chauhan S/o Dharmpal Singh Chauhan R/o Flat No. 137 GH-3, HEWO Society MDC Sector-5 Panchkula Po. Mansa Devi Panchkula, Haryana have changed my name from Rajendra Singh to Rajendra Singh Chauhan.

I, hitherto known as Rajwinder Kaur W/o Balwinder Pal R/o Tikhawal Mohalla Teh- Mukerian Distt. Hoshiarpur, Pb-144205, have changed name of my minor daughter Avantika aged about 06 years and shall hereafter be known as Abhantika.

I, **Aarti** W/o Sanjiv Kumar R/o Vpo-Jhinjri, Teh-Anandpur Sahib, Distt. Rupnagar (Ropar), Pb. declare that i have changed my name from Aarti to Arti Sharma.

I, **Amanjot Kaur** D/o Gurdev Singh R/o H.No.123, Village Daudpur, Tehsil Samrala, Khanna (Ludhiana) declare that my name be read as given name Amanjot and surname Kaur.

I, **Jasmin Bagum** W/o Nizamudin R/o Village Salana Jiwan Singh Wala, Tehsil Amlah (Fatehgarh Sahib) have changed my name to Jasmeen.

I, **Harjit Seehra** W/o Lakhvir Singh R/o VPO Rauni, Tehsil Payal (Ludhiana) have changed my name to Harjit Kaur.

I **Harbhajan** Singh Punu S/o Jaswant Singh residing at # H.No.5C/18, Block-C, NIT-5 Faridabad, Haryana-121001, have changed my name to Harbhajan Singh.

I **Manvi** D/o Birbal Batra and W/o Pardeep Kumar R/o H.No. 3048 Sadbhavna Parivar Society Near Java palace N.H.B.C Panipat, Haryana - 132103, have changed my name to Meetu.

I **Chaman Kishore** S/o Ravi Kant R/o Mohalla Bramana, Near Govt. School, P.O.-Badhani, Tehsil - Pathankot, Badhani, Pathankot, Punjab - 145001, have changed my name to Kamal.

I **Deepshikha** Sharma D/o Davinder Sharma and W/o Barjinder Singh R/o Standard Motors, Dalhousie Road, Near Pyare Lal Petrol Pump, Pathankot, Punjab - 145001, have changed my name to Disha Singh.

I, **Raj** Kumar Bhardwaj S/O Dhanna Ram R/O Village - Khutha, Po- Gahlari, Tehsil/Distt- Gurdaspur, Punjab, India. Declare That In My Son Mohit Bhardwaj's School Records Have Changed My Name From Raj Kumar Bhardwaj To Raj Kumar.

I, **Imran** Son Of Sh. William Masih, Residing At H.No. Ward No.269/4, Railway Station Gurdaspur, Punjab - 143521, Do Hereby Declare That I Have Changed My Name From Imran To Imran Khokhar. All Nears And Dears May Note.

I, **No. 10363600N** Rank RFN Name NARINDER SINGH of 126 Inf Bn (TA) JAK RIF, C/o 56 APO, have changed name of my mother from JASHVINDER KAUR to JASWINDER KAUR vide Affidavit No. IN-PB71157452373862X Dated 05-09-2025 before Notary Public Pathankot (Punjab).

I, **RENU** is legally wedded spouse of No 2500464M Rank Hav Name Bhupinder Singh residing at Village – Chhani Muwalan, Post Office – Jugial, Tehsil – Pathankot, Distt – Pathankot, State – Punjab, have changed my name from RENU to RENU KUMARI vide Affidavit No. IN-PB71085246062331X Dated 05-09-2025 before Notary Public Pathankot (Punjab).

I, **Rekha Rani** is legally wedded spouse/Nok of GS-172096Y Rank Mason Name Pawan Kumar presently residing at Vill - Dehriwal, PO - Sarna, Tehsil and Distt – Pathankot, Punjab, PIN - 145025, have changed my name from Rekha Devi to Rekha Rani and my Date of Birth is 20 Dec 1968 vide Affidavit No. IN-PB70561465044453X Dated 04-09-2025 before Executive Magistrate Pathankot (Punjab).

I, **Neetu Arora** W/O Vikas Marwaha: R/O Sangalpura Road, Gurdaspur Tehsil/Distt-Gurdaspur, Punjab, India. Have Changed My Name From Neetu Arora To Neetu Marwaha.

I, **Usha Devi** spouse of No.14846571P Hav/SHT Shailendra Dohare resident of Village- Bilav Umri, Post- Bilav Umri, Tehsil- Bhind, District- Bhind, State- M.P. Pin-477331, have changed my name from Usha Devi to Usha Dohare Vide affidavit No.IN- PB70400091217844X dated 03 Sep 2025 before notary public Pathankot

I, **Manee** Samantaray Mother of No.17026221H Sep Bulu Samantaray resident of Village- Ballia, Post- Haripura Sasan, Tehsil- Chilkila, District- Khordha, State- Odisha, Pin-752034, have changed my name from Manee Samantaray to Mani Samantaray Vide affidavit No.IN- PB69684943888402X dated 01 Sep 2025 before notary public Pathankot

I, **BHAGWAN** SAHAI YADAV is Father of Army No: 4204487Y Rank: Hav Name- Sri Ram Yadav Presently residing at Unit: 11 Kumaon C/o 56 APO Permanent Address: Govind ji ki Dhani, Ward No: 5, 11, Risani, PO: Bhurthal, DIST: Jaipur, Rajasthan, Pin- 303704 declare that I have changed My Name from BHAGWAN SAHAI YADAV to BHAGWAN SAHAY

I, **BHAWARI** DEVI YADAV is Mother of Army No: 4204487Y Rank: Hav Name- Sri Ram Yadav Presently residing at Unit: 11 Kumaon C/o 56 APO Permanent Address: Govind ji ki Dhani, ward No: 5, 11, Risani, PO: Bhurthal, DIST: Jaipur, Rajasthan, Pin- 303704 declare that I have changed My Name from BHAWARI DEVI YADAV to BHURI DEVI

I, **VIMALA** DEVI am legally Wedded Spouse of Army No: 4204487Y Rank: Hav Name- Sri Ram Yadav Presently Residing at Unit: 11 Kumaon C/o 56 APO Permanent Address: Govind ji ki Dhani, Ward No: 5, 11, Risani, PO: Bhurthal, Dist: Jaipur, Rajasthan, Pin- 303704 declare that I have changed My Name from VIMALA DEVI to VIMALA YADAV.

I, **PAMPAM** KUMARI am Legally Wedded Spouse of Army No: 14844198F Rank: Hav/MT Name: Sandeep Kumar Presently Posted At Unit: 519 Asc Bn C/o 56 APO Permanent Address: Ranadih, Kahua, Kahua, Munger, Sangrampur, Bihar, 813321 declare that I have changed my name from PAMPAM KUMARI to PAMPAM DEVI. Vide Affidavit No: 11AA 216522, dated:05/09/2025

I, **PA VANAJAKSHI** is Mother of Service No: 16118163N Rank: Spr Name: Lakshmi Narayana Polaki Presently residing at 163 Br Coy, 16 Engr Br Regt (PMS), Chandimandir Cantt Panchkula, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from PA VANAJAKSHI to POLAKI VANAJAKSI and Also Correct my Date of birth from 28/10/1967 to 01/01/1966.

I, **Army** No: 16118163N Rank: Spr Name: Lakshmi Narayana Polaki Presently residing at 163 Br Coy, 16 Engr Br Regt (PMS), Chandimandir Cantt Panchkula, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from LAKSHMI NARAYANA POLAKI to LAKSHMINARAYANA POLAKI.

I, **Ankita Bansal** Mittal W/O Sh. Sahil Mittal R/O House No. 213, Sector-4, Panchkula (Haryana) Declare That I Have Changed My Name From Ankita To Ankita Bansal Mittal.

I, **Maras** (Aadhaar Card No. 5765-0422-9622) S/O Piyara Masih Vill. Ghulla P.O. Abul Khair Tehsil & Distt. Gurdaspur, Pin Code- 143521, declare that Simon is my son and my name is Bunty has erroneously been recorded in my son documents. Now I want to change the name Bunty (incorrect name) to Maras (correct name) in my son documents.

I, **Maras** (Aadhaar Card No. 5765-0422-9622) S/O Piyara Masih Vill. Ghulla P.O. Abul Khair Tehsil & Distt. Gurdaspur, Pin Code- 143521 declare that I have changed name of my son Siman (incorrect name) to Simon (correct name)& Mahima is my daughter his date of birth is 09-09-2010 (incorrect date of birth) to 08-09-2010 (correct date of birth).

I, **Shailendra** Singh Bajetha Father of No.4211971N Sep Jitender Singh Bajetha resident of Village- Pratap Vihar Part 2 Gali No.1 Kirari Post- Sultanpuri, Tehsil- Saraswati Vihar, District- North West, State- Delhi, Pin-110086, have changed my name from Shailendra Singh Bajetha to Shailender Singh Bajetha Vide affidavit No.IN- PB71169248034605X dated 05 Sep 2025 before notary public Pathankot

Parvati Devi Mother of No.4211950X Sep Shubham Singh resident of Village- Dhondaha, Post- Bareji, Tehsil- Mohhamdabad, District- Ghazipur, State- Uttar Pradesh, Pin-233301, have changed my name from Parvati Devi to Parwati Singh Vide affidavit No.IN- PB71168033964819X dated 05 Sep 2025 before notary public Pathankot

I, **No.15677127M** Hav Manoj Kumar Pathak resident of Village- Barakagaon, Post- Barakagaon, Tehsil- Barhaj, District- Deoria, State- U.P, Pin- 274601, have changed my Son name from Harsh Vardhan Pathak to Harshvardhan Pathak Vide affidavit No.IN- PB71167897824533X dated 05 Sep 2025 before notary public Pathankot

I, **Parwati** Mother of No.4211971N Sep Jitender Singh Bajetha resident of Village- Pratap Vihar Part 2 Gali No.1 Kirari Post- Sultanpuri, Tehsil- Saraswati Vihar, District- North West, State- Delhi, Pin-110086, have changed my name from Parwati to Parwati Devi Vide affidavit No.IN- PB71169085151751X dated 05 Sep 2025 before notary public Pathankot

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Opposition slams Mamata for backing ‘tainted’ teachers

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

The Opposition parties have slammed Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for expressing her sympathy for the deposed school teachers who were earlier adjudged “tainted” by the Supreme Court. “The Chief Minister seems to be more concerned about the “tainted” teachers who had secured their jobs through corrupt means does this not smell a rat when the deserving teachers who too lost their jobs are agitating in the streets the Chief Minister is showing her sympathy for the “tainted” teachers who obtained their jobs through corrupt means,” said Bengal BJP chief Samik Bhattacharya.

The Court in an order passed earlier this year cancelled an entire recruitment panel of 1916 that led to the dismissal of about 25,600 school teachers on account of non-transparency in recruitment process. The Court also directed the State School Service Commission to hold a fresh recruitment examination and complete the appointment procedure by December 31 of this year.

The new recruitment examination will be conducted on September 7 and 14. The Court has ruled the “tainted” teach-



ers ineligible to appear in the exams.

The Chief Minister had earlier said that she was “concerned about the teachers who have lost their jobs after being ruled tainted,” adding she would try to find out ways of accommodating them in Class III jobs.

The Chief Minister in an award giving programme earlier said that she was looking for alternative jobs for the teachers who had been ruled tainted. “After working for so many years, many of them have been termed ‘tainted and ineligible’. I am looking into this matter. They

may not work as teachers according to the court’s order, but I am trying to ascertain whether they can work as Group C or D staff of course legally,” she said.

Following the Court order the SSC last week released the names of 1806 “tainted” teachers. Incidentally a large number such tainted teachers in the list published by the SSC turned out to be the close relatives of TMC leaders including ministers and MLAs.

“Her sympathy for the tainted and the lathi-charge that her police resorted to on the eligible and agitating teachers is a proof of the

corrupt nature of her Government the Court has rightly called it an institutionalised corruption,” said a CPI(M) leader.

Meanwhile, Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari on Friday alleged that some TMC people were leaking questions.

“The TMC is selling questions for ₹50,000 I have reports that they are selling questions for the coming two examinations,” he said. The SSC however rejected the charges saying the “question papers are absolutely safe and there is no question of any leak.”

BJP slams Karnataka for ballot paper move

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

■ Bengaluru

Taking a swipe at the Congress Government in Karnataka, the opposition BJP on Friday claimed the state cabinet’s decision to use ballot papers instead of EVMS in the next local body polls amounted to “self-certifying” that the ruling party came to power through “vote theft.” Urging the 136 Congress MLAs elected in the 2023 Assembly polls and the nine Congress MPs from the state to resign first, BJP state president B Y Vijayendra alleged, “Let them win the elections again using ballot paper, or accept that they came to power through vote theft.” The Congress Government on Thursday

decided to recommend to the State Election Commission (SEC) that all future panchayat and urban local body elections in Karnataka be held using ballot paper instead of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil had cited “erosion of public confidence and credibility in EVMs as the reason for the cabinet decision.” The cabinet also authorised the SEC to “prepare, revise and, if necessary, redo” the electoral rolls for local body polls, citing discrepancies and allegations of “vote theft.” Vijayendra, in a post on X, claimed, “The highest number of illegal voting, complaints of vote theft, incidents of election violence,

and complaints about irregularities in the country have been registered in the courts during elections held on ballot papers—and that too against Congressmen.”

“The people of the country have not forgotten that Indira Gandhi imposed the Emergency due to the court’s verdict in the wake of vote theft and election malpractices by her,” he alleged.

Alleging that the Congress, “an expert in vote theft and election malpractices using ballot papers,” was in disarray due to continuous electoral defeats, he said Rahul Gandhi was creating a “childish controversy in the name of ‘vote theft’, putting forward a baseless, immature and twisted argument.” “To support this, the ruling

Congress Government in the state has decided to conduct elections using ballot papers,” he added.

“While the entire country and the world are moving rapidly based on technology, the Congress Government in Karnataka is insulting technology,” he claimed.

According to Vijayendra, Congress under Rahul Gandhi supports ballot-based elections only because “electoral irregularities, booth violence and fraudulent voting can be committed without hesitation” through ballot papers.

“The Congress Government in Karnataka is going to take the first step to implement it. The Congress’s agenda and goal is to defy the democratic system and transparent elections,” he alleged.

Flood-hit Jammu reels under devastation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

■ Pargwal (Jammu)

Days after floodwaters swallowed their homes and fields, the villagers of Pargwal walk barefoot through sludge and rubble, searching not just for belongings but for pieces of memory in the mud-filled farmlands that stretch to the International Border.

On Tuesday last, the Chenab river burst into their hamlet with a roar, breaking walls, carrying away animals and household items, and leaving behind a suffocating carpet of mud. The villagers were scattered across the fields, searching for whatever the river had not claimed.

Pargwal village, near Akhnoor, one of 27 border hamlets, is situated between the border with Pakistan and the mighty Chenab river.

For two days, floodwaters stood up to the first storey of houses, drowning shops, granaries and livestock.

Over 3,000 people were evacuated by rescue teams, but the damage remains everywhere. Broken walls lean dangerously, doors creak in mud, and fields — once green with paddy — now lie under thick layers of silt. Subash Chander bent over in the muddy waters, his hands trembling, as he pulled



Swollen Jhelum river in spate after heavy rainfall, in Downtown Srinagar PTI

out their only surviving old almirah half a kilometre from his house with the help of his brothers.

It was a wedding gift, still locked, holding inside not just cash and jewellery but the weight of memory. “I thought I would never see it again. It is a piece of memory for us,” he whispered, brushing mud off its corners.

Chander recalled the fearful moment when the flood struck and said, “We had a narrow escape as the water gushed into our house

suddenly. We rushed to save children and elders first. A wall was damaged on the back side due to the impact of water. “It was all happening in front of our eyes. We could not save anything except our lives. Now, when we see our houses ruined, we cannot even eat,” he added. The villagers feel hapless about their fate as most of the houses suffered damage and are unsafe for living. With tears rolling down the cheeks of 62-year-old Puran Chand, he stood

amid the rubble of his destroyed home. “We have lost everything. Our house is damaged. We are a family of nine. Where do we live now? I am 62 years old. I have seen this much water for the first time in my life,” he said. The family, which mostly has daily-wage labourers, had built their home only five years ago after saving every penny. The floodwaters had inundated houses up to the first storey for almost 48 hours, damaging most of them as well as shops and other structures.

It has not only hit their housing needs but also their economy, which is mostly dependent on agriculture and is now suffering huge damage. For Sharda Devi, the floodwaters rose up to her neck as she struggled to pull her family out. “It was like a wall of water hitting us. We lost everything, even our animals,” she said, adding that in 15 years of marriage, she had never witnessed such a calamity. “Even our paddy fields are buried under a thick sheet of mud,” she said. Villagers said that they have not witnessed such intensity of floods in the area, as was witnessed in 1984 and 1992 when the village was severely battered by the Chenab waters, causing large-scale damage.

SIT probing Dharmasthala case, no need for NIA: Siddaramaiah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

■ Bengaluru

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday downplayed calls for a National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe into allegations of multiple murders, rapes and burials in Dharmasthala, saying the case is already being investigated by the state police through a Special

Investigating Team (SIT). The chief minister was responding to questions about Hindu and Jain seers meeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah, seeking an NIA probe into the case.

“We have constituted SIT, they are police. Who is in NIA? They too are police,” Siddaramaiah told reporters.

The Opposition BJP and JD(S) have also demanded an NIA probe, targeting the

Congress Government over its handling of the case.

They alleged a conspiracy behind the “smear campaign” against Dharmasthala and the local Hindu temple.

The controversy erupted after a complainant, later identified as C N Chinniah and arrested on charges of perjury, claimed to have buried several bodies, including women showing signs of sexual assault, in

Dharmasthala over the past two decades, with implications pointing to the administrators of the local temple. The SIT, tasked by the state Government to probe the allegations, conducted search operations, digs at multiple locations identified by the complainant in forested areas along the banks of the Netravathi River, where skeletal remains were recovered at two sites.



