

Caste returns to census after 1931

Respondents will face 40 questions covering caste, religion, education, employment, migration and household financials

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

The 2027 census will collect caste details, for the first time since 1931, along with information on bank accounts, Aadhaar numbers and passport numbers. This is the first time caste will be enumerated in Independent India, beyond the existing categories of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The decision to include caste enumeration was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on April 30 last year. The Office of the Registrar General of India (RGI), under the Ministry of Home Affairs, has notified a 40-question Household Schedule for the 2027 Census of India, covering parents' details, caste, Aadhaar and passport numbers, employment status, the location where a person received the COVID19 vaccination, and the total number of bank accounts held. The questionnaire covers a broad range of demographic, social, educational and economic details. In 2011, there were 29 questions and now, the Census 2027 has 40 questions with some addition to existing questions. "In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 8 of the Census Act, 1948 (Act 37 of 1948), the Central Government hereby



Census-2011 work in progress at Parengaon, near Rinchengpong, West Sikkim

instructs and directs that the census officers may, within the limits of the local area for which they have been respectively appointed, ask all such questions of all persons residing within such limits, subject to the items enumerated below, for collecting information through the Household Schedule in connection with the Census of India 2027," a notification from RGI said. Questions also include queries on name of the person, relationship to head of family, sex, date of birth and age (in completed years), current marital status, age at marriage (in completed years), spouse

name, nationality as declared, religion, father's particulars, mother's particulars, disability, mother tongue and other languages known, literacy and digital literacy status, status of attendance in educational institution, highest educational level attained and stream/discipline and if the person has worked any time during last year. "For the conduct of the above Census, there shall be an option for self-enumeration from August 17 to 31 just before the start of house-to-house population enumeration," the notification added. Respondents will also be asked for attendance in an

educational institution, highest educational level, stream, discipline, if they worked at any time during the last year, category of economic activity, occupation, nature of industry, trade or service, class of worker and if engaged in non-economic activity (for marginal, semi-marginal and non-worker). Questions on migration will cover a person's birth-place, place of last residence, reason for migration, duration of stay in the current village or town and permanent residential address and if they travel to their place of work will also be part of the questionnaire.

President promises secure exams amid student anger



President Droupadi Murmu addressing to the nation on the eve of the 80th Independence Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Against the backdrop of rising concerns among students and competitive examination aspirants and related protests, President Droupadi Murmu in her address to the nation on the eve of the country's

80th Independence Day on Friday said the Government is taking comprehensive steps to reform public examinations to completely curb paper leaks and unfair means, making the system transparent, secure, and trustworthy, as they are the "architects of India's future."

Uttarakhand: 7 dead in Chamoli tunnel accident

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jyotirmath

At least seven workers were confirmed dead and three were reported under debris after water gushed inside a tunnel under construction at a hydroelectric project site in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district. According to officials, 22 workers were trapped inside the three-kilometre tunnel when the water rushed in around 7 pm on Thursday, according to the Chamoli district disaster management officer N K Joshi. The disaster at THDC India Limited's Vishnugad-Pipalkoti hydroelectric project in Mayapur (Pipalkoti) occurred after landslides and subsidence caused debris and water to fill half of the tunnel, trapping the workers inside.

According to the State Emergency Operations Centre on Friday, 19 workers were pulled out of the tunnel during relief and rescue operation, which continued throughout Thursday night. Of these, seven people were dead, and 12 others were injured. A search is underway for the remaining three workers, who authorities suspect are trapped 1.8 kilometres inside the tunnel. Authorities have deployed machines to remove debris and pump out water to reach the missing workers, even as the continuous rainfall is rendering the operation difficult. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami visited Pipalkoti on Friday and reviewed the relief and rescue operations. He also visited the 12 injured workers admitted to a hospital in Chamoli.

AIRBUS FLAGS HYDRAULICS FAILURE IN A12379 PLUNGE

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Initial analysis by Airbus of the Digital Flight Data Recorder from an Air India A320neo that plunged about 300 feet during a Phuket-New Delhi flight has

revealed a complete, simultaneous loss of several key flight-control surfaces for roughly four seconds. The elevators and ailerons on A12379 became unavailable after failures in all three of the aircraft's

hydraulic systems, while the spoilers were also affected. During the four-second disruption, the elevators and ailerons reportedly moved without corresponding pilot commands, leaving the aircraft

temporarily without normal control response. The simultaneous failure of all three hydraulic systems is considered an unusual development and is now a central focus of the investigation.