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 Order Order

**Telangana BJP moves SC
against order quashing
defamation case against CM**



Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy

The Telangana unit of the BJP has moved the Supreme Court challenging an order of the high court which quashed a defamation case against Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy over his speech during the 2024 Lok Sabha poll campaign. The plea is slated to come up for hearing on September 8 before a bench of Chief Justice BR Gavai and Justices K Vinod Chandran and Atul S Chandurkar.

The Telangana High Court on August 1 acted on Reddy's plea who sought quashing of proceedings in the case pending in a Hyderabad trial court. The BJP's Telangana unit, represented by its general secretary, filed a complaint in May 2024 against Reddy alleging he delivered a defamatory and provocative speech against the party on May 4 last year. Reddy, it alleged, connived with the Telangana Congress Party to develop a fake and dubious political narrative that the BJP would end reservations if voted to power. The complainant claimed the alleged defamatory speech lowered BJP's reputation as a political party.

A trial court in August last year said a prima facie case was made against Reddy for the alleged offences of defamation under the erstwhile IPC and under Section 125 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Section 125 of the Act deals with promoting enmity between classes in connection with election. Challenging the trial court's order, Reddy moved the high court contending the allegations in the complaint do not make a prima facie case against him. Reddy argued before the high court that political speeches cannot be made a subject matter of defamation.

**₹40.91 lakh compensation
to woman as she suffers
miscarriage due to accident**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal has directed an insurance company to pay ₹40.91 lakh compensation to a woman who suffered miscarriage due to a road accident in 2018. Presiding officer Shelly Arora was hearing the claim petition of Anshu Kashyap, who suffered injuries after a rashly driven vehicle hit her on December 12, 2018.

The claimant said she had already been certified as disabled owing to dwarfism suffering from 40 per cent disability and the accident rendered her with 84 per cent permanent disability in her lower limbs. In an order dated September 2, the tribunal held the accident was caused by the driver's "speedy and reckless" driving.

On the point of compensation, the tribunal said the 41-year-old woman lost her six-month-old foetus and compensated her with ₹5 lakh on that count.

"In such advanced age, without any reproductive assistance, chances of normal pregnancy are very rare, even the success rate of reproductive assistance is also very low. Therefore, even without any conclusive certification by a medical expert, it can at least be inferred that any further possibility of enjoying motherhood for the injured shall be very rare," the order read.

For other losses, it said the woman's disability had severely impeded her unhindered physical mobility, limiting her capacity to perform

routine daily sustenance tasks and she required a wheelchair. "In view of her medical condition, it is evident that she would require the active assistance of an attendant at least for 12 hours a day," the tribunal said.

The woman was a Government school teacher and the disability was stated to inevitably affect her efficiency, mobility, and overall ability to perform her duties.

"While the job of a teacher does not demand heavy physical labour, it still involves tasks like standing for long periods, moving between classrooms, supervising co-curricular activities, and participating in school events; all of which are now likely to be affected," the tribunal said.

It said these limitations may not cause an immediate reduction in her salary, but they would still restrict her chances of competing for certain assignments, postings, or roles that could have offered better pay or additional benefits in the future.

"Because of the injuries and permanent disability, the claimant can no longer enjoy life as she did before the accident. Activities that once gave her joy, such as travelling freely, taking part in social gatherings, or moving about without help, are now limited or not possible at all," the tribunal said.

It directed the vehicle's insurer, Iffco Tokio General Insurance Co Ltd, to pay a total compensation of around ₹40.91 lakh for various pecuniary and non-pecuniary damages.

Water seepage irks Delhi NCLT Bar Association

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) Bar Association has raised urgent concerns with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) after three courtrooms of the Tribunal's New Delhi Bench were declared unsafe and shut down due to severe water seepage.

The NCLT issued a public notice on September 3, informing advocates and litigants that court rooms IV, V and VI on the 8th floor of Block 3 of CGO Complex at Lodhi Road have become structurally unsafe. At present, only three courtrooms are functional against the sanctioned six.

Continuous leakage from the roof had caused deterioration of the false ceiling, raising risks of collapse, short-circuiting and fire hazards.



NCLT building in Delhi

After inspection, the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) confirmed that the courtrooms were unfit for use until repairs and certification were completed. An order issued the same

day notified that with effect from September 4, all courts of the NCLT New Delhi Bench would function on a half-day basis from the remaining rooms available on the 6th and 7th floors.

In its September 4 representation to MCA Secretary Deepti Gaur Mukerjee, the NCLT Bar Association led by President and Senior Advocate UK Chaudhary and Secretary General Saurabh

Kalia described the situation as a "complete obstruction in the administration of justice."

"The closure of the 8th floor has exacerbated the situation, bringing the functioning of the NCLT to a near standstill. All courts under the New Delhi Bench are now operating on a half-day basis, resulting in a severe disruption of judicial proceedings," the Association said. The Bar highlighted that even before the shutdown, court no. VI had been functioning temporarily from court no. V and the premises lacked basic facilities such as a bar room for advocates, a canteen, photocopying services and adequate space for registry staff.

The Association pointed out that a 2018 PIL it filed before the Delhi High Court on the issue remains pending. Although the High Court had directed that the

First Floor of the CGO Complex be earmarked for NCLT use, renovation was abruptly halted and possession never handed over.

"The persistent roof leakage at NCLT New, Delhi has forced closure of the courtrooms, bringing critical judicial work to a halt. The Ministry must act with urgency to restore full operations. Stakeholders' trust in the insolvency and company law framework depends on assuring seamless, efficient and timely adjudication, said NCLT Bar Association's President and Senior Advocate UK Chaudhary.

Copies of the representation have also been marked to the Chief Justice of India, the Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, NCLT President Justice Ramalingam Sudhakar and MCA Joint Secretary Anita Shah Akela.

Khalid's bail plea: Sibal to approach SC against 'injustice'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Days after the Delhi High Court denied bail to Umar Khalid in the Delhi riots case, senior advocate Kapil Sibal on Friday said Article 21 had been violated and "we will approach the Supreme Court" against the "injustice". The Rajya Sabha MP also questioned as to where India's democracy was heading with political parties not raising such issues thinking that this may harm them politically. "We don't want to do the right thing and raise our voice for it. Our lawyers, middle class and society are silent," Sibal said.

In an apparent swipe at former Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud over his reported remarks that there were at least seven adjournments sought by Khalid's counsel, Sibal said only two adjournments were sought by the defence when the matter was



Kapil Sibal

before the Supreme Court. "If the court does not give a verdict for years, are lawyers to be blamed for it. This is the state of affairs of the court. If you don't want to give bail,

reject the plea. Why do you have to do 20-30 hearings," Sibal said at a press conference here.

"Umar Khalid has been in custody for the last four years, 11

months and 15 days and will continue to be in custody. There have been two appeals — filed in 2022 and in 2024 — that were rejected by high courts. One SLP was filed in 2023 but was withdrawn in 2024," he said.

Pointing out that the Supreme Court has stated that bail application should be heard as soon as possible and there are several verdicts to that effect, Sibal asked whether that has been applied to the case of Khalid.

"The first appeal that came before the High Court had 28 hearings in 180 days. In 2024, an appeal was filed and it took 407 days to be rejected," Sibal said. He said the case against Khalid pertains to a speech he made in Mumbai for which he has been charged under UAPA.

The charge is that he gave a speech which implied that there would be violence in future and it is not about killing a person,

kidnapping a person or attacking territorial integrity of the country, he said. There is no direct evidence against him, Sibal claimed. "The judges that are sitting in high courts, according to us, this is a violation of Article 21 and this injustice should not be done," he said. "But life depends on hope and we will approach the Supreme Court and expect that we will be heard," Sibal said.

Denying bail to nine persons including Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the "larger conspiracy" case of February 2020 riots, the Delhi High Court on Tuesday ruled "conspiratorial" violence under the garb of demonstrations or protests by citizens cannot be allowed.

A bench of Justices Navin Chawla and Shalinder Kaur was dealing with the pleas of Imam, Khalid, Mohd Saleem Khan, Shifa Ur Rehman, Athar Khan, Meeran Haider, Abdul Khalid Saifi, Gulfisha Fatima and Shadab Ahmed.

Allow passion to evolve, law graduates urged

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Visakhapatnam

Supreme Court Judge Justice Surya Kant on Friday advised graduates of a law college here to allow their interests and passions to evolve, saying very few professionals — lawyers or otherwise — find their calling overnight.

Addressing the convocation of multiple batches of students of Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University (DSNLU), Justice Surya Kant said evolving interests and passions should not be seen as confusion but as a sign of growth.

"The truth is, very few professionals — lawyers or otherwise — find their calling overnight. Your interests and passions will evolve, and as they do, your sense of purpose will transform," he said. Acknowledging the internal struggle many face in finding the perfect role, the apex court judge said passion rarely emerges in a sudden burst. Instead, it develops gradually through layers of experience, curiosity, and reflection.

"Today, you may have an idea of where you wish to go, and tomorrow that vision



Justice Surya Kant

may shift. Permit yourself to evolve and adapt, for the simple reason that growth rarely proceeds in a straight line." Reflecting on the legal profession, Justice Surya Kant said

"Some may discover their passion in advocacy, others in the corporate world and still others in teaching, public service or paths entirely unexpected. The magic of law lies in its permeability — its ability to let you reinvent yourself, to switch lanes and start over, he added.

The judge called on law graduates not to be afraid of uncertainty, but to embrace it and have the courage to ask themselves "what truly makes me happy?".

Noting that life is akin to a Formula 1 Grand Prix, Justice Surya Kanth likened the pivotal role of the paddock crew on a race track to the support and guidance that shapes one's journey through life.

"However, this race is a little different from the ones you watch online: in the Grand Prix of your life, your goal is not to finish the race faster than everyone else. The goal is to focus on the quality of your own race," he said. The judge advised young lawyers and graduates to invest time in relationships, occasionally set work aside, and be present for those moments and people that matter the most.

'Police witnesses to be examined physically'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Following protests by Advocates Associations, the Delhi Police has clarified that material Police witnesses be examined physically in Court and only formal police witnesses will be examined through video conferencing from police stations. The Delhi Police has said that the examination of material police witnesses may continue to be conducted in physical mode, pending further consultations among various stakeholders.

"This would ensure that while the objective of expediting proceedings and reducing delays is met, the sanctity and efficacy of examination of crucial witnesses is also maintained. Further, in the event of any request from

the defense counsel for examination of a police witness, in physical mode, the same may be considered by the learned Presiding Judge on merits," an order issued by the Delhi Police on Thursday said.

The order said that the arrangement will facilitate a smooth and balanced implementation of the newly introduced provisions for virtual examination of witnesses in Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS). Last month, the Delhi LG had issued a notification as per the second proviso to section 265(3) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), which allows for witnesses to be examined by "audio-video electronic means" at a designated place notified by the state Government. All bar bodies in

the national capital, including the Supreme Court Bar Association, Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association, Delhi High Court Bar Association and the District Bar Associations, voiced their protests against the LG's notification, saying that it will impact fair trial. Allowing police witnesses to testify from police stations will vitiate the fairness of the process, the lawyers' associations stated. After week long protests by Advocates and shut down of trial courts, the Delhi Police stated that the notification will be put on hold till the Union Home Minister met the representatives of the bar associations for an open discussion. A PIL has been filed in the Delhi High Court against the LG's notification which will be heard next week.

SC pulls up MCD on 'Gumti of Shaikh Ali' cleanliness



Gumti of Shaikh Ali

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

"You will clean it in two hours if a dignitary is coming," the Supreme Court has said as it slammed the MCD for its inaction in maintaining cleanliness around the Lodhi-era monument "Gumti of Shaikh Ali" in Defence Colony area in the national capital.

Directing the MCD commissioner to hold officers accountable, a bench of Justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and S V N Bhatti told him to submit an action plan to deal with the gaps shown by the court commissioner.

"If a dignitary is coming, you will clean it in two hours and keep the area spick and span. Is this the respect you show to our orders? It is very difficult to restrain ourselves but is this the way you behave? Is there any ego issue that you say the archaeology department will do?" the bench observed on September 4.

The top court also directed the municipal body to depute a senior official to monitor the situation on a day-to-day basis and to share the details of the officer with the senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan who has been appointed court commissioner in the matter. Examining a report submitted by Sankaranarayanan, who visited the site on

Wednesday, the court found non-compliance of its orders. It then summoned the MCD commissioner and directed him to appear by 3 pm.

"We find that there is too much of a communication gap between the court and the MCD. We would thus like the Commissioner of the MCD to be personally present in the court at 3 pm so that whatever order the Court passes is in his presence so that it is taken in the right spirit," the bench said.

The top court continued, "We have been constrained to pass this order as we have been giving sufficient leverage and latitude to the MCD to come clean by showing its bonafide but we find that our hopes have been dashed by the conduct and the stand taken by the MCD." When the commissioner appeared he submitted there was some communication gap as regards the cemented portion and assured that it will be removed.

The court then posted the matter for September 18 and sought a report MCD on officers responsible for disobeying its orders and the action taken in this regard.

The top court had previously ordered the park inside the Lodhi-era monument "Gumti of Shaikh Ali" premises not to be used for the construction of badminton or basketball courts.

The top court then direct-

ed the Delhi Government to issue a fresh notification to declare the Lodhi-era monument "Gumti of Shaikh Ali" a protected monument under law. The dispute over the monument surfaced when the top court directed the Defence Colony resident welfare association to vacate its structures and pay ₹40 lakh to the archaeology department of the Delhi Government as compensation for occupying the historical place since the 1960s.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by Defence Colony resident Rajeev Suri, who sought to have the Gumti declared a protected monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 (AMASR Act). The plea was filed in the top court after the Delhi High Court dismissed his plea in 2019. The top court has been regularly passing directions to ensure removal of encroachments, illegal occupation, and beautification of the monument and its surrounding area.

Protected monuments under the AMASR Act benefit from legal protection, conservation efforts, and restrictions on activities around them to ensure their preservation for future generations. Such monuments are safeguarded against damage, destruction, and unauthorised construction or excavation in their vicinity.

Editor's

TAKE

Demographic shift: Is India ageing too fast

It is a demographic paradox — once battling rapid population growth, the nation now faces the challenges of declining births and the prospect of an ageing society

It is a classic dilemma: Too much of anything is bad, but too little of it is equally worrisome. India has long been celebrated as a young nation with a large working-age population powering its growth story.

However, recent data suggest a quiet demographic transformation is underway. The latest Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2023 reveals that India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has declined to 1.9, down from 2.0 in the previous year, well below the replacement level of 2.1 births per woman. For the first time, rural India's TFR has touched the replacement rate of 2.1, while urban India's rate is even lower at 1.5.

The fall in fertility is driven by a combination of social, economic, and cultural changes – rising urbanisation growing cost of raising children, women education, availability of contraceptives – have altered family aspirations. Women's increasing participation in the workforce have played a decisive role, as they have delayed marriages, which reduce the reproductive window. Besides, fewer children and higher education ensure upward mobility. While this decline is a sign of progress, especially in terms of healthcare and gender empowerment, it carries complex implications for economic growth.

The most immediate concern is the risk to India's demographic dividend. The country's youthful workforce has been its biggest economic advantage, but now the working-age population will peak in the coming decades before beginning to shrink. This will mean fewer workers supporting a growing unproductive population.

The uneven fertility rates across states also add a layer of complexity. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh continue to record relatively high fertility, while states such as Delhi, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal are far below the average. This could result in inter-state labour migration, creating social tensions. Sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services may face shortages of young workers, while the pressure on pensions, healthcare, and elderly care will mount.

Addressing this shift will require a careful and balanced policy response. Family planning policies must adapt to regional variations, with high-fertility states focusing on population stabilisation while low-fertility states may need to encourage childbearing through supportive measures such as childcare facilities, parental leave, and financial incentives. More importantly, India must invest heavily in human capital. With fewer children being born, the emphasis must move from numbers to quality – ensuring good education, healthcare, and job opportunities. India's falling fertility rate is both a triumph and a test. The window of demographic advantage is narrowing, and unless India acts decisively to adapt, the very advantage it has could become a challenge for its future.

India's quest for knowledge

From the early vision of science and Gandhian thought to the contemporary framework of NEP-2020, each milestone reflects the nation's attempt to prepare its citizens for a changing world while remaining rooted in its cultural ethos

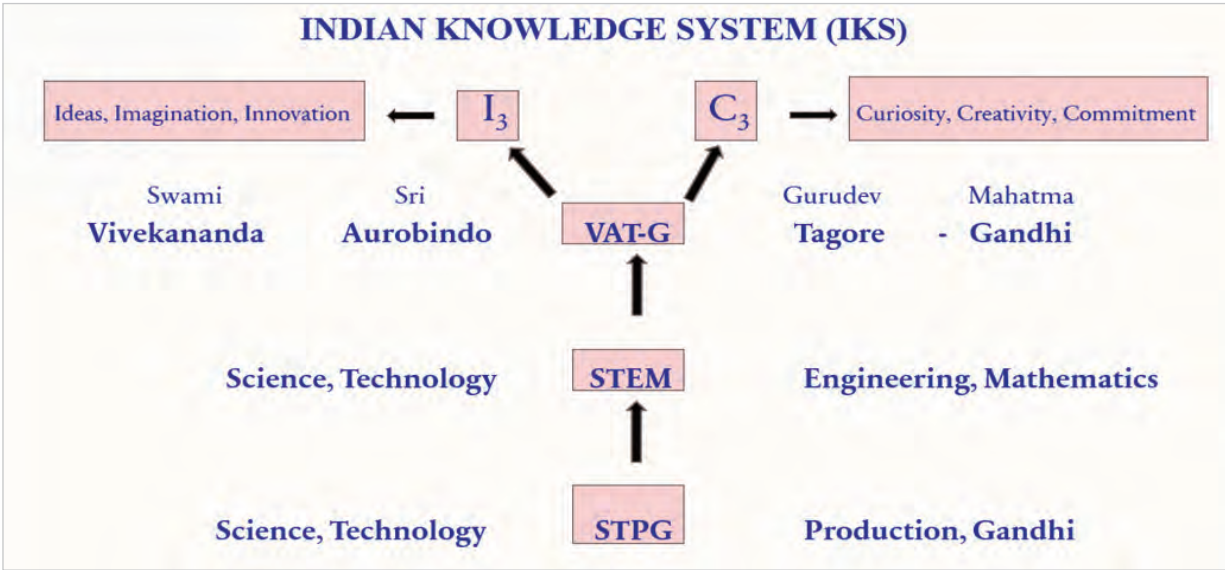


AARIF

India formulated its latest National Education Policy, NEP-2020, after a long gap, as the earlier National Policy on Education was formulated only in 1992. There was a major attempt to formulate a new curriculum framework for school education, 25 years. It was released on November 14, 2000, the birthday of Pandit Nehru, by the then Minister of HRD, Dr Murli Manohar Joshi.

Based upon it, the school textbooks, some of which were more than three decades old, were rewritten and revised. Focus must now be on where we stand at this juncture in education and how far we are preparing ourselves for the future in the national and global context. Unprecedented changes are taking place both in the content and process of education everywhere. Simultaneously, there is an ever-increasing global realisation of the interdependence of nations, communities, and people all around. It is now left to India to resume its leadership role in the process of the reshaping of the world, which was taking shape anyway! It needs to create a vibrant knowledge society, a highly acculturated people, and excellence in spirituality. Obviously, it has to be achieved only by seriously envisioning and implementing a dynamic and visionary Indian education system.

New challenges were emerging before the education systems globally, and every nation has to decipher its own challenges. India attempted the same through the reformulation of its education policy, the NEP-2020: "This National Education Policy envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all... The vision of policy is to instil among the learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in spirit, intellect, and deeds, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values and dispositions that support responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development." This is a very comprehensive statement that would require not only tremendous efforts in implementation but also modern comprehension of the Indian tradition of knowledge quest, which in the ancient days commanded global respect and adulation. It shall have to be supplemented by the global philosophical and epistemological comprehension. The Centre for Contemporary Studies, PMML, Teen Murti Bhavan, New Delhi, has been re-energised under Nripendra Misra, chairman of the executive committee. He inspired a study on how education development during the second half of the 20th century could be reviewed and recalled for



The Pioneer

SINCE 1865

THIS STUDY HAS BEEN COMPLETED OVER A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS, AND A MANUSCRIPT OF 553 PAGES ENTITLED MILLENNIAL TRANSITION: LEADERSHIP, EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND SOCIAL COHESION HAS BEEN WRITTEN

The writer is a Research Fellow at Delhi University. He voluntarily assisted Professor JS Rajput, a Padma Shri awardee educationist, who conducted this project at the instance of the PMM, as an Atal Fellow for two years

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the benefit of the millennials, who would be holding the reins of power in practically every country in years to come. This study has been completed over a period of two years, and a manuscript of 553 pages entitled *Millennial Transition: Leadership, Education, Culture, and Social Cohesion* has been written. It has been prepared as an outcome of the study and submitted to the organisation on July 8, 2025. The National Book Trust of India, NBT, has accepted it for publication.

This study finds that India initially began its post-independence journey of education, knowledge, and development under the shadow of the times that were characterised by STPG: Science, Technology, Production, and Gandhi, an acronym often used by an outstanding scientist and academician, Prof Daulat Singh Kothari. This motto was the futuristic vision of those days and has subsequently been substituted by STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. It was incorporated for implementation in the National Policy on Education, 1986, which was revised in 1992. Afterwards, there was a long gap, and the next policy formation was completed only in 2020. The biggest challenge that India faced during the first five to six decades after independence was to take education to every child.

Focus at this stage is on excellence and skill acquisition. Today the biggest challenges are acculturation, social cohesion, and religious amity. Towards this, the passage passes through VAT-G, the ideas, thoughts, philosophy, and pragmatism of Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Gurudev Tagore, and Mahatma Gandhi. Swami Vivekananda was the most brilliant interpreter of the Indian quest of knowledge and wisdom in the contemporary context for international audiences. Sri Aurobindo, who understood Western culture and its inadequacies and

dwelled in great depth on the universality of the Indian interpretation of spirituality in the global context, and the Gurudev, who developed a subtle comprehension of the beauty of the man-nature interdependence. The comprehension of the thought, philosophy, and pragmatism of the great quartet offers an effective understanding of India, its knowledge traditions and systems, and its relationship to the global developments. Crossing this stage, one could go deeper into the works of the galaxy of illustrious persons and their works. Gurudev Tagore had highlighted the need to encourage the divine gift of the power of ideas and the power of imagination given in abundance to every child. The two I's, if inspired and nurtured with empathy, would lead to the third, Innovations, which constitutes the I³. To make it easier for the teachers and learners, three C's – Curiosity, Creativity, and Commitment – are also added: C³. Thus, the VAT-G, together with the I³ C³, constitutes the perfect combination for those interested in understanding and also in finding a solid base for Indian education, rooted in culture and committed to progress.

This identification comes after a thorough study and analysis of the initial post-independence emphasis on STPG – Science, Technology, Production, and Gandhi. It was followed by the STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. Whatever the challenges, a nation like India cannot ignore its national and international responsibilities in the world of knowledge and skill acquisition. As the Indian tradition of knowledge quest, which is not confined to a particular region, community, religion, or language, has to be studied in its broader framework and, more importantly, in light of the modern traditions of knowledge generation and creation being developed on the international map.

Mentors illuminate the journey of lifelong learning



M J WARS

THE PIONEER

2ND OPINION

As we all know, teaching is truly a rewarding and unique profession, long regarded as one of the most sacred, noble, and pious services to both society and the nation. Teachers' Day is celebrated by students across the country with the purpose of expressing their gratitude towards their mentors for their invaluable contribution. The date of celebration varies from country to country. Since 1994, UNESCO has observed Teachers' Day on October 5. In India, however, it is celebrated on 5 September, the birth anniversary of Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Apart from being the first Vice-President and the second President of India, he also served as Chairman of the University Grants Commission in 1949. Radhakrishnan was a great scholar and an excellent

teacher, admired widely for his contribution to education. When his students and friends once sought his permission to celebrate his birthday, he modestly suggested that it would be far better if the day were dedicated to the entire teaching profession by honouring the hard work and commitment of teachers across the nation.

The purpose behind celebrating Teachers' Day is to acknowledge the dignity of the profession and the contribution of educators in nurturing young minds and nation-building. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also advocates restoring high respect for teachers and inspiring the best minds to join the profession. This year's celebration held special significance for Aligarh Muslim University, as Professor Vibha Sharma of the Department of English was selected for the National Education Award 2025 in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the field of education. The role of educators in shaping society is undeniable. Teaching is one of the most essential aspects of human life, pervading individuals, society, culture, and every dimension of human endeavour. Teachers, with their profound understanding of subject matter and deep reservoirs of wisdom, continually enrich the lives of their students. It is no coincidence that UNESCO has recognised India as one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, a fact reflected in the richness of its teaching traditions.

The principal role of a teacher is to transmit knowledge from one generation to another, ensuring that art, ideas, and cultural nuances are effectively preserved and carried forward. In India, there has long been a tradition of respecting and honouring teachers, known traditionally as gurus. Irrespective of religious belief or linguistic background, Teachers' Day is celebrated throughout the country. From childhood, we have heard the story of Eklavya, which defines exemplary discipleship. This tale illustrates dedication, hard work, obedience, and the spirit of *guru-dakshina*, the offering traditionally made by students in gratitude for learning. Dronacharya, by asking for Eklavya's thumb, immortalised his disciple's loyalty. In Islamic tradition, too, the teacher holds a very high status. Hazrat Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) once said, "If a person teaches me even one single word, he has made me his servant for a lifetime." The role of a teacher extends far beyond imparting knowledge or preparing students for examinations. It includes guiding them to distinguish right from wrong, correcting their mistakes, and shaping their moral character. Teachers are recognised for their contribution to society by inspiring, enlightening, and preparing students to become responsible citizens.

Prof M J Warsi, a widely acclaimed linguist, teaches in the Department of Linguistics at Aligarh Muslim University

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Faith cannot bind language

An event featuring the proud Urdu speaker Javed Akhtar has been postponed by the West Bengal Urdu Academy due to threats from the orthodox section of his own linguistic-cum-religious group.

How can a liberal soul be allowed a free ground in this country where fundamentalism and orthodoxy call the last shot irrespective of community?

While attending the Kolkata Literary Meet in 2022, Akhtar sang paeans to Urdu, celebrating its secular literature and Indian credentials surpassing divides of Hinduism and Islam – with practitioners ranging from Mirza Ghalib to Munshi Premchand, Faiz Ahmed Faiz to Krishan Chander.

Akhtar stressed: "Languages belong to regions, not religions. Ten crore Muslims of erstwhile East Pakistan told seven crore Muslims of West Pakistan that they would not learn Urdu at the cost of Bengali. I love Urdu as you love Bengali, but I respect and salute those who defended Bengali. For them, mother tongue was far more important than religion." Surely this is not music to the ears of Urdu imperialists. Nor will harbingers of "Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan" be pleased. Thanks to Akhtar for practising "live and let live", reminding us that language transcends religion.

KAJAL CHATTERJEE | KOLKATA

GST reforms yield mixed results

The announcement of rationalisation of Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates is a watershed in India's indirect tax regime. It focuses on boosting consumption with significant rate cuts on essentials, FMCG goods and consumer durables through a new two-tier slab: "Merit" and "Standard."

The exemption of life and health insurance, along with life-saving drugs, could address low insurance penetration and high out-of-pocket expenditure in health care.

From the export perspective, lower production costs in labour-intensive sectors due to reduced GST on raw materials may absorb additional tariff shocks announced by the United States. A simplified, consumer-friendly GST 2.0 appears a step towards removing the "Gabbat Singh Tax" tag. However, uncertainties remain. Revenue loss for states due to rate cuts may affect welfare schemes and fiscal stability.

To mitigate this, greater devolution of taxes under the Sixteenth Finance Commission and extension of Compensation Cess are crucial, alongside addressing concerns raised by MSMEs, consumers and other stakeholders. GST 2.0 offers hope but requires vigilance and cooperation.

PRASUN KUMAR DUTTA | KOLKATA

Mental health demands actions

Over one billion people live with mental health disorders, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). Conditions such as anxiety and depression impose immense human and economic costs. While many nations have strengthened mental health policies, greater investment is needed globally to expand services that protect and promote well-being.

Mental health conditions are widespread, affecting all ages and incomes. They represent the second-largest cause of long-term disability, reducing healthy life expectancy. They increase health-care costs for families while inflicting significant global economic losses. Recent WHO reports – *World Mental Health Today and Mental Health Atlas 2024* – highlight progress but expose gaps in services. Governments and leaders must act urgently to ensure mental health care is treated not as privilege but as a basic right. The economic burden is staggering. While treatment costs are high, the indirect cost of lost productivity is higher still. Depression and anxiety alone cost the global economy over one trillion US dollars annually. These findings underscore the urgent need for sustained investment, prioritisation and collaboration to expand access, reduce stigma and address root causes of mental illness.

N SADHASIVA REDDY | BENGALURU

BITS, PILANI (GOA) FACES STUDENT SAFETY CRISIS

The Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), Pilani, at Sancoale in Goa, has been shaken by a spate of student deaths since December 2024. On Thursday, a nineteen-year-old student was found dead in his hostel room. Undue pressure, harassment through ragging and pressing mental health concerns have been cited as possible reasons for five deaths within a single year. Parents of the deceased have expressed serious concern over the possibility of foul play in some cases.

Students in higher centres of learning need not only quality education but also proper communication and coordination mechanisms to support them. They must be kept engaged, motivated and energetic. Mere teaching, without sufficient extra-curricular activities, may

ultimately do more harm than good. A thorough relook at the curriculum and examination pattern is urgently required. The introduction of systematic and consistent wellness courses cannot be overemphasised.

At the same time, campus security must be enhanced, and vigilant monitoring of unwanted visitors should be considered a necessity rather than an optional measure. The committee constituted by the Goa Government has the onerous responsibility of not only identifying the causes of these unfortunate deaths and fixing accountability, but also of recommending practical ways and means to ensure a safe, healthy and secure environment for all students.

GANAPATHI BHAT | AKOLA

Please send your letter to the info@dailypioneer.com. In not more than 250 words. We appreciate your feedback.

PIC TALK



A young Newar girl, embodying divine feminine energy, waits for the Kumari Puja ritual, during which she will be venerated – at Hanuman Dhoka, Basantapur Durbar Square, Nepal.

PHOTO: PTI

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE



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North India’s Floods: Not Seasonal Wrath, but Climate Collapse

It is tempting to see these floods as seasonal wrath. But they are not accidents of weather; they are a mirror to our misplaced idea of progress. Describing them as ‘natural calamities’ dangerously denies their man-made roots



ACHARYA
PRASHANT

Over the past weeks, North India has been brought to a standstill. The monsoon, once awaited as a lifeline, has turned into a chain of disasters with floods, landslides and water-logging. What should have replenished the soil has instead uprooted families, erased livelihoods, and scarred the land.

The scale of this devastation is staggering. Himachal Pradesh alone has lost over 340 lives since 20 June: 182 to landslides, flash floods and collapsing houses, the rest to rain-triggered accidents. More than 1,300 roads lie blocked, including four national highways; over 2,100 transformers are down; nearly 800 water supply schemes are disrupted. Entire tourist districts like Shimla, Kullu and Chamba are cut off. The State Disaster Management Authority has warned that restoring access to many remote villages may take weeks.

In Jammu & Kashmir, the Tawi and Chenab rivers have surged past danger levels, schools are closed, and evacuations are under way. Punjab reports devastation across 1,400 villages in 23 districts: 350,000 people affected, 148,000 hectares of crops gone. Delhi and NCR, too, wade through waterlogged streets, schools shut, and transport paralysed. Northern Railway has cancelled 68 trains; the Pathankot-Jammu line remains blocked. Relief teams are in the field, but the scale of loss dwarfs every effort.

It is tempting to see these floods as seasonal wrath. But they are not accidents of weather; they are a mirror to our misplaced idea of progress. Describing them as “natural calamities” dangerously denies their man-made roots.

Fragile Mountains, Fractured by Greed

Himachal's hills are collapsing because we drilled, blasted, and cemented them year after year. When rivers are forced into concrete and wetlands into real estate, the monsoon is bound to return the debt.

The Himalayas are geologically young, their slopes precariously held together. Yet we have treated them as construction sites. Every highway cut through rock, every tunnel bored into the mountain, every dam raised across a river has weakened what was already fragile. So when the rains come hard,



ASIA IS HEATING NEARLY TWICE AS FAST AS THE GLOBAL AVERAGE, WHICH MEANS MORE VIOLENT BURSTS OF RAIN AND MORE FREQUENT CLOUDBURSTS

The writer is philosopher and teacher of global wisdom literature and is the founder of the PrashantAdvait Foundation

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prashantadvait

the mountains do not simply get wet, they collapse. In Uttarakhand too, the red alerts keep coming. The India Meteorological Department has warned of extremely heavy rainfall in Dehradun, Nainital, Rudraprayag, and Udham Singh Nagar. District administrations fear fresh landslides and cloudbursts in zones already scarred. These are not isolated accidents; they are the cumulative outcome of years of taking more from the hills than they can yield.

Cities That Engineer Their Own Floods

There is also a stark contrast between rural helplessness and urban negligence. Villages in the Himalayas collapse because they are too weak to resist. But what excuse do Delhi and Gurgaon have? These are the richest cities. They drown not from poverty, but from negligence: storm drains buried, floodplains encroached, public responsibility traded for private convenience.

Urbanisation was meant to expand our horizon. Instead, it has imported the village's narrowness into skyscrapers: responsibility ends at the boundary wall. Inside, polished roads and manicured

lawns; outside, chaos and waterlogging. The annual drowning of our richest cities is not a failure of funds, but a failure of mindset.

The Climate Crisis Is Not Distant, It Is Here

Climate change is the decisive force behind today's devastation. Asia is heating nearly twice as fast as the global average, which means more violent bursts of rain and more frequent cloudbursts. NASA confirms floods and droughts have already doubled worldwide in two decades.

According to the Council on Energy, Environment and Water, the average number of flood-affected districts in India has jumped from 19 a year (1970-2004) to 55 a year (2005-2019). This is not seasonal wrath, it is climate collapse unfolding before us. Yet three out of four of India's flood-prone districts still lack proper early-warning systems.

This crisis is inseparable from global feedback loops: permafrost is releasing methane, glaciers are vanishing, coral reefs are dying. Once these cycles begin, they drive themselves. To dismiss floods as accidents of weather is not realism, it is denial. This is not pessimism,

it is physics.

Inequality of Emissions, Inequality of Suffering

The world's richest 10% drive emissions with private jets and excess lifestyles, while farmers and labourers lose lives and crops. Climate change is not only an ecological crisis. It is the violence of the rich upon the poor.

Yet it is not the elites who die in landslides or lose their crops to floods. It is farmers in Punjab whose fields are destroyed, labourers in Himachal whose houses collapse, and migrant families in Delhi who lose what little they had. Climate change is not only measured in degrees or millimetres of rainfall, it is measured in uprooted families and broken livelihoods.

And inequality is not just global; it is domestic too. In India, urban elites consume far more energy, fuel, and goods than the rural majority, yet it is the poor who live on riverbanks, in fragile hillside settlements, and in unplanned colonies most exposed to disaster. The climate crisis is layered upon pre-existing injustice, deepening every faultline of class and geography.

Redefining Progress Before It Is Too Late

We need to redefine progress. A “good life” cannot remain defined by bigger cars, bigger houses, more air miles. That definition was implanted by those who profit from our desires.