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15001/87/2627

MESSAGE OF

HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF ODISHA

ON THE AUSPICIOUS OCCASION OF

INDEPENDENCE DAY-2026

On the auspicious occasion of our Independence Day, I greet all my sisters and brothers of Odisha and extend my heartfelt wishes. I call upon all to work collectively and dedicatedly to transform Odisha into a Viksit Odisha and one of the best States of the Country.

(Hari Babu Kambhampati)

OIPR-15001/15001/2/2627/0087

ଠାତମ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ଦିବସ

ଅବସରରେ ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା

ପବିତ୍ର ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ଦିବସ ଅବସରରେ ରାଜ୍ୟବାସୀ ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ମୋର ହାର୍ଦ୍ଦିକ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ଓ ଅଭିନନ୍ଦନ ଜଣାଉଛି ।

ଆମ ଦେଶର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ନାଗରିକ ମହାନ ଭାରତୀୟ ମୌଳିକ ମୂଲ୍ୟବୋଧର ଆଦର୍ଶରେ ଅନୁପ୍ରାଣିତ । ସେହି ମୂଲ୍ୟବୋଧ ଆମକୁ ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ନିର୍ମାଣ ପାଇଁ ଆମର ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ଓ କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ସଚେତନ କରିଚାଲିଛି । ରାଜ୍ୟର ସମୃଦ୍ଧି ଓ ଦେଶର ବିକାଶ ଆମ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଏକମାତ୍ର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ।

ଆସନ୍ତୁ, ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଓ ବିକଶିତ ଭାରତ ଗଠନ ଦିଗରେ ସଂକଳ୍ପବଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇ କାମ କରିବା ।

(ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଝୀ)

ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

DGP Khurania meets CM ahead of retirement

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

Director General of Police (DGP) YB Khurania met Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi at Lok Seva Bhavan in Bhubaneswar on Friday, two days before the completion of his tenure as the state's police chief.

The meeting was held ahead of the impending transition at the top level of the Odisha Police. Chief Secretary Anu Garg and senior officials of the Chief Minister's Office were also present.

The meeting assumes significance as the state government is expected to take a decision on Khurania's successor



soon. Khurania is scheduled to retire from service on August 16, bringing his tenure as DGP to an end.

Khurania took charge as the Odisha DGP in August 2024 and has since headed the state police force through several major law-

and-order and policing challenges.

While discussions over the appointment of the next police chief have gathered momentum, the Odisha government has not yet officially announced Khurania's successor.

The appointment is being closely watched in administrative and political circles as the new DGP will be responsible for overseeing law and order, crime control and policing across the state.

The meeting between Khurania and Chief Minister Majhi comes at a crucial juncture, with the leadership transition in the Odisha Police now imminent. A decision on the next DGP is expected shortly.

MMDR Bill

Naveen seeks all-party meet, special Assembly session

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

Voicing concern over the passage of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 by Parliament, BJD president Naveen Patnaik on Friday urged Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to take immediate steps to safeguard the interest of the State.

In a letter to the Chief Minister, Naveen alleged that the measure posed a serious threat to Odisha's fiscal autonomy and rights over its mineral resources.

In his letter, the former Chief Minister claimed that several provisions in the newly passed amendment directly infringe upon the State's financial rights and land jurisdiction. Section 2 of the Act expands Central control to encompass mineral-bearing lands alongside the regulation of mines, he claimed. Furthermore, Section 9D explicitly prohibits State Governments from levying any tax, cess, or similar levy on mineral rights



or mineral-bearing lands unless permitted under conditions set by the Central Government. Section 13 delegates sole authority to the Centre to frame rules restricting the tax-levying powers of state governments, claimed Naveen, who is also the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in Odisha Assembly.

The BJD chief said revenues derived from mining operations play a vital role in funding education, healthcare, social

welfare schemes, and infrastructure projects across Odisha. Stripping the state of its taxation authority deals a heavy blow to federalism and revenue independence, he said.

If the central government usurps control over mineral-bearing lands, Odisha will be left bearing the ecological and social burdens of mining such as environmental pollution and population displacement, while

losing the economic benefits generated from its own natural wealth, he said.

To safeguard state interests, the BJD supremo urged CM Majhi to take two immediate steps. First, Naveen called for an urgent all-party meeting to build a unified political consensus on protecting federal rights and state mineral revenues. Second, he sought a special session of the Odisha Assembly to formally pass a unanimous resolution opposing the Amendment Act and protesting the central encroachment on state jurisdiction.

The issue follows strong objections raised by BJD MPs during proceedings in the Rajya Sabha, where opposition leaders criticised the bill for infringing upon state financial rights.