Urgent reforms are overdue: restore wetlands and floodplains, tax carbon-heavy consumption, and disclose the footprints of corporations and celebrities. But there is a warning: no reform will hold without a shift in human consumption. Policies will fail unless minds change. Festivals need not mean firecrackers. Joy need not mean excess travel or display. The climate outside reflects the climate within, and when the inner self is restless, nature too collapses.

This is why the PrashantAdvait Foundation has launched Operation 2030, a mission to awaken citizens before the UN's climate deadline. Scientists warn that unless warming is capped at 1.5°C by 2030, feedback cycles-melting glaciers, rising seas, collapsing ecosystems-will lock us into irreversibility. Operation 2030 rests on one insight: only inner clarity can anchor outer change.

A Civilisational Test

Looking again at this week's disasters: highways blocked, villages drowned, pilgrims stranded, crops ruined, it is clear that these are not just damages to be compensated; they are reminders of what reckless choices bring.

Mountains can bear only so much blasting, rivers only so much encroachment, cities only so much concrete. When the limits are crossed, collapse follows. If we hurry to rebuild on the same foundations of ignorance, the next disaster is already assured. If we pause, reflect, and change direction, this moment could still become a turning point.

The Gita reminds us: action born of inner clarity liberates, while action born of delusion destroys. Development without wisdom is rehearsal for the next tragedy. The monsoon has spoken. The question is, will we listen?

And if we refuse to listen, it will not only be us who pay. It will be our children and grandchildren who inherit a land where the monsoon is feared, not welcomed; where rivers mean devastation, not fertility. History will ask what we were doing in 2025, when the signs were so clear. Our silence then will be the loudest testimony of all.

‘Voter Adhikar Yatra’ redefines Opposition unity, elevates RaGa’s stature



ANIL
ANAND

Mr Rahul Gandhi's 1,300-kilometre ‘Voter Adhikar Yatra’ criss-crossing the rough and tumble of the Hindi hinterland of poll-bound Bihar has certainly stirred the country's political pot afresh. If his across-the-country Bharat Jodo Yatra and Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra were meant to bring him out of the closet and erase the image of “Pappu” carelessly heaped upon him by the Narendra Modi dispensation, the Bihar outing has not only established him as the sole potential candidate to challenge Mr Modi, but also considerably increased his acceptability in the opposition camp.

This, importantly, is his first foray in the hard-core cow-belt where Congress has nothing to fall back upon. It is too early to gauge his endeavour's impact on the organisation or its electoral dividends. The net gain is that he has been able to set the narrative, forcing others, including the BJP, to follow, and has led the charge from the front.

His political rating has definitely increased, notwithstanding the fact that the ‘Voter Adhikar Yatra’ was supposed to be a local phenomenon with focus on the Bihar assembly elections. The idea was to corner the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the ruling BJP on the issue of surreptitiously deleting votes through a hurriedly called Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter rolls barely three months before assembly polls.

No one, even Mr Gandhi's worst critics, can deny that he has been able to raise a crescendo over this issue single-handedly in true ‘Sansad se Sadak tak’ manner and succeeded singularly despite a hostile and partisan media. The fact of the matter is that he has successfully changed the tide from being reactive to launching the action straightaway. This is particularly so in Bihar. In the rest of the country, it has become a talking point and theme of discussion, thereby forcing the ECI to come out with unconvincing clarifications, leading to strengthening his narrative and the resultant doubt in the public mind.

Although the ‘Voter Adhikar Yatra’ was an I.N.D.I.A combined venture, which was testified by the presence of leading leaders and representatives of its constituents (regional parties from other parts of the country) but dominated by the Bihar-centric poll alliance, from the word go it had the stamp of Mr Gandhi affixed.

In fact, he became the star attraction pulling crowds, overwhelmingly youth, and finally his stamp was firmly affixed on the mega event by

the time it concluded.

The astounding success of the Rahul-focused march, as senior journalist and columnist Ms Neeraja Chaudhary described it after extensively covering the event, is solely ascribed to him. Despite the Congress organisation being in shambles in Bihar, he drew out enthusiastic crowds.

The immediate purpose of the march covering nearly 125 assembly constituencies was, of course, to galvanise public opinion in favour of the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD)-Congress-Left led opposition alliance. Despite the RJD being the dominant partner, Congress, courtesy of Mr Gandhi, has been able to steal the show. However, the success of the event with Mr Gandhi playing a dominant role has also brought into focus its impact on the national political scene, particularly the fragile opposition unity.

From the national perspective, it has raised the stature of Mr Gandhi by many notches, establishing him as the frontline challenger to Mr Modi in future electoral contests. The regional satraps, particularly the muscle-flexing Trinamool Congress supremo, Ms Mamata Banerjee, and self-styled rebel and AAP chief, Mr Arvind Kejriwal, seem to have fallen by the wayside as the Bihar event unfolded. As it is, the latter has disassociated himself from the I.N.D.I.A alliance but kept a window open as AAP has joined the opposition protest on SIR in Bihar. The just concluded monsoon session of Parliament saw a more co-ordinated show by the opposition alliance on the issue of alleged tampering of voters' lists and sudden SIR in Bihar. There was not a single voice of dissent and every constituent of I.N.D.I.A participated at one level or the other.

The SIR and resultant ‘Voter Adhikar Yatra’ have pushed Mr Modi, for the first time in the last decade, on the back foot. It is for the first time, all this while, that an issue has stuck around his neck, rendering his well-crafted counter-offensive mechanism ineffective.

The positive buzz over these issues combined with his relentless ‘Samvidhan Bachao’ campaign getting public traction, has proved a new trendsetter for Mr Gandhi. Although Mr Gandhi has emerged as the dramatis persona behind the success of the Bihar march and the main driving force behind his relentless campaign against the ECI and the BJP-led Central Government, it should in no way diminish the contribution of the other I.N.D.I.A bloc partners. The united show put by the opposition inside and outside Parliament, despite reluctance to direct participation by Ms Banerjee and her ilk, certainly gave strength to him as the leader of the premier opposition party of the country.

Another interesting outcome of these developments, owing to effective headship provided by Mr Gandhi, is acceptance of his leadership by

the bloc leaders as against earlier reluctance on their part. This is a hard-earned situation which he should not squander by only focusing on his solo drives and ignoring Congress's organisational weaknesses.

There is still a strong imponderable whether Mr Gandhi's stellar effort will help raise the Congress's graph both at the national level and in Bihar. Such a scenario had earlier emerged at the end of his nearly 6,500-kilometre twin yatras across the country, but it had fizzled out due to lack of organisational back-up from the party to carry forward the positive impact.

Will the ‘Voter Adhikar Yatra’, which has firmly saddled Mr Gandhi on the national political firmament, meet the fate of the Bharat Jodo yatras?

The question assumes significance as nothing much has changed on the organisational front in Congress, which continues to reel under a status quoist culture.

His efforts to change this culture, which primarily is being perpetuated by the old guard, have met stiff resistance after the culmination of the Bharat Jodo Yatras. The more he tried to change, though efforts were a tame affair, the more vicious the saboteurs became in the form of active BJP cells.

The Bihar yatra has fully empowered Mr Gandhi to act decisively and given him enough elbow space to act. The fact that he has shown guts to take the bull by the horns by launching a direct diatribe against Mr Modi, mostly over policy issues including “poll management”, means he should not let this opportunity go and must act to overhaul the Congress, removing deadwood, non-performers, and moles of the BJP (by Mr Gandhi's own admission).

This is not only in Mr Gandhi and Congress's interest, but more in the interest of the nation. A strong Congress and thereby a strong opposition could be an anathema to the ruling elite's attempts at creating a unitary system, undermining the basic democratic ethos of the country. The opposition parties, particularly Ms Banerjee and Mr Kejriwal, should also shed their biases and keep aside personal ambitions for a while to work for a bigger cause, which is to thwart the challenge posed by Mr Modi.

The hard fact which they cannot ignore is that a national party such as Congress with pan-India presence should act as a pivot to face this challenge. The sooner they realise, the better it would be to take the fight against the ECI's shenanigans, and for the protection of the Constitution, to its logical conclusion en route to electoral victories ahead.

The writer is Political and National Affairs Analyst

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How Mao misled Nehru as China-Pakistan axis took shape

A new book, “Trial By Water: Indus Basin and India-Pakistan Relations” by Uttam Sinha, brings out how, as the Indus Waters Treaty was being negotiated, Mao Zedong was already casting his eye on a strategic relationship with Pakistan

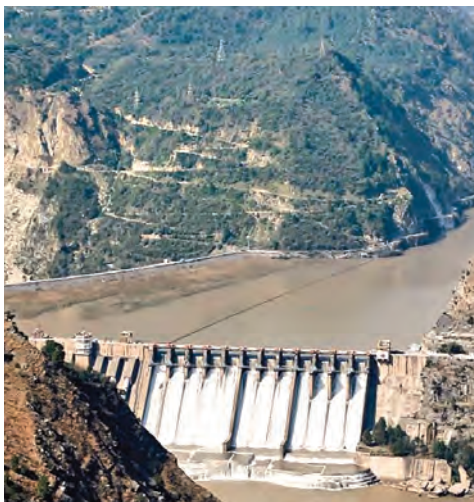
When India and Pakistan signed the Indus Waters Treaty in 1960, brokered by the World Bank and hailed internationally as a model of co-operation, it seemed a rare moment of stability in an otherwise fraught relationship. Yet even as Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru extended his hand toward reconciliation with Pakistan, a more ominous challenge was quietly taking shape to the north-a China-Pakistan axis that would soon alter the strategic landscape of South Asia.

A new book, *Trial By Water: Indus Basin and India-Pakistan Relations* by Uttam Sinha, brings out how, as the Indus Waters Treaty was being negotiated, Mao Zedong was already casting his eye on a strategic relationship with Pakistan. What Nehru hoped would be a step toward peace with one neighbour coincided with the forging of an alliance between his two most difficult adversaries.

The seeds of this two-front challenge were sown in the 1950s. After occupying Tibet in 1950, Mao had set his eyes on Aksai Chin, a desolate but strategically crucial high-altitude desert of Ladakh. By the mid-1950s, China had built a road through the region, linking Xinjiang to Tibet. Nehru, downplaying its importance, told Parliament in 1959 that the area had “not a blade of grass,” a remark that would haunt India after China consolidated its grip during the 1962 war. Behind Mao's rhetoric of Asian solidarity, his ambitions were calculated and expansionist. When he met Nehru in 1954, Mao charmed the Indian leader with talk of shared struggles against Western imperialism. He spoke of peace, dismissed war as unprofitable, and even recited poetry at their farewell. But beneath the gestures lay a grand design. For Mao, rivers, mountains, and barren expanses were not empty landscapes; they were strategic levers. Control over the headwaters of the Indus in Tibet and Aksai Chin gave China the ability to influence lifelines that sustained millions downstream.

Even as Indian engineers were engaged in delicate negotiations with Pakistan over the Indus river system, China was tightening its grip over these contested territories. The Indus, beginning from Tibet's sacred Mount Kailash, passes through Aksai Chin before reaching Ladakh and eventually flowing into Pakistan. With the occupation of Aksai Chin and later the Shaksgam Valley ceded by Pakistan in 1963, China was steadily positioning itself as a decisive player in Kashmir's strategic geography.

The betrayal became clear as Pakistan and



China moved closer in the late 1950s and early 1960s. While Nehru defended the Indus Waters Treaty as a step toward peace with Pakistan, Islamabad was quietly negotiating with Beijing to define their common border. In 1963, Pakistan handed over 5,180 square kilometres of the Shaksgam Valley to China, giving Beijing a foothold in Gilgit-Baltistan and cementing the foundation of a long-term strategic partnership.

India's protests went unheeded. An official note to China in 1962 asserted India's sovereignty over the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir, but by then, the ground reality had shifted. As New Delhi placed its faith in diplomacy and restraint, Beijing and Islamabad were forging an alliance that would eventually confront India on two fronts-militarily in wars and diplomatically in global forums.

The story of the Indus Waters Treaty, often celebrated as a triumph of co-operation, thus hides a parallel story of strategic miscalculation. As Nehru sought peace with Pakistan through water-sharing, Mao was setting the stage for a partnership with Islamabad that would redefine South Asia's security equation. The real trial was not in the Indus waters alone, but in the dangerous alignment of two neighbours-an axis that continues to test India to this day.

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HIT TICKET

Harsh Goenka, a well-known Mumbai-based industrialist, is known to be outspoken, even cheeky in his social media posts. In an outlandish reverse sweep, he took on the Government's GST's 'doosra.' His latest tweet on X: "No tax for BCCI (Board of Control for Cricket in India), good. But increased 40 per cent GST on IPL (Indian Premier League) tickets." He said this was the new 'Incredible India,' where cricket is a religion, the Board is God, IPL is the temple, the cricket fans, or the devotees need to pay a higher offering. It was a clean hook off the front foot, and the ball landed in the stands.

There was another dichotomy. The GST on tickets for regular international and domestic matches remains at 18 per cent, but the tax on IPL was pushed up from 28 per cent to 40 per cent (the sin tax applicable on tobacco, high-end cars, and business flight travel). The Government is clear that the League is not really cricket, it is more of an entertainment enjoyed by the elite. Which is possibly wrong as one knows of hundreds of middle-class homes, who save to buy relatively-expensive IPL tickets so that their children can get a glimpse of the cricketing stars from a vantage position of deep cover.

For years, the BCCI, which claims to be a non-profit entity, has strived, fought and battled to retain its tax exemption status. In its 2023-24 annual, the Board noted that the income tax appellate body ruled (2021) that the former was "entitled to continuance of registration under Section 12A of the Income Tax (which allows zero tax for non-profit entities like trusts, welfare societies, NGOs and religious bodies)" The income tax authority has appealed in the Bombay High Court. However, acting prudently, the BCCI continues to recognise the liability, which amounted to ₹7,362 crore as on March 31, 2024, and pertains to the past six years since 2018-19.

In August 2018, the Board amended its Constitution to avail of the tax exemptions under Section 12A. But it has defended against the tax googlies for years before it. Based on professional advice, the Board, as stated in the annual report, "believes that no provision for income tax is required to be made in respect of the prior years and until the change to the Constitution... aggregating ₹7,453 crore as it believes that it has a good case to avail the (tax) exemption... notwithstanding the demands/disputes raised by the income tax department which have been challenged... before various appellate/judicial authorities." If pre- and post-2018 demands are combined, the BCCI disputed taxes stand at almost ₹15,000 crore.

Do not forget that the BCCI is the richest cricket body in the world, and by far the wealthiest sport body in the country. In 2023-24, it clocked an annual revenue of more than ₹9,700 crore, of which almost 60 per cent was the surplus from IPL. The money that was handed over by the International Cricket Council, which shares its profits with member nations, was just over ₹1,000 crore. The Board is raking in more money from the League, as compared to the international matches. But only the fans pay the taxes, and that too in a sinful way. A clear case of hit wicket, or shall we say, hit ticket.

The Pioneer

CHANDIGARH | SATURDAY | SEPTEMBER 6, 2025

BUSINESS10

Checking the pulse of pulses

This stability ensures food security and supports rural livelihoods by providing consistent income for pulses farmers

The recent NITI Aayog report on pulses projects a steady rise in production, but underscores the importance of achieving self-sufficiency in production. Beyond nutritional benefits, pulses enhance soil health, conserve water, and help to mitigate climate change. Due to the wide popularity and demand for pulses, the report emphasises on increasing yield to meet domestic demand.

The relevance of the report lies in the fact that India needs to be ‘*Atmanirbhar*’ in pulses. The Government too supplies them to the States and Union Territories for welfare schemes like public distribution system, mid-day meal, among others. Achieving self-sufficiency can lead to benefits like reduction in import dependency and stabilising prices against global fluctuations, says the report.

“This stability ensures food security and supports rural livelihoods by providing consistent income for pulses farmers, while promoting food sovereignty,” adds the report. Globally, pulse production has grown steadily at three per cent per year since the early 2000s. Developing countries account for nearly 75 per cent of the output, while Asia contributes over 44 per cent of the production.

Quoting OECD-FAO 2024 data, NITI Aayog predicted a growth in the global market, with per capita consumption reaching 8.6 kg by 2033. This growth is expected in most regions, with Europe witnessing an increase of three per cent annually. In 2023-24, India achieved a yield of 242 lakh tonnes, and imported 47 lakh tonnes. The export figure was six lakh tonnes.

In January 2024, the Government expressed confidence in achieving import independence

by December 2027. This is achievable with planning and execution. India is the world's largest cultivator and producer, with over 38 per cent of the world's cultivated area, and more than 28 per cent of the global output.

But in terms of yield, the country ranks lowest among the top ten producers. India ranks 2.5 times lower than Ethiopia, which is the leading producer of pulses at 1.9 tonnes/hectare, followed by Canada, USA, China and Russia. “India's area under cultivation experienced fluctuations, and a declining trend in the initial three decades. There was some recovery... during the mid-70s, mid-80s, and early '90s, but afterwards, the area... either stagnated or declined,” notes the think tank's report.

In recent times, the cultivated area fell to 108.39 lakh hectares in 2024-25 from the “normal area” of 129.61 hectares. But in 2025-26 (as on August 15, 2025) there was an increase by 1.14 lakh hectares. According to the report, pulses production faces significant challenges stemming from technological and environmental constraints.

The need of the hour is to address farmers' problems due to inadequate access to quality seeds, and ineffective management of crop disease and pest control. With nearly 80 per cent of production dependent on rainfed areas, specialised knowledge needs to be imparted. India must adopt a multifaceted strategy to achieve self-sufficiency. The focus should be on “three key pillars: Value addition, area expansion and higher productivity.

Supported by the Government's procurement and pricing, the area under cultivation has seen progress. There is a move to launch a six-year *Atmanirbharta* campaign with the

following aims: Develop climate resilient seeds, enhance protein content, hike productivity, improve storage and assure remunerative prices. Central agencies like Nafed will procure the produce of farmers who register with them, and enter into agreements over the next four years.

In addition, there is a need for interventions at the State levels. While 10 States contribute more than 90 per cent of the output, the top three account for more than 55 per cent. There are variations in yields, with Gujarat being the most productive, and Karnataka the least. Even the States like Madhya Pradesh (largest producer) and Maharashtra (second largest) “have room for improvement.” Both are below Gujarat's level. The same is true for Rajasthan, which has the largest area under cultivation, and ranks third in production.

The contribution of pulses to foodgrain production has declined over the decades, with the lowest point in 2000-01. Since 2015, policy interventions increased both area and production, which pushed up the share, which remains below 10 per cent. In 2023-24, pulses imports shot up after some time, primarily due to rise in red lentils, yellow peas and black gram. Red lentil purchases from Canada doubled, and yellow peas came from Russia and Turkey.

Dietary patterns across the country too contribute to either preference or lack of them for pulses. “Cereals, for instance, contribute significantly to the daily diet, i.e., 50-70 per cent of daily energy intake exceeding the recommended limit of 45 per cent, while pulses, meat, poultry and fish contribute only 6-9 per cent, falling short of the recommended 14 per cent of total energy,” states the NITI Aayog report. Pulses intake remains below diet levels, which is evident across the States, and in both urban and rural areas.

The report suggests several ways to enhance production. Using a third of the rice fallow area across 10 States can increase production by nearly three million tonnes. Intercropping them with sugarcane in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra can unlock three million hectares of area. Optimising the rice-wheat cropping system in Bihar, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh can add another four million hectares. These strategies can lead to an extra production of eight million tonnes.

Procurement remains a problem area. According to the NITI Aayog, “Most of the pulses growers are currently unable to reach regulated markets to sell their produce; instead, village traders are their main buyers. Therefore, to ensure remunerative prices for these growers, it is important to bring the procurement centres to the growers' doorsteps, particularly during harvest season.”

A price guarantee too is critical. This may be by bridging the gap between what the farmers earn and MSP, or ensuring procurement under MSP. “Both these provisions are already there in the scheme, PM AASHA, operated by the Ministry of Agriculture. Its operational part needs to be strengthened for effective and comprehensive coverage.”

The Tech Wrecker

Cooking a multi cuisine meal

Apple CEO Tim Cook is probably questioning his decision to take that big bite of the Apple. His multi cuisine global strategy is slowly unravelling, dish by dish, recipe by recipe, and meal by meal. As a corporate Sous Chef, he is running around the global kitchen to rustle up ingredients, and hustle up a meal that will please several leaders. But as any chef realises, it is near-impossible to please every customer. Someone will be displeased about the dessert. Another one by the appetiser. A third by one of the dishes in the main course. Some may not like the looks, others the taste, a few the herbs.

Like any global CEO, who is ambitious enough to dip his fingers in several pies, and experiment with a multi cuisine meal, Tim Cook needs to grapple with three crucial ingredients, which can turn stale quite quickly. These are obviously money, manufacturing and markets. The first relates to multiple investments that he has promised to multiple leaders. The second is how to spread the operations to extract the best efficiencies, and progress towards high productivity without disturbing the nuanced balance between demanding palettes. The third is about customers, what to serve in which country. Like cooking, it requires a delicate touch.

The US President Donald Trump wants Cook to return home, and help the former make America great again. Pushed, cajoled and berated, the Apple CEO committed \$600 billion investments in the US. Apart from public admonitions, Trump loses no opportunity to ask Cook about his new investment meals. The other day, at a private dinner that the president hosted for tech leaders, and which was attended by the CEOs of Google, Microsoft and OpenAI, apart from Apple, he asked Cook, “How much money is Apple going to be investing in the United States because you know, you were really elsewhere, and now you are coming back home in a big way?”

Keeping the half-bit apple aside, donning his best chef's attire, Cook was at his diplomatic best. “I want to thank you (president) for setting the tone such that we could make a major investment in the United States. That says a lot about your focus, and your leadership, and your focus on innovation.” To some, it sounded a bit tongue-in-cheek. For Trump, the focus is on himself, leadership is about beating others with a stick, and offering a carrot, and innovation is to use archaic laws to appropriate superpowers. Just to ensure that there are no cross-connections or signal drops, the Apple CEO praised the US First Lady, Melania Trump, for her work in education.

Last month, the CEO had apparently assured the Indian Government that Apple has no intention to behave like a snake, and wriggle out of the country's heavenly abode. He said he was committed to invest \$2.5 billion to boost the local iPhone production by 50 per cent to 60 million units a year. There was no question of slowing down the expansion or investment inflows. Despite the bite from the Apple, and goading from a snake, Adam (Cook) and Eve (Mother India) will remain in this heaven. According to reports, the company is assembling the soon-to-be-launched iPhone 17 in India.

This brings us to the second ingre-

dient, which is sharp on the taste buds. Everyone wants Apple to make it in their countries. Trump wishes to impose 'Make in America.' India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, wants to expand 'Make in India.' China's president, Xi Jinping, is not worried. He knows that global manufacturers have no option but to make in China, whatever they may say about China+1 strategy. Apple cannot make in America, and sell to the world. For that, the options are India and China, with potential investors still salivating on the latter. Cook needs to take job as a global Sous Chef seriously. He cannot antagonise anyone.

As things stand, the iPhone maker will manufacture high-end compo-

nents in the US. It is cheaper and safer to do it, given that neither India nor China have the skills. He will make the low-end components in India, which will assemble the phones. India is quite happy with the situation as it can claim that the iPhone, the world's most sophisticated and desired dish, is being made in India, and being served to global customers. China, as we said before, knows that one does not need to cater to other people's tastes. If one can provide the right ingredients, environment and kitchens (factories), the chefs are happy, and they will keep the customers happier.

Now for the markets. This is the most complex part of Cook's plan. One taste cannot fit all. Well, it does work for a hamburger, pizza or Coke but not for iPhones. Even in the case of the hamburger, McDonald's was forced to use Indian ingredients, and avoid beef to cater to Indian tastes and culture. Pizza makers possibly sell as many vegetarian variations as the non-veg ones in India. Chinese food is now completely Indianised. So, Cook knows that even if the ingredients are the same, made in just a few nations, the serving needs to be special. He needs to market the same cuisine differently in different markets. Thus, India can be a base for dual markets, domestic and the US. China can cater to the non-US markets. The US operations can fulfill the needs of the Americans, and foreigners.

Well, it does get a bit wonky managing all these ingredients and taste buds. It is tricky to handle the local herbs, some of which are extra spicy and edgy, as also transport the ingredients all over the world, and establish separate logistics for the final products. There are several promises Cook needs to fulfill. He is under pressure from his masters and customers. The kitchen is getting crowded, and there is little space to jostle around. But the chef has to fire up, or the food will either not arrive in time and style, or rot.

BSE SENSEX

80,710.76
▼-7.25

Intra-day on September 5

Change ▼ -7.25 (-0.01%)

Open: 81,012.42

Previous close: 80,718.01

Close: 80,710.76

Top Losers

%

Top Gainers

%

ITC -2.01

M&M 2.34

HCL Tech -1.55

Maruti Suzuki 1.70

TCS -1.53

Power Grid 1.21

Tech Mahindra -1.43

Reliance 1.11

Infosys -1.29

Bharti Airtel 0.84

ASSOCIATED PRESS and
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Washington and New Delhi

When the Labour Department put out a disappointing jobs' report a month ago, an enraged President Donald Trump responded by firing the economist in charge of compiling the numbers, and nominating a loyalist to replace her. Nothing quite so dramatic is likely on Friday when the department releases hiring and unemployment numbers for August.

Yet, the August numbers may be almost as dismal as those for July. The former are expected to show that companies, government agencies and non-profits added a modest 80,000 jobs during the month, according to a survey of forecasters by the data firm FactSet. This will be a slight improvement on July's 73,000, but still indicate, and maybe prove, that the American job market has cooled down significantly from last year.

Jobs are an important part of Trump's vision to boost American manufacturing, and create more employment opportunities for Americans. His immigrant policy is aimed at reducing foreign workers so that locals can get more jobs. If the jobs market continues to cool down, the president may blow his top, even if he does not fire someone, and hire someone else.

The silver lining is that the unemployment rate is forecast to stay at a low 4.2 per cent, which suggests that employers are stuck in a no-hire, no-fire mode. While they are reluctant to add many new workers, they do not want to give up the ones they have. One is not sure how long the employers will continue with their wait-and-watch attitude? At some stage, as is visible in some sectors, companies will begin to cut staff, and let go of people. This will make Trump angrier.

The US job market has lost momentum this year, partly because of the lingering effects of the 11 interest rate hikes by the inflation fighters at the Federal Reserve in 2022 and 2023, and partly

Cooling jobs, hot-headed Trump



because Donald Trump's policies, including his trade wars with several nations, have created uncertainty that leaves managers reluctant to make hiring decisions. In fact, even investment decisions are in a limbo, as American firms engage in immediate firefighting tactics.

So far in 2025, the economy has generated 85,000 new jobs a month, down from 168,000 last year, and an average

400,000 a month during the hiring boom of 2021-2023 as the United States roared back from Covid-19 lockdowns. "The labour market is showing signs of cracking," said Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union. "It is not a red siren alarm yet, but the signs keep growing that businesses are starting to cut workers."

The Labour Department reported

that the number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits, a proxy for layoffs, rose last week to the highest level since June, though the number of claims remained within a healthy range. An outplacement firm said that the US-based employers have announced more than 892,000 jobs cuts this year through August, which is more than the 761,000 reported for all the 12 months of 2024.

If hiring slows down, and firing goes up, Trump will start firing aimlessly in all directions to extricate some good news on the economy front. In a sign that the US hiring gains are limited and fragile, nearly 80 per cent of the new private sectors jobs this year were created in just one industry: healthcare and social assistance, a Labour Department category that spans hospi-

Games managers craft

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

Online gaming firm Gameskraft Technologies filed a police complaint against its former CFO for allegedly siphoning off ₹231 crore, whose write-off led to a decline in the company's FY25 net profit. The Bengaluru-based firm reported a net profit of ₹706 crore on a revenue of ₹4,009 crore in the fiscal year 2024-25. While profit was much lower than ₹947 crore in the previous year, the revenue was higher than ₹3,475 crore.

The company said FY25 was the first full year of 28 per cent GST tax on its operations. The previous year earning was factoring in a six-month impact of the newly introduced GST regime for the online gaming sector. The 2024-25 profit was impacted by "a one-time accounting adjustment of past unsanctioned transactions amounting to approximately ₹231 crore," it said in a statement.

While the company did not elaborate on the nature of unsanctioned transactions, sources with the knowledge of the matter said the write-off pertained to the discovery of money allegedly siphoned off by the firm's former CFO. A police complaint was registered against the senior executive in a Bengaluru police station.

The former employee, who was removed as Group Chief Financial Officer

in May this year, could not be contacted for comments. The complaint states that he executed unauthorised financial transactions totalling ₹231.39 crore for the past years. It goes on to state that he had in a purported email to the company in March this year "voluntarily admitted" of misusing company funds for personal equity and derivatives trading.

Globally, there are cases of senior executives, especially in stock and bond trading firms, using the company's money to play personal trades, which go wrong. In some cases, only the money that was siphoned off is lost. In others, the companies are saddled with huge losses as the trades were in their name but hidden. In the 1990s, Nick Leeson's fraudulent, unauthorised and speculative trades resulted in the collapse of Barings Bank, the UK's oldest merchant bank. Leeson was convicted of financial crime in Singapore.

Following the discovery of unauthorised use of company funds, Gameskraft instituted a forensic audit which revealed the extent and nature of funds being siphoned off, sources said adding that the company will make all attempts to recover the money from the accused. Following best accounting practices, Gameskraft has recognised the amount in its P&L, resulting in the impact on profit.

"While recording steady increase in

revenues, the decline in Gameskraft's profit after tax (PAT) is primarily due to the full-year impact of the 28 per cent GST, which led to a rise in tax outflows from ₹1,512 crore in FY 2023-24 to ₹2,526 crore in FY 2024-25, and a one-time accounting adjustment of past unsanctioned transactions amounting to approximately ₹231 crore," the company statement said.

The Indian online gaming sector is undergoing a fundamental transformation with the recent Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, which prohibits online real-money games, whether skill-based or chance-based.

"The legislation has created widespread disruption, compelling operators to shut down online money game operations, and begin the arduous journey of reimagining their business models. This regulatory shift comes after the introduction of the 28 per cent GST on deposits in October 2023, which compressed margins and slowed growth," it said.

The sector also faces uncertainty from retrospective tax notices totalling ₹2.5 lakh crore, currently under review by the Supreme Court. "In light of the recent Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, Gameskraft has already stopped 'Add Cash' and 'Gameplay' services across their rummy



apps, and has maintained a strong focus on compliance, transparency, and operational continuity, working closely with auditors, banking partners, legal advisors, and policymakers during this transition," it said.

The company said it has cleared all regulatory dues and has proactively safeguarded the interests of its players,

employees, partners, vendors, and service providers through timely action and consistent and transparent communication.

Founded in 2017, Gameskraft in less than a decade, has grown into one of India's gaming bellwethers and has already initiated structured internal discussions to chart the road ahead.

tals to daycare centres.

After seeing the weak July jobs numbers, Trump fired Erika McEntarfer, head of the Bureau of Labour Statistics, baselessly claiming the hiring report had been rigged to hurt him politically. He nominated a partisan ideologue, EJ Antoni, to replace her. But for now, pending Antoni's confirmation by the Senate, the jobs report is in the hands of the acting commissioner, William Wiatrowski, a career Labour Department official. The August figures may nudge Trump to pressurise the Senate to hasten Antoni's hiring.

Economists and others familiar with how the jobs numbers are collected have expressed confidence that the Labour Department procedures will keep the data safe from political interference. What set Trump off a month ago was not the July hiring or unemployment figures. It was the department's revisions, which shaved a stunning 258,000 jobs off May and June payrolls, and slashed average monthly hiring from May through July to a mere 35,000.

The revisions are standard practice, and necessary because many companies surveyed by the government submit their responses late or correct what they have already sent in. Government economists are contending with a big drop in the share of companies that respond to the surveys. A decade ago, about 60 per cent of those surveyed responded. Now only about 40 per cent do.

This is not unique to America. It is an international problem for data collectors, especially since Covid-19. The United Kingdom even suspended publication of an official unemployment rate because of inadequate responses. "I remember being at an international conference where the chief statistician of the Russian Republic was complaining about how the Russians do not want to complete their surveys," William Beach, the labour department's commissioner from 2019 to 2023, said in an interview last month. "What could he do? If you cannot compel completion in Russia, you cannot compel it anywhere."

Billions or millions, take your pick

PTI and PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Reliance Industries has consistently remained compliant with international sanctions and is expected to adhere to upcoming measures on Russian oil, analysts said, estimating that oil sourced from Russia contributes just 2.1 per cent to its consolidated EBITDA. Reliance operates the world's largest single location refining complex, with more than half of the capacity exclusively dedicated for exports. It is also India's biggest user of Russian oil.

In July, the European Union (EU) approved its eighteenth sanctions package in response to Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine. It lowered oil price cap to \$47.60 per barrel from \$60, for cargo to avail western shipping and insurance services, as well as banned import of refined petroleum products derived from Russian crude, including those refined in third countries, beginning January 2026.

Reliance's Jamnagar refinery complex, which includes a 35.2 million tonnes a year unit dedicated only for exports, sells fuels like diesel to EU and other nations. Stating that Reliance has been compliant with western sanctions, Jefferies in a note said the company "has adhered to western sanctions on Iranian and Venezuelan crude, and is likely to comply in the event of sanctions on Russian crude, in our view."

Like other Indian refiners, Reliance increased purchase of Russian oil



post Ukraine war in February 2022. This was because the oil was available at a discount because of the EU price cap, and some western nations shunning purchases to punish Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine. Estimating a \$1 per barrel benefit from refining Russian oil, the brokerage said Russian grade Urals headline discount to Brent has varied between \$4-7 per barrel over the past 15 months, with landed discounts prevailing at \$3 given higher logistics and insurance costs.

"This translates to \$1-1.2 per barrel

of incremental margin on Reliance's refinery throughput, in our view," it said, adding that this would mean around \$500 million of EBITDA per year, or 2.1 per cent of consolidated pre-tax earnings. "Benefit of Russian crude is limited... in our view," Jefferies said. Previously, the Hong Kong-based CLSA made a similar estimation of limited benefit.

US officials have targeted India for its import of Russian oil saying New Delhi was funding Russia's war machine and profiteering off Russian

oil. American estimates indicated that the benefit to refiners ran into billions of dollars. The Jefferies report contradicts those figures, and states that the benefit to Reliance is half a billion dollars.

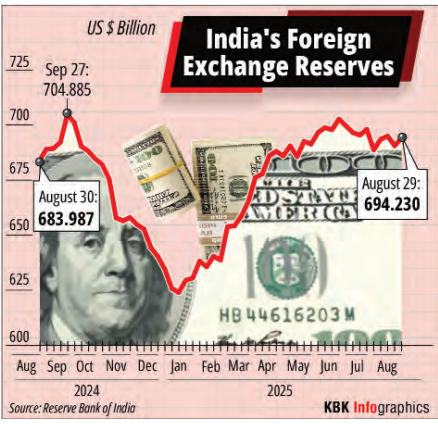
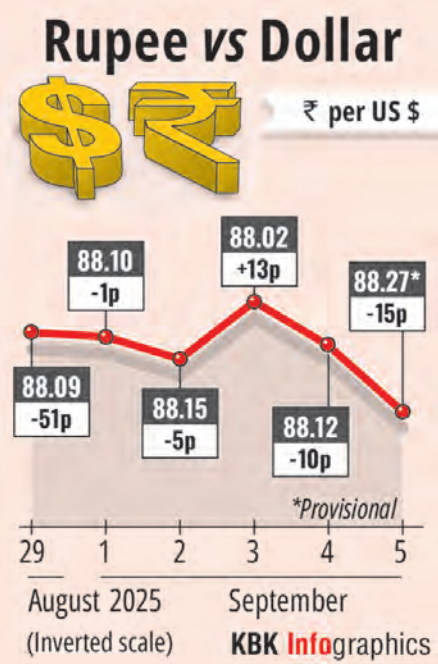
CLSA in its report titled 'Russian crude imports, the real math' found the "net annual benefit to India from Russian crude imports to be much smaller at just \$2.5 billion, or a small 6 bps of India's GDP." This is significantly lower than the speculative number of \$10-25 billion benefit being

quoted. A foreign news agency calculated that the benefits from Russian crude oil to India was way lower than the adverse impact of the US' 50 per cent tariff.