Naveen urged the Chief Minister to act swiftly in the interest of the people of Odisha, stating that fiscal autonomy remains a foundational principle of the federal structure.

17 Odisha cops selected for Gallantry, Service Medals

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

Seventeen police personnel from Odisha have been selected for Gallantry and Service Medals announced by the Union Government on the occasion of Independence Day 2026, recognising acts of bravery and distinguished and meritorious service.

According to the medal lists released by the Ministry of Home Affairs, a total of 1,057 personnel from the police, fire services, Home

Guard and Civil Defence, and correctional services across the country have been selected for the honours.

Five Odisha Police personnel have been selected for the Medal for Gallantry (GM). They are Sub-Inspector Manmath Kumar Mahapatra, Havildar Nirakar Bhue, and Commandos Santosh Gurung, Suman Pun and Suresh Chandra Puta.

Two senior Odisha Police officers have been selected for the

President's Medal for Distinguished Service (PSM). They are Additional Director General Sanjeeb Panda and Deputy Superintendent of Police Smitarani Mohanty.

Another 10 personnel from Odisha have been selected for the Medal for Meritorious Service (MSM). They are Deputy Superintendent of Police Manoranjan Paikray, Deputy Superintendent of Police Suresh Kumar Bal, Inspector Gitanjalea Panda, Deputy Commandant

Bhabesh Kumar Nayak, Assistant Commandant Pareshe Kumar Minati Nandan Pati, Constable Shyamali Biswas, Sub-Inspector Barun Kumar Naik, Havildar Subash Chandra Trinath Gouda, Constable Mustaque Alli Khan and Havildar Prasanta Kumar Biswal.

The recognition of the 17 personnel highlights their courage, dedication and commitment to duty and brings distinction to the Odisha Police on the eve of Independence Day.

Covid-19 patient detected in BBSR

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

A Covid-19 patient has been detected in the capital city of Bhubaneswar. A 50-year-old man from the Baramunda area has tested

positive for the virus and is currently undergoing treatment at a private hospital. The hospital authorities have confirmed this information. However, the source of the infection remains unknown.

B'pur Agriculture Officer held taking bribe

PNS ■ Brahmapur

The Vigilance Directorate on Wednesday caught Brahmapur Chief District Agriculture Officer (CDAO) Byomkesh Mishra while allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 15,000 from a beneficiary, officials said.

According to Vigilance officials, Mishra had allegedly demanded the money to process a beneficiary's file under the Integrated Farming Systems component of the Mukhyamantri Krushi Udyog Yojana (MKUY) and facilitate the release of the subsidy.

The beneficiary had reportedly approached the officer several times over the past two months seeking processing of the file. Under the scheme guidelines, beneficiaries are entitled to a subsidy of 50 per cent

of the investment made towards farming and related infrastructure.

However, despite repeated requests, Mishra allegedly did not process the file and instead demanded Rs 15,000 as a bribe. He allegedly also demanded a fixed percentage of the subsidy amount at the time of its release.

The beneficiary subsequently approached the Vigilance authorities and lodged a complaint.

Acting on the complaint, a Vigilance team laid a trap and caught Mishra while allegedly accepting the Rs 15,000 from the complainant. The entire tainted money was recovered from his possession and seized.

Simultaneous searches were also conducted at three locations linked to the accused officer as part of a disproportionate assets (DA) angle.

In Puri Talcher-Puri Express derails

PNS ■ Puri

The engine of the Talcher-Puri Express derailed near Puri railway station on Friday, triggering panic among passengers.

According to reports, the incident occurred around 500 metres from Puri station while the train was approaching from Talcher. The engine suddenly went off the tracks, although preliminary information suggested that no passenger was

injured.

Railway authorities immediately launched rescue and restoration operations following the derailment. Efforts were underway to bring the engine back onto the track and restore normal train services.

The exact cause of the derailment was not immediately known. Railway officials are expected to ascertain the circumstances behind the incident as part of the investigation.

Madhu Babu Pension scheme DMs asked to clear pending applications

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

All District Collectors in Odisha have been directed to scrutinise pending applications under the Madhu Babu Pension Scheme and expedite the process to ensure eligible beneficiaries receive the benefits without further delay.

In a letter to all District Collectors, the department Secretary directed officials to take up the pending applications on a mission-mode basis

and complete the scrutiny at the earliest. According to official information, as many as 63,848 applications under the pension scheme are currently pending for scrutiny.

The department has set August 18 as the deadline for completing the scrutiny of all pending applications. Collectors have been asked to closely monitor the process and take immediate action to ensure that eligible applicants do not miss out on pension benefits.