But as one understands, the imbroglion and oil slicks related to crude oil, Russia, India and the US are not just about economics. They are about politics, bruised egos and changing geopolitics, where strong-arm tactics seem to be more important than delicate moves. Hence, analysing them only in the context of profits and losses is understanding a part of the narrative. Yet, there is no doubt that cheaper Russian crude oil played a part in the strategies.

While the Russian crude oil price was capped at \$60, when the Brent crude oil traded at \$75, the entire differential of \$15 a barrel was not India's gain. The CLSA report explained, "However, the net gain to Indian importers is far smaller than this visible discount as there are several shipping, insurance and reinsurance related restrictions for Russian crude. Therefore, Indian refiners import Russian crude on a cost, insurance and freight (CIF) basis, landed in India. Thus, the landed price of Russian crude is at a far lower discount."

The discount on Russian crude has been steadily declining. The discount averaged around \$8.5 per barrel in FY24, which fell to \$3-5 in FY25, and has declined to about \$1.5 per barrel last month. The net gains estimated at \$2.5 billion for FY25 have gone down even further in the last few months. According to CLSA, at current discounts, the annualised gains are \$1 billion.



FROM THE WORLD

COLOMBO

Indian arrested for smuggling

An Indian national was arrested while attempting to smuggle in 10.75 kilograms of Kush worth over ₹100 million (INR 29 million) at the international airport on Friday, a local media report said. The Indian national was arrested at the green channel of the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) in the morning. The 43-year-old arrested works as a salesman at a shoe store in New Delhi, news portal Ada Derana reported. A senior customs department official said that they used the scanning machines installed in the green channel to detect the consignment of illegal intoxicants, according to the Daily Mirror. The authorities said he purchased the consignment of Kush from Bangkok, Thailand, Ada Derana added. Kush, a variety or strain of the indica subspecies of cannabis plant.

UKRAINE

Ban on Orthodox church likely

The Ukrainian Government has declared that a branch of the Orthodox Church has failed to sever its longstanding ties with Moscow – and could soon be banned. The looming ban affects one of the two rival branches of Orthodoxy in the country and further underscores the turbulent role of religion as Ukraine fends off the Russian invasion. Orthodoxy is the majority religion in both Russia and Ukraine and has served as a cultural and spiritual battleground in tandem with the wider war. The action comes a year after the Ukrainian Parliament passed a law banning the Moscow-based Russian Orthodox Church due to its strong support of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The law also authorised banning any organisation tied to the Russian church.

UK Deputy PM resigns after tax row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ London

Angela Rayner on Friday resigned as UK's Deputy Prime Minister and Housing Secretary after a sped-up independent ethics inquiry concluded that she had underpaid tax on a recently bought home.

Rayner, 45, a powerful leader within the Labour Party, handed in her resignation after the inquiry concluded that she had breached the Ministerial Code of Conduct by failing to seek out specialist tax advice to ensure she paid the correct stamp duty on the property on the south coast of England. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who is now formalising a forced Cabinet reshuffle of his top team, expressed his regret at losing his senior-most minister.

“You were right to refer yourself to the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Adviser and right to act on his conclusions,” Starmer said, in a rare hand-written letter in response to Rayner's resignation. “On a personal note, I am very sad to be losing you from the Government. You have been a trusted colleague and a true friend for many years. I have nothing but admiration for you and huge respect for your achievements in politics,” he said, adding that she will remain a “major figure” in the Labour Party as she moves to the backbenches.

Sir Laurie Magnus, Starmer's Independent Adviser on Ministerial Standards, informed him that his deputy cannot be considered to have



UK's Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner

met the “highest possible standards of proper conduct” and therefore was in breach of the Ministerial Code of Conduct.

Rayner, Labour's member of Parliament for Ashton-under-Lyne in northern England who also held the influential post of Secretary of State of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, said she deeply regretted her decision to “not seek additional specialist tax advice.”

“I would like to take this opportunity to repeat that it was never my intention to do anything other than pay the right amount. I must also consider the significant toll that the ongoing pressure of

ANGELA RAYNER
HANDED IN HER
RESIGNATION AFTER
THE INQUIRY
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THE MINISTERIAL
CODE OF CONDUCT

the media is taking on my family,” she said in her resignation letter to the PM.

The letters were released by 10 Downing Street along with the letter to Starmer from Laurie Magnus, who described his conclusion as “highly unfortunate.”

“She [Rayner] believed that she relied on the legal advice she had received, but unfor-

tunately did not heed the caution contained within it, which acknowledged that it did not constitute expert tax advice and which suggested that expert advice be sought,” he wrote.

He added, “I believe Ms Rayner has acted with integrity and with a dedicated and exemplary commitment to public service. I consider, however, that her unfortunate failure to settle her SDLT [stamp duty] liability at the correct level, coupled with the fact that this was established only following intensive public scrutiny, leads me to advise you that, in relation to this matter, she cannot be considered to have met

the ‘highest possible standards of proper conduct’ as envisaged by the Code. “Accordingly, it is with deep regret that I must advise you that in these circumstances, I consider the Code to have been breached.”

Earlier this week, after weeks of intense media coverage, Rayner had revealed a complex arrangement with her ex-husband over the care of her disabled son involving another property that remains a family home. Under the stamp duty requirements for home-buyers in England, anyone buying a second property is expected to pay an additional surcharge.

Mamdani likely to be New York’s next mayor: Trump



Democrat Zohran Mamdani

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Washington

US President Donald Trump has said he thinks Democrat Zohran Mamdani is likely to become New York City's next mayor unless two of the three major candidates running against him drop out of the race. But the Republican didn't say which two candidates he'd like to see quit.

Trump said “No” when he was asked by a reporter on Thursday night if he'd urged or encouraged any of the candidates in the race to drop out, but went on to say he would like to see that happen. “I don't think you can win unless you have one-on-one, and somehow he's gotten a little bit of a lead,” Trump said of Mamdani.

“I have no idea how that happened.” The president, who spoke as he hosted a dinner at the White House with tech executives, went on, “I would like to see two people drop out and have it be one-on-one, and I think that's a race that could be won.”

Mamdani, a 33-year-old

democratic socialist, has been the presumptive favourite in the election since soundly beating former governor Andrew Cuomo in the Democratic primary in June.

But Cuomo is still on the ballot as an independent, as is incumbent Mayor Eric Adams. Joining those three Democrats in the field is Republican Curtis Sliwa, the founder of the Guardian Angels crime patrol group.

Recently, intermediaries for Trump reached out to people close to Adams to talk about whether he would consider abandoning his reelection campaign to take a federal job, according to people familiar with those conversations who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because of the private nature of the talks.

On a recent trip to Miami, Adams met with Steve Witkoff, a former real estate developer in New York who is now one of Trump's main diplomatic envoys in Washington, according to one of the people briefed on the discussions.

Trump administration targets Boston in latest sanctuary city lawsuit

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Washington

The Trump administration sued the city of Boston and its leaders in its latest attempt to invalidate policies seen as interfering with immigration enforcement.

The suit alleges that Boston's sanctuary city policies are illegal under federal law and the city's refusal to cooperate with immigration authorities has resulted in the release of dangerous criminals who should be deported.

“The City of Boston and its Mayor have been among the worst sanctuary offenders in

America — they explicitly enforce policies designed to undermine law enforcement and protect illegal aliens from justice,” Attorney General Pamela Bondi said in a statement. “If Boston won't protect its citizens from illegal alien crime, this Department of Justice will.” The administration has filed a series of similar lawsuits against other cities, including Los Angeles, New York City, Denver and Rochester, New York. It sued four New Jersey cities in May.

Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, who was named as a plaintiff in the latest lawsuit, did not immediately respond to a

request for comment. In a letter to Bondi last month, she called Boston the safest major city in America and defended its law prohibiting local police from engaging with immigration enforcement absent a criminal warrant as a valid exercise of local authority.

“On behalf of the people of Boston, and in solidarity with the cities and communities targeted by this federal administration for our refusal to bow down to unconstitutional threats and unlawful coercion, we affirm our support for each other and for our democracy,” she wrote.

Israel strikes Gaza City high-rise building

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Deir al-Balah (Gaza Strip)

Israel struck a high-rise building on Friday as the Army ramped up an offensive in preparations to take over Gaza City.

Defence Minister Israel Katz said the strike on the building was just the beginning, warning “when the door opens it will not close” and the army's activity will increase.

His comments come days after Israel began mobilising tens of thousands of reservists and repeating evacuation warnings as part of its plan to widen its offensive in Gaza City and other

Hamas strongholds, which has sparked opposition domestically and condemnation abroad.

Palestinians said Israel's strike Friday targeted the Mushtaha tower in Gaza City, located in the southern area of the once-upscale Rimal neighbourhood. The tower already had come under Israeli attacks and photos of the building taken before the strike showed its roof was heavily damaged. Israel said it struck the building because it was used for Hamas surveillance.

Israel has declared Gaza City, in the north of the territory, to be a combat zone. Parts of the city are already

considered “red zones” where Palestinians have been ordered to evacuate ahead of expected heavy fighting.

That has left residents on edge, including many who returned after fleeing the city in the initial stages of the Israel-Hamas war. Moving costs thousands of dollars and finding space in the overcrowded south to pitch a tent feels impossible. But staying behind, they say, could be deadly. While this wasn't the first strike on Mushtaha tower, it was the first time the building was targeted since Israel announced its operation to take Gaza City several weeks ago.

Gaza City resident Ahmed

al-Boari said the building and the surrounding areas were recently inundated with displaced families who have come since Israel began operating on the outskirts of the city. It was unclear how many people were killed in the strike.

Israeli public fears for hostages

Israel's new offensive also has sparked widespread protests among members of the Israeli public who fear it will endanger hostages still held in Gaza, some of who are believed to be in Gaza City. There are 48 hostages still held in Gaza, 20 of who are believed to be alive.

UK royal family in mourning after Duchess of Kent dies, aged 92

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ London

Britain's royal family on Friday began a period of mourning after Buckingham Palace announced the death of the Duchess of Kent, a cousin of the late Queen Elizabeth II. She was 92.

Buckingham Palace said Katherine Kent, who was married to the Duke of Kent — a grandson of King George V, passed away peacefully at Kensington Palace in London on Thursday night.

As one of the oldest members of the royal family, the Duchess was best known around the world as the elegant lady who presented the trophies at the conclusion of the Wimbledon tennis tournament. “It is with deep sorrow that Buckingham Palace announces the death of Her Royal Highness The



Duchess of Kent

Duchess of Kent,” the palace statement said.

“Her Royal Highness passed away peacefully last night at Kensington Palace, surrounded by her family. The King [Charles] and Queen [Camilla] and all members of the Royal Family join The Duke of Kent, his children and grandchildren in mourning their loss and remembering fondly The Duchess's life-long devotion to all the organisations with

which she was associated, her passion for music and her empathy for young people,” the statement added.

Born Katharine Worsley, the Duchess hailed from an aristocratic land-owning family in Yorkshire before becoming a part of the royal family in 1961 on her marriage to Prince Edward, the Duke of Kent, at a wedding ceremony attended by Queen Elizabeth II and the then Prince Charles.

Trump hosts tech executives at White House

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New York/Washington

US President Donald Trump hosted a power-packed cohort of technology executives, including Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella and Google chief Sundar Pichai, at the White House, saying the “high IQ group” is leading a revolution in business.

“The most brilliant people are gathered around this table. This is definitely a high-IQ group and I'm very proud of them,” Trump said, sitting at the centre of a long table and flanked by First Lady Melania Trump, Microsoft co-founder and billionaire philanthropist Bill Gates on one side and Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg on the other.

Pichai and Apple CEO Tim Cook sat across the table from Trump, while Nadella was seated toward one end of the table. “It's an honour to be here with this group of people. They're leading a



President Donald Trump hosting a dinner with first lady Melania Trump in the dining room of the White House

revolution in business and in genius and in every other work you can imagine,” Trump said on Thursday.

After making opening remarks, Trump invited the technology leaders sitting at the table to share their thoughts. In his brief comments, Pichai said that the “AI

moment is one of the most transformative moments any of us has ever seen or will see in our lifetimes. So making sure the US is at the forefront.”

Pichai said the Trump administration is investing a lot in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and termed the ‘AI Action Plan’, unveiled in July by the

White House, as a “great start”. “We look forward to working together. And thanks for your leadership,” Pichai said to Trump.

“Great job you're doing. Incredible, really,” Trump told Pichai. Turning to Nadella, Trump said the Microsoft chief “has done a

pretty good job” and added that he owns the Microsoft stock that has gone from \$28 to now over \$500.

“What a job you've done,” Trump said to Nadella.

Nadella thanked Trump “for bringing us all together” and for the policies he has put in place for the United States to lead in the sector.

Nadella said that it is not just innovation that makes the industry unique, “but it's the market access that you (Trump) have obviously championed for us all over the world and also the trust the world has in American technology.”

“I think that everything that you are doing in terms of setting in place the platform where the rest of the world can not only use our technology, but trust our technology more than any other alternative, is perhaps the most important issue, and you and your policies are really helping a lot,” Nadella said.



New Ebola outbreak in Congo suspected of causing 15 deaths

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dakar (Senegal)

A new Ebola outbreak in Congo is suspected of causing 15 deaths among 28 people with symptoms, the health ministry in the central African country said on Thursday.

It is the 16th outbreak of Ebola in Congo and Health Minister Samuel-Roger Kamba said the fatality rate, estimated at 53.6 per cent, showed the gravity of the situation.

The confirmed case was of a 34-year-old pregnant woman in the locality of Boulape in southern Kasai province. Research on the suspected cases was ongoing.

“To date, the provisional report shows 28 suspected cases and 15 deaths, including 14 in Boulape and 1 in Mweka, as well as four healthcare workers,” Health Minister Kamba said.



Sri Lanka bus crash leaves 15 dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

At least 15 people were killed and another 15 injured in a road mishap in the Badulla District of Uva Province, southern Sri Lanka, police said on Friday.

A group of over 30 people were on a pleasure trip from the southern town of Tangalle when their bus went down a precipice over 1,000 feet around in the Ella town around 9 pm local time on Thursday.

The bus had collided with an oncoming jeep before hitting the road railing and going down.

The dead include nine women. They all were employees of the Tangalle Urban Council.

The rescue efforts were undertaken by the military, police, disaster management teams and residents, the Newsfirst web portal reported.

Xi, Kim Jong pledge deeper ties

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un pledged mutual support and enhanced cooperation during talks in Beijing after a commemoration of the end of World War II, the countries' state media said.

Xi and Kim, along with top officials from their countries, met at Beijing's Great Hall of the People, a day after Kim attended a Chinese military parade alongside other foreign leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin.

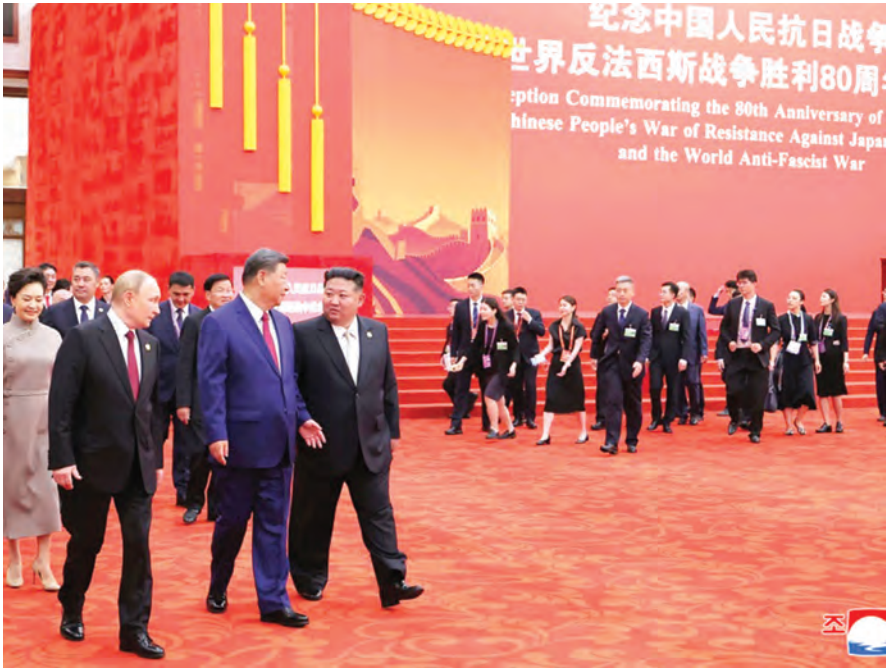
Kim is making a rare trip outside North Korea.

Xi highlighted the "traditional friendship" between China and North Korea and pledged to consolidate and boost relations, according to a readout of their statements published by Chinese State broadcaster CCTV.

"This position will not change regardless of how the international situation evolves," Xi told Kim, according to CCTV.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency said on Friday that the leaders discussed increasing high-level visits and contacts as well as strengthening strategic cooperation and protecting shared interests in international and regional affairs.

It said Kim left Beijing by his private train on Thursday evening after his meeting with Xi. China has been North Korea's biggest trading partner and aid provider, though questions



KIM JONG TRIP TO CHINA MARKS TRANSFORMATION

Tokyo: Kim Jong Un put on a command performance this week at a gathering of some two dozen world leaders in China, striding with confidence and a broad grin across one of the biggest international stages of his 14-year career as North Korea's leader.

As Kim returns home on Friday, his time in Beijing marks a stunning transformation from his first tentative, violent years in power, when some analysts suggested the inexperienced young leader would struggle to survive threats to his rule.

Serious diplomacy with a large group of leaders was unimaginable. But in Beijing, Kim looked like the leader his propaganda services have constantly sought to portray: an important – crucial, even – player in world affairs, entirely at home with the biggest hitters in Eurasia. Beginning in 2018, when he and US President Donald Trump held the first of their much-publicized meetings, Kim has emerged as a far different, far more confident leader than when he was thrust into power after his father's death in 2011.

Granted, he is not yet appearing at the United Nations or established Western global forums. And the attendees in Beijing – which didn't include leaders from the US, Western Europe or Japan – showed little interest in pressing him on widespread concerns about human rights violations or his nuclear weapons. But the events this week are a watershed in his use of international diplomacy to advance his largely secluded nation's aims.

He deftly handled his two biggest allies, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, laughing with them, pledging enduring assistance to Moscow in its war against Ukraine, and strengthening a sometimes shaky relationship with China. He confidently rubbed shoulders with world leaders at a military parade marking the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II.

He even felt self-assured enough to bring his young daughter, and possible successor, along for the ride.

Anutin Charnvirakul elected as Thai PM in parliamentary vote

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Bangkok

Veteran Thai politician Anutin Charnvirakul was elected Prime Minister on Friday after winning a parliamentary vote, according to an official tally.

The leader of the Bhumjaithai Party won a total of 311 votes, far exceeding the 247 required majority from the House of Representative's 492 active members. He and his Government are expected to take office in a few days after obtaining a formal appointment from King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

Anutin, 58, succeeds Paetongtarn Shinawatra,



who was dismissed by court order as prime minister last week after being found guilty of ethics violations over a politically compromising phone call with neighbouring Cambodia's Senate President Hun Sen.

A border dispute between the two nations erupted into a deadly five-day armed conflict in July. Anutin, who's an elected member of the House, got up from his seat and walked around the chamber to take pictures with other lawmakers when he was a few votes short

from the winning total.

Anutin told reporters as he exited Parliament to visit his father in a hospital that he would work hard to solve the country's problems. "I intend to work with my full capability," he said. "I must work everyday and make the most out of it, with no day off."

Videos published by Thai media showed Anutin laughing as he hugged his father who said he was "very happy to see this day."

Anutin had served in Paetongtarn's Cabinet, but he resigned his position and withdrew his party from her coalition Government after news of the leaked phone call caused a public uproar.

Sikh truckers see spike in anti-immigrant vitriol after Florida crash

SSOCIATED PRESS
■ New York

Members of California's Sikh trucking community say a deadly crash involving one of its own, which triggered heated national debates over immigration, has led to a spike in anti-Sikh rhetoric.

On August 12, Harjinder Singh, an India-born truck driver, made a U-turn on the Florida Turnpike that authorities say caused a crash that killed three people. The crash and subsequent investigations stirred arguments between Florida Republican Gov Ron DeSantis and California Democratic Gov Gavin Newsom.

It also sparked online vitriol denigrating members of the monotheistic religion, who often covet high-paying trucking jobs that allow Sikh men to wear beards, uncut hair and turbans.

"There are a lot of negative comments online," said Prabh Singh, a truck driver in Riverside, California, who isn't related to the driver.

None of the people named in this story are in the same family; Singh is a common last name among Sikhs.

"People are saying: 'Take the towel heads off the streets' and 'Make our roads safe by taking immigrants off the street'," said Singh, a US citizen who emigrated from India at age 8. "All of this before a judge gives a sentence. It was a mistake by a driver, not the whole community."

Estimates of the Sikh population in the US range up to 7,50,000, with the largest concentration in California. Many work in the trucking industry and related businesses, including restaurants and trucking schools along major routes.

"I've been talking to a lot of truck drivers, and they've been saying, 'People look at us different now'," said Sukhpreet Waraich, a trucker who owns an interstate freight carrier in Fontana, California. A father of three and his family's breadwinner, he worries about being unfairly targeted. Like other Sikhs, he lamented the Florida crash, calling it a tragedy.

But he hopes the driver gets a fair trial and wants people to understand it's an isolated crash.

'475 people detained during immigration raid in Georgia'



ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Savannah (US)

Some 475 people were detained during an immigration raid at a sprawling Georgia site where South Korean auto company Hyundai manufactures electric vehicles, according to a Homeland Security official.

Steven Schrank, Special Agent in Charge, Homeland Security Investigations, said at a news briefing on Friday that the majority of the people detained were from South Korea. "This operation underscores our commitment to jobs for Georgians and Americans," Schrank said. "This was in fact the largest

single site enforcement operation in the history of Homeland Security Investigations."

The investigation has been ongoing for several months, with authorities receiving leads from community members and former workers, he said. South Korean Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lee Jaewoong described the number of detained South Koreans as "large" though he did not provide an exact figure.

He said the detained workers were part of a "network of subcontractors," and that the employees worked for a variety of different companies on the site.

Nepal land of thinkers and reformers, says CJI Gavai



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kathmandu

Chief Justice of India BR Gavai on Friday described Nepal, the birth place of Lord Buddha, as the "cradle of thinkers and reformers, who challenged existing norms, inspired moral reflection and sought to transform society for the better."

CJI Gavai was addressing the Nepal-India Judicial Dialogue 2025 on recent jurisprudence and justice sector reforms organised by the Supreme Court of Nepal.

"As the birth place of Lord Buddha, Nepal has been the cradle of thinkers and reformers who challenged

existing norms, inspired moral reflection and sought to transform society for the better," CJI Gavai said in his address as the keynote speaker.

He appreciated Nepal's constitution on the ground that it guarantees 33 per cent reservation for women representatives in the Parliament.

Chief Justice of Nepal Prakash Man Singh Rawat said, "In the past two decades, Nepal has achieved significant improvement in justice delivery through human resource development, use of information technology and infrastructure development."

Pakistan, China launch second phase of CPEC, ink \$8.5 billion deals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Islamabad

Pakistan and China have formally launched the second phase of the controversial CPEC project and signed 21 agreements and joint ventures worth about \$8.5 billion.

The MoUs were signed in Beijing on Thursday, on the concluding day of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China, when he met with Chinese Premier Li Qiang and attended an investors' conference.

According to the Dawn newspaper on Friday, the agreements covered cooperation in the development of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) 2.0, as well as in areas like science and technology, information technology, media, investment, and agriculture.

The total worth of the MoUs and joint ventures is about \$8.5



Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif meeting Chinese Premier Li Qiang

billion, it said. The PM Office in an official statement said during talks with Li, Shehbaz described the meeting as "most productive".

"Both sides also agreed to continue working closely on the next phase of the upgraded CPEC 2.0, with its five new corridors," it said.

India opposes the CPEC, which will link Xinjiang in

China and the Gwadar port in Pakistan's Balochistan, as it passes through PoK. The CPEC is the flagship project of China's ambitious multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The BRI is seen as an attempt by Beijing to further its influence abroad with infrastructure projects funded by Chinese investments all over the world.

Foreign troops in Ukraine legitimate targets, says Putin

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Kyiv

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday that any foreign troops deployed to Ukraine before a peace agreement has been signed would be considered "legitimate targets" by Moscow's forces.

Putin's comments came hours after European leaders repudged their commitment to a potential peacekeeping force, a prospect that Moscow has repeatedly described as "unacceptable."

"If any troops appear there, especially now while fighting is ongoing, we assume that they will be legitimate targets," he said during a panel at the Eastern Economic Forum in the far eastern Russian city of Vladivostok. Putin also dismissed the idea of peacekeeping forces in Ukraine after a final peace deal, saying "no one should doubt" that Moscow would comply with



Russian President Vladimir Putin

a treaty to halt its 3½-year full-scale invasion of its neighbour. He said that security guarantees would be needed for both Russia and Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov later said that Moscow would need "legally binding documents" to

outline such agreements. "Of course, you can't just take anybody's word for something," he told Russian news outlet Argumenty i Fakty.

Putin's comments follow remarks from French President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday that 26 of

UKRAINE CONFLICT AFFECTING GLOBAL SOUTH: INDIA AT UNGA

United Nations: India has voiced regret over the Ukraine conflict's "collateral consequences", including prices of fuel, saying countries of the Global South have been left to fend for themselves, as Delhi underscored that diplomatic efforts hold the promise to end the war and bring lasting peace.

"India continues to remain concerned over the situation in Ukraine. We maintain that the loss of innocent lives is unacceptable, and no solution can be found on the battlefield," India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish, said.

Addressing the UN General Assembly debate on 'The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine', Harish said India continues to "note with regret that the collateral consequences of the conflict, including prices of fuel, is affecting the world at large and particularly the countries of the Global South, which have been left to fend for themselves. From our perspective, it is critical that their voices are heard and their legitimate concerns duly addressed".

Ukraine's allies have pledged to deploy troops as a "reassurance force" for Ukraine once fighting ends.

Macron spoke after a meeting in Paris of the so-called coalition of the willing, a group of 35 countries that support Ukraine. He said

that 26 of the countries had committed to deploying troops to Ukraine – or to maintaining a presence on land, at sea or in the air – to help guarantee the country's security the day after any ceasefire or peace is achieved.

US sanctions 3 Palestinian human rights organisations

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Washington

The US imposed sanctions on three organisations that advocate for Palestinian rights because they allegedly engage in efforts by the International Criminal Court to investigate, arrest, detain or prosecute Israeli nationals without Israel's consent.

Al Haq, Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights were hit with diplomatic and economic sanctions – the US uses an executive order that relates to imposing sanctions on the International Criminal Court as its authority.

"We oppose the ICC's politicised agenda, overreach and disregard for the sovereignty of the United States and that of our allies," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement.



Afghan earthquake: Death toll jumps to more than 2,200

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Jalalabad (Afghanistan)

Hundreds more bodies have been recovered from houses in mountain villages destroyed by a major earthquake in Afghanistan early this week, pushing the death toll to over 2,200, a Taliban Government spokesman said.

The shallow, 6.0-magnitude quake struck the mountainous and remote eastern part of the country late Sunday, leveling villages and trapping people under rubble. Most of the casualties have been in Kunar province, where people typically live in wood and mud-brick houses along steep river valleys separated by high mountains.

Some 98 percent of the buildings in the province were damaged or destroyed, according to an assessment issued on Thursday by the Islamic Relief charity.



PROSPECT

VEDANTA BEATS ADANI GROUP WITH ₹17,000 CR BID TO ACQUIRE JAL



Mining conglomerate Vedanta on Friday beat Gautam Adani's Group to make a winning bid for the acquisition of debt-ridden Jaiprakash Associates (JAL) for ₹17,000 crore, according to sources.

The bid value translates into Jaiprakash Associates' net present value of ₹12,505 crore. JAL, which has interests in real estate, cement, power, hotels and roads, has been dragged into insolvency proceedings after it defaulted on payment of loans. Lenders of JAL conducted a challenge process for the sale of the company under the IBC. Multiple bidders participated in the process, but in the end, firm bids were placed by only two entities, Adani and Vedanta Group.

CAIT TO LAUNCH CAMPAIGN TO BOOST CONSUMPTION OF SWADESHI PRODUCTS



Traders' body CAIT on Friday said it will launch a campaign this month to encourage traders to increase the presence of "Swadeshi" products in markets to boost their consumption as an alternative to foreign goods.

The announcement comes in the backdrop of the reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods levied by the US and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clarion call to promote "Swadeshi" products. "The trading community pledges that Swadeshi products will be available in every shop, every market, and every street cart. The only alternative to foreign goods will be Swadeshi," CAIT said in a statement.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said a national conference will be organised in Nagpur on September 15-16, with the participation of over 400 trade leaders, hawkers' organisations, consumer forums, and industry representatives from across the country.

Shapoorji Pallonji Real Estate unveils 'Wings of VANAHA' in Pune

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Shapoorji Pallonji Real Estate (SPRE) has set a new benchmark in industry recognition with the unveiling of 'Wings of VANAHA', a landmark tribute celebrating the achievements of 60 top-performing Channel Partners at its flagship 1,000-acre integrated township, VANAHA, near Bavdhan, Pune.

Taking inspiration from iconic global traditions of immortalising names — from the Hollywood Walk of Fame to the names of soldiers etched on India Gate — Shapoorji Pallonji Real Estate reimagined this spirit of timeless recognition for the real estate industry.

The bespoke 'Wings of VANAHA' installation stands as a lasting symbol of growth, trust, and shared legacy. It honours the pivotal role Channel Partners have played in shaping VANAHA into one of Pune's most sought-after addresses. As a part of the ceremony, each channel partner was presented with a handcrafted metal leaf engraved with their name, which was ceremonially placed on the installation designed in the form of the VANAHA emblem.

Together, these leaves form a living monument, capturing the enduring partnership and commitment behind VANAHA's journey. "Our Channel Partners are the roots of our growth story," said Mr



Sriram Mahadevan, CEO of Shapoorji Pallonji Real Estate and MD of Joyville Shapoorji Housing. "The 'Wings of VANAHA' is not just an acknowledgement, but a symbol of how deeply their contributions are interwoven with VANAHA's success.

Together, we are creating new benchmarks for collaboration in India's real estate sector." The evening concluded with a celebratory toast, marking not just milestone achievements but also the enduring spirit of partnership that continues to power VANAHA's success.

VANAHA by Shapoorji Pallonji Real Estate is one of Pune's largest integrated developments, offering thoughtfully designed residential, commercial, and retail spaces across 1,000 acres, with over 350 acres dedicated to open green landscapes.

The township is anchored by premium lifestyle amenities, including a state-of-the-art clubhouse, gym, spa, multi-purpose courts, landscaped gardens, and panoramic views of the Oxford Golf Course—

Aravind VK honoured with Merlin Award

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Aravind VK, known on stage as Myzticq Mayaman, an Indian magician-technologist based in Columbus, Ohio (USA), has been honoured with the 2025 Merlin Award by the International Magicians Society (IMS) in Las Vegas.

The Merlin Award — often described as the "Oscar of Magic" — is the world's most prestigious recognition in the field of magic.

Past recipients include David Copperfield, Criss Angel, and India's own Gopinath Muthukad, who received it in

2011 in the presence of then Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh.

This year, Aravind received the title "Most Magical Techie and Filmmaker," a unique category celebrating the fusion of art, technology, and cinematic storytelling.

Born in a small village in Kerala and now settled in the US, Aravind balances his career as a senior Data Engineer with his passion for magic, mentalism, and filmmaking. His shows and short films combine psychology, technology, and illusion, creating a new genre of storytelling. Beyond entertain-



ment, Aravind has also used his art for charity and social good, collaborating with community organisations across the US and supporting Kerala's Different Art Centre, founded by magician-philanthropist Gopinath Muthukad, which empowers differently-abled children through art.

"This award is not just for me — it is for every Indian who dares to dream beyond boundaries," says Aravind. Aravind's recognition highlights the growing global presence of Indian talent at the intersection of creativity, technology and social impact.

DUSU election: Candidates must submit affidavit, ₹1 Lakh bail bond

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A press conference was organised by the DUSU Election Committee to brief the media about the DUSU election 2025-26 schedule, prevailing guidelines on conduct, guidelines on defacement of public and private property and ₹1 lakh bond.

It was clarified that only handmade posters are allowed for canvassing among the students and specified wall of democracy.

Any act of defacement may be reported on the online portal of DUSU and on the college portal, in the case of college. It was clarified that a prospective candidate for DUSU Elections is required only to submit an affidavit and a surety bond of ₹1 lakh.

There is no need to deposit the amount in the University or his/her own account. The surety bond can be signed by the parents/guardian/friend/supporter.

All measurers are being taken to the DUSU elections



2025-26 as green election and clean election. The DUSU Election Committee and the University have indicated Zero tolerance towards defacement and violation of guidelines.

The DUSU Election Committee and other committees like committee for prevention of defacement, discipline committees, students grievance cell, univer-

sity proctorial board, Delhi Police and other civic agencies are vigilant and keeping a watch on all aspects of DUSU elections 2025-26.

The DUSU Election Committee has met with the prospective candidates and students groups and discussed to conduct a free and fair DUSU Election 2025-26. The students have explicitly shown their interest to keep

Pandit Harish Pujari honoured with Doctorate



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Renowned astrologer and Vastu Shastra expert Pandit Harish Pujari, with over 28 years of experience, was conferred a prestigious Doctorate Award in New Delhi. The honor was presented by acclaimed actress Nushratt Bharuchha at an event organised by the Honorary Doctorate Award Council, Bharat Gaurav Ratna Shri Samman Council, and the World Human Rights Protection Commission.

Pandit Harish was also

appointed Vice President of the World Human Rights Protection Commission. Since 2004, he has guided countless individuals through his expertise in astrology and Vastu Shastra while dedicating himself to social service. His notable contributions include supporting orphaned and underprivileged children, particularly in higher education for meritorious students. This doctorate recognises his unwavering commitment to societal welfare through both spiritual guidance and humanitarian efforts.

VIBGYOR Gurugram excels in Chess, Science Olympiad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gurugram

Students from VIBGYOR High Gurugram blazed a new trail in the international sports and academics arena by winning in their categories in the FIDE Rapid & Blitz Chess and scoring 15 slots in the Science Olympiad.

The school has made its mark in sporting and academic excellence. Young talents Nimray Agarwal (Grade X) and Navya Agarwal (Grade III) created waves by winning their categories at the International Open FIDE Rapid & Blitz Chess tournaments. Girl students have also secured multiple District and State level Judo championship titles across Under-14 and Under-8 categories. Other outstanding achievements are discernible in the International Science Olympiad, where learners from the Gurugram campus have secured the top 15 ranks across disciplines including general knowledge, social studies, computer science, mathematics and English. "Our aim is to inspire young minds to explore boldly and create new benchmarks, not just on the national stage, but internationally as well.

We are committed to venturing out in the northern region, duplicating the highly successful VIBGYOR Gurugram model by expanding across other States, thereby making our vision of holistic and quality education accessible to a larger population," said school vice chairperson Kavita Kerawalla.

Recognised among the top five schools in Gurugram, the institute reaffirmed its commitment to deliver high-quality, future-ready education that nurtures the intellectual, social and emotional development of new-age learners, the school said in a statement.

The school's curriculum is delivered through an interactive, experiential pedagogy that blends classroom theory with hands-on learning, sports, performing arts and community engagement, it added.

Gurugram Metro extension launched



PARVESH SHARMA
■ Gurugram

The long-awaited Gurugram Metro extension project has officially taken off, with Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal, and Haryana Chief Minister Naib Singh Saini laying the foundation stone on Friday in Sector-44.

The ambitious project, pegged at ₹5,452.72 crore, is expected to redefine urban mobility, decongest roads, and significantly push up property values across the city.

The 28.5-km corridor will feature 27 stations, connecting Old Gurugram with New Gurugram and creating a seamless link to Cyber City and other key business hubs.

The metro will run in a loop from the Millennium City Centre Metro Station (earlier HUDA City Centre) to Mouslari Avenue near Cyber City, with a 1.85-km spur to the Dwarka Expressway.

The new line will cover major locations including Subhash Chowk, Hero Honda Chowk, Udyog Vihar, Palam Vihar, Sector-45, 47, 48, 72, and Ashok Vihar.

These stations have been strategically planned in high-demand areas to benefit both residents and commuters.

The project, to be executed by Gurugram Metro Rail Limited (GMRL) and Haryana Mass Rapid Transport Corporation Limited (HMRTC), is expected to be completed within four

years.

Experts predict a strong boost for Gurugram's real estate market, particularly in traditional localities such as Sectors 4, 5, 9, 10, 22, 23, 37, 45, 47, 48, 72, and Palam Vihar. Improved access and reduced travel times are expected to drive demand from both homebuyers and investors.

The project is also seen as a game-changer for developments along the Dwarka Expressway, SPR, and Sohna Elevated Road, where significant residential and commercial inventories are concentrated.

"The laying of the foundation stone for the new Gurugram metro line is a landmark step in strengthening the city's infrastructure. Improved connectivity through metro expansion will not only ease commuting for residents but also unlock immense real estate potential along the corridor. With enhanced accessibility to business hubs and residential clusters, we anticipate a strong surge in housing demand across Gurugram and neighbouring towns," Mohit Malhotra, Founder & CEO, Neoliv said.

Union Minister Manohar Lal highlighted the rapid expansion of metro services in India, noting that in 2014, the network covered only 248 km in five cities. Today, it spans 1,066 km across 24 cities, with another 970 km under construction.

He added that metro

connectivity saves both time and money, while ensuring safe and efficient commuting.

He also announced that the Urban Affairs Ministry will provide 10,000 subsidized buses nationwide, including 450 for Haryana and 100 for Gurugram, supported by a mobile app for last-mile connectivity.

Pradeep Aggarwal, Chairman of Signature Global (India) Ltd., said, "This metro expansion will decongest traffic, ease mobility, and unlock new opportunities for businesses and citizens. Together with other transformative infrastructure projects, it will position Gurugram as a seamlessly connected urban hub."

Calling it a "historic day", Chief Minister Naib Singh Saini said the project will reduce traffic congestion, cut pollution, save travel time, and generate employment.

He further revealed that future corridors are planned, including Rezagla Chowk to Dwarka Sector-21, Sector-56 to Pachgaon, and the "Nameo Metro Corridor" connecting Delhi to Karnal, Neemrana, and Faridabad via Noida.

Gurugram, already home to over 250 Fortune 500 companies and a majority of Haryana's unicorn startups, is poised to further strengthen its status as a leading business and residential hub with this metro expansion.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
TENDER CALL NOTICE
No.CE/PHD/M/AGCTS-11/25/502 Dt:02/09/2025
Name of the work : "Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of 2.00 MLD STP-III in front of maritime academy for two years (2025-27)". Estimated cost: Rs.2,16,04,587.90. Last Date & time of submission : 22.09.2025 up to 17:30Hrs. Refer our website for details: eprocure.gov.in/eprcuare/app
Sd/- Executive Engineer, PHD(M), PPA
PPA/PR/37/2025-2026 dtd.04.09.2025

BRIEFLY

ROSS TAYLOR TO COME OUT OF RETIREMENT TO PLAY FOR SAMOA



New Zealand cricket great Ross Taylor will come out of retirement to play for Samoa at the Twenty20 World Cup qualifying tournament in Oman next month. Taylor retired from international cricket in 2022 after playing more matches for New Zealand than any other player: 112 tests, 236 one-day internationals and 102 T20 internationals. He remains second behind Kane Williamson on New Zealand's all-time test scoring list with 7,683 runs and second, also behind Williamson, with 19 test centuries.

Taylor's mother, Lote, was born in Samoa. Taylor will play under his given names and chiefly title as Leaupepe Luteru Ross Poutoa Lote Taylor. Now 41, Taylor answered the call of his friend, former Black Cap Tarun Nethula, to join Samoa at the qualifying tournament.

STONES RULED OUT OF ENGLAND WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS



John Stones has been ruled out of England's World Cup qualifiers against Andorra and Serbia with a muscle injury. The Manchester City defender left the national team training camp on Friday, with head coach Thomas Tuchel saying he could not be risked for the upcoming games. Stones played in all three of City's Premier League games this season, but Tuchel said he was carrying an injury when reporting for England duty.

"He came with minor issues, muscular issues, to camp and didn't progress as we thought and hoped he would, so he left camp this morning because we will not take the risk, not against Andorra and also unfortunately not against Serbia," Tuchel said Friday.

England plays Andorra at Villa Park on Saturday and Serbia in Belgrade on Tuesday.

EL SALVADOR BEATS GUATEMALA



Harold Osorio scored late to give El Salvador a 1-0 away win over Guatemala in the first match of the final round of Central America World Cup qualifiers. Osorio's 79th-minute goal on Thursday was just enough for the Salvadorians who're trying to advance for their first World Cup since Spain in 1982.

El Salvador leads Group A with three points, two clear of Panama and Suriname. El Salvador will be aiming for back-to-back wins when it hosts Suriname next Monday, when Guatemala visits Panama. Twelve teams, divided into three groups, are vying for three direct spots from regional qualifying for next year's World Cup. The United States, Canada and Mexico have qualified automatically as World Cup co-hosts. In the earlier CONCACAF World Cup Group A qualifying game, Panama salvaged a scoreless draw against Suriname. "It was what I had predicted in my analysis of Suriname, and it was a crazy match with chances for both sides," Panama coach Thomas Christiansen said.

INDEPENDIENTE DISQUALIFIED FROM COPA SUDAMERICANA



Argentine club Independiente was disqualified from the Copa Sudamericana after violent clashes involving fans at its stadium in a match against the Universidad de Chile last month, South American soccer's governing body said. More than 100 people were arrested and around 20 injured when the round of 16 match was played on August 20 at the Libertadores de América stadium in Avellaneda, a province of Argentina's capital Buenos Aires. Regional soccer authorities also ruled that Universidad de Chile would advance to the quarterfinals of the continental competition where they will play Alianza de Lima of Peru.

South Africa clinches ODI series against England

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London

South Africa clinched the ODI series against England with a game to spare after a five-run win in the second match that was set up by a record-breaking 85 by Matt Breetzke at Lord's.

Brought in to the Proteas lineup to replace the ill Wiaan Mulder, Breetzke became the first player in ODI history to score at least a half-century in his first five matches, according to the ESPNcricinfo website.

The 26-year-old middle-order batter's 77-ball knock added to a 49 from opener Aiden Markram and 58 from Tristan Stubbs as South Africa, which was put into bat, made 330-8 from its 50 overs on Thursday.

"It was a more than com-



South Africa successfully defended 330 at Lord's to go 2-0 up in the three-match series in England

petitive score. I definitely would have taken that when we were three wickets down," Proteas captain Temba Bavuma said.

England was skittled for 131 on the way to losing the first match by seven wickets at Headingley on Tuesday but competed much better two days later, despite losing Jamie Smith to the first over of the reply.

It went down to the last over, off which England needed 16 with one wicket remaining, but some inspired hitting by tailender Jofra Archer (27 off 14 balls) couldn't prevent the hosts falling just short on 325-9.

Before that, Jacob Bethell illuminated the home of cricket with a 58-ball 40, including hitting four consecutive boundaries, and put

on 77 runs for the third wicket with Joe Root (61 off 72 balls) to give England a chance.

Jos Buttler then smashed 61 off 51 balls before being deceived by a slower ball from Lungi Ngidi and getting bowled.

Will Jacks kept alive English hopes with two sixes but was one of two wickets to fall in the 47th over, bowled by Nandre Burger (3-63).

Archer hit two fours and two sixes but ran out of balls as the South Africans — back at Lord's 2 1/2 months after beating Australia there to win the World Test Championship — prevailed again.

"They probably got 10, 15 too many, but to get within one blow of their score, I thought was a good effort," England captain Harry Brook said.

Central Zone reply strongly to West Zone

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bengaluru

Central Zone top-order batters, led by Danish Malewar, carried the team to 229 for two, giving a solid reply to West Zone on the second day of the Duleep Trophy semifinal here on Friday. Shubham Sharma (60) and skipper Rajat Patidar (47) were batting at stumps after Central bagged four quick wickets to end West's first innings at 438. Central need a further 209 runs to take an innings lead.

Malewar, who made a double hundred in the quarterfinal against North-East Zone, took his time to settle down before making 76, as his opening partner Ayush Pandey (40 off 59 balls) went off the blocks briskly.

The left-hander made 32 runs in boundaries, but his cavalier stay ended when Pandey's drive on the up off pacer Arzan Nagwaswalla ended with Aarya Desai in the covers.

But Malewar and Shubham stitched together a 93-run alliance for the second wicket to ensure that they did not waste a firm beginning.

Malewar was confidence personified during his 136-ball innings, seldom giving any chance to the bowlers with precise footwork.

A backfoot punch, which was executed standing tall on his feet, off pacer Tushar Deshpande was an absolute treat to watch. It fetched him four runs in a blink.



Central Zone's Sarangsh Jain celebrating with teammates after taking the wicket of West Zone's Dharmendrasinh Jadeja on day two of the Duleep Trophy 2025 in Bengaluru

behind catch to Harvik Desai.

However, Shubham found another able ally in skipper Patidar, making 69 runs for the ongoing third wicket alliance, to keep Central close on the heels of West Zone.

Eventually, Shubham reached his fifty in 118 balls with a single off Jadeja, and continued to offer a broad bat to the West bowlers.

Unlike other batters, Patidar was more aggressive in his ways, often unfurling those strong drives using supple wrists through the covers to get boundaries as he reached his fifty

In the morning session, West, starting from overnight 363 for six, motored on to 411 for six as

skipper Shardul Thakur, overnight 24, duly completed his fifty off 83 balls with a boundary off pacer Yash Thakur.

The seventh wicket partnership also touched 84, but the run out of Thakur, who attempted a tight run and ended up on the same end as Kotian, turned the tide in favour of Central.

They plucked the next three wickets of Kotian, Jadeja and Arzan Nagwaswalla for 27 runs to prevent West from posting a much bigger total.

Kotian, overnight 65, could not progress beyond 76 as left-arm spinner Harsh Dubey beat him with a quick one that also carried a hint of turn.

BCCI raises Indian team's jersey sponsorship rates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi

Sponsoring the Indian cricket team is set to get costlier with the BCCI raising the amount to ₹3.5 crore per match for a bilateral series and ₹1.5 crore for a game in a multilateral event.

According to a report in Cricbuzz, these figures will apply in competitions sanctioned and organised by the ICC and Asian Cricket Council (ACC). Citing industry sources, the report added that these figures are slightly higher than the current rates of ₹3.17 crore for bilateral games and ₹1.12 crore for multilateral matches.

The development comes in the wake of Dream11's exit as jersey sponsor, which was triggered by the Government's Online Gaming Act, 2025.

Following the government's recent Promotion and

Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, the BCCI promptly cancelled the contract of the Indian team's lead sponsor, Dream11.

With this revision, which will come into effect only after the end of the upcoming Asia Cup, the BCCI could potentially earn over 400 crore rupees, though the final figure may be higher depending on the bidding outcome.

The BCCI on Tuesday invited bids for the Indian team's title sponsorship rights after fantasy sports giants Dream11's pullout and barred companies dealing in real money gaming and crypto currency from the process due to a Government ban on such entities.

The Indian team will be without a title sponsor in the Asia Cup starting September 9 in the UAE as the Board has set September 16 as the last date to submit bids.

Ahmed takes Pakistan to tri-series final

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sharjah

Leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed mystified United Arab Emirates batters with a career-best return of 4-9 as Pakistan sealed its place in the final of the T20 tri-series with a 31-run victory.

Fakhar Zaman tuned up for next week's Asia Cup with an unbeaten 77 off 44 balls — the left-hander's first T20 half-century after 15 games — and propelled Pakistan to 171-5 against some sloppy UAE fielding after captain Salman Ali Agha won the toss and elected to field Thursday.

Ahmed, playing his first game of the series, then baffled UAE top-order batters

LEG-SPINNER ABRAR AHMED BAFLED BATTERS WITH HIS CARROM BALLS AND GOOGLIES BEFORE RESTRICTING THEM TO 140-7

with his carrom balls and googlies before restricting them to 140-7 and the trend of teams successfully defending the totals continued for fifth successive game.

Afghanistan, which already has four points, will take on UAE in the last league game Friday before meeting Pakistan in the final Sunday.

UAE top-order batters

couldn't decode Ahmed's mystery spin once he came onto bowl inside the batting powerplay. Captain Mohammad Waseem (19) failed to read the carrom ball and sliced an easy catch at point in Ahmed's second over. Alishan Sharafu, who was scrappy in the field earlier on, and Ethan D'Souza struggled to set up the momentum before D'Souza holed out at deep square leg in the 11th over after scoring 9 off 14 balls.

Ahmed then returned for another two brilliant overs and picked up the wickets of Asif Khan and Rahul Chopra in space of three balls before wrapping up a brilliant spell with the wicket of Harshit Kaushik off his final ball as

UAE slipped to 102-5 in 15 overs.

Opening batter Sharafu's countercharge came a bit too late for UAE as he made 68 off 51 balls before Agha grabbed a catch over his head at mid-off of Shaheen Shah Afridi's off-cutter.

Earlier, Zaman and Mohammad Nawaz (37 not out) revived Pakistan with its highest-ever sixth wicket stand in T20 international and added 91 runs off the final 51 balls.

But both batters survived chances against an unlucky left-arm spinner Haider Ali (2-17) when they were dropped in the outfield off successive balls before cutting loose in the final two overs which fetched Pakistan 42 runs.

Messi scores twice as Argentina beats Venezuela

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Buenos Aires

Lionel Messi made sure he had good memories of playing a home qualifier with Argentina's national team for the last time in his illustrious career.

Messi scored twice on Thursday in Argentina's 3-0 victory over Venezuela in front of a raucous sellout crowd that had gathered at estadio Monumental to bid him farewell.

"Being able to finish this way here is what I've always dreamed of," Messi said.

"I've experienced a lot of things on this pitch, both good and not so good, but it's always a joy to play in Argentina, in front of our fans."

Messi is yet to give any clues about when he will



Lionel Messi celebrating after scoring goal

retire from the top level of the sport. But the qualifiers for the 2030 World Cup will begin in 2027, when he's 40.

The Argentina captain scored in the 39th and 80th minutes, and Lautaro Martinez added a goal in the 76th.

Messi now has 36 goals in South American World Cup qualifiers and remains as the all-time scoring leader. His Inter Miami teammate Luis Suarez has 29 goals in continental qualifying, but he has retired from Uruguay's nation-

al team. Bolivia's Marcelo Moreno Martins is third with 22.

Looking ahead, Messi clarified that he will only compete in next year's World Cup if he feels physically fit.

"I'm excited, eager. It's day by day, feeling the sensations. If I feel good, I enjoy it; if not, I'd rather not be there," he said, adding that the nine months until the tournament kicks off "is a long time."

Already qualified, the World Cup champions extended their tally to 38 points and will remain atop the South American qualifying standings regardless of what happens in the last round next Tuesday.

Venezuela, trying to qualify for its first World Cup, remains on 18 points and in seventh place.



Slovakia players celebrating after winning the World Cup Group A qualifying soccer match between Slovakia and Germany in Bratislava, Slovakia

Slovakia defeats Germany in World Cup qualifying

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London

Germany lost an away World Cup qualifying game for the first time in a 2-0 upset against Slovakia which threw its campaign to reach the 2026 tournament into immediate jeopardy.

David Hancko and David Strelec each exploited mistakes in Germany's defense to give Slovakia — which last qualified for the World Cup in 2010 — a surprise lead.

Germany couldn't find a way through the Slovakian defense to get back into the game on Thursday.

It was a blow to coach Julian Nagelsmann and his new-look lineup, including Newcastle's new striker Nick Woltemade in his third Germany game and 21-year-old Nnamdi Collins making his debut at right back.

Nagelsmann was scathing about his team, which he said lacked "emotionality" on the field and the will to win

against motivated underdog opposition. He even questioned whether he should pick less skilled but more dedicated players instead.

"Maybe we really do need to rely less on quality and instead on players who just give everything, because that would have led to better results today than if the best players played," he told broadcaster ARD.

Germany now needs to win all of its remaining five games to avoid the playoffs, Nagelsmann added.

Historic records fall

Germany, including West Germany's record during the Cold War, has played at every World Cup since 1954. Until Thursday it had only ever lost three World Cup qualifiers, all at home.

The loss in Slovakia was also only the second time Germany lost a World Cup qualifier by more than one goal. The other was a 5-1 home loss to England in 2001.