Vinaytosh Mishra appointed acting DGP

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The State Government has appointed senior IPS officer Vinaytosh Mishra as the acting Director General of Police (DGP) in Odisha.

Mishra, the Director General of CID and Crime Branch, will remain in additional charge of DGP after the retirement of incumbent YB



Khurania on August 16. Chief Minister Mohan Charan

Majhi has approved a proposal in this regard, said the state government in a statement on Friday.

"After the retirement of incumbent DGP YB Khurania on August 16, Vinaytosh Mishra, DGP, CID, Crime Branch will remain in additional charge of DGP (Head of Police Force) until further orders," added the government.

Ravenshaw row

RUTA opposes new hostel wardens' appointment

Submits memo to VC

PNS ■ Cuttack

Faculty members of Ravenshaw University have expressed resentment over the varsity authorities' decision to appoint a new Chief Warden, Deputy Chief Wardens, Wardens and Deputy Wardens for different hostels of the institution.

The Ravenshaw University Teachers' Association (RUTA) alleged that the authorities appointed new officials for 13 hostels without consulting the faculty members.

The association submitted a memorandum to Vice-Chancellor Arka Kumar Das Mohapatra on Friday, urging him to reconsider the decision and withdraw the appointments.

RUTA also pressed for action on two other demands, including justice for faculty members in connection with the dispute involving Cuttack Sadar MLA Prakash Chandra Sethi and former Chief Warden Sudarshan Mishra.

"We urged the VC to withdraw the decision to appoint a new Chief



Warden and other officials for the hostels. We also requested him to take necessary steps to give justice to the faculty members in connection with the dispute involving the MLA and the Chief Warden. The RUTA will decide its future course of action if the authorities fail to fulfil our demands," said faculty member Netaji Abhinandan.

The controversy dates back to an alleged face-off between Mishra and the Cuttack Sadar MLA over issues relating to the East Hostel. Following the incident, Mishra and other wardens collectively

submitted their resignations to the Vice-Chancellor.

The RUTA had blamed the legislator for the confrontation and demanded an unconditional apology from him. The MLA, however, wrote to the Odisha Assembly Speaker seeking action against Mishra.

Amid the ongoing controversy, the university authorities appointed a new Chief Warden two days ago, replacing Mishra. New Deputy Chief Wardens, Wardens and Deputy Wardens were also appointed for the university's hostels.

Ganja cultivation on Govt land

Revenue Dept directed to intensify surveillance

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The State Government on Friday warned of action against officials found aiding illegal ganja cultivation on government land and directed authorities in six districts to step up monitoring to prevent such activities.

Revenue Secretary has written to the Collectors of Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Kandhamal, Boudh and Gajapati, asking them to ensure strict surveillance of government land and prompt

reporting of any illegal cannabis cultivation.

Tehsildars, Additional Tehsildars and Revenue Inspectors have been directed to regularly monitor government land and identify instances of ganja cultivation. If such cultivation is detected, they must immediately inform the local police station, Special Task Force (STF) or Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF).

The government has stressed the need for closer coordination between the revenue and police departments to ensure that

information about illegal cultivation reaches the concerned law enforcement agencies without delay.

The Revenue Secretary warned that officials found knowingly helping or supporting cannabis mafias, or failing to act despite being aware of illegal cultivation, would face disciplinary action.

The move is aimed at strengthening prevention and accountability at the field level and curbing illegal ganja cultivation on government land in the six districts.

In city

Woman damages computer after flight cancellation

Airport authorities file police complaint

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

A woman passenger allegedly damaged a computer at Bhubaneswar airport after an IndiGo flight to Kolkata was delayed and subsequently cancelled on Thursday, triggering tension at the airport for some time.

According to reports, the woman was scheduled to travel to Kolkata for her son's treatment. She reportedly



became upset after the flight was delayed and later cancelled; following which she allegedly expressed her

anger at the airport and damaged a computer.

During the incident, a passenger was heard saying that the woman's child was unwell. A video of the incident subsequently went viral on social media. Following the incident, airport authorities lodged an FIR at the Airport police station.

Meanwhile, passengers affected by the cancellation were taken to Kolkata through another connecting flight, allowing them to continue their journey.

BDA SO gets 3-yr RI in graft case

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The Additional Special Judge, Vigilance, Bhubaneswar, on Friday convicted Tarini Charan Das, a former Section Officer of the Allotment Section of the Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA), in a bribery case and sentenced him to three years of rigorous imprisonment along with a fine.

The case, registered under Sections 13(2) read with 13(1)(d) and Section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, dates back to Das's tenure as a BDA official. He was accused of

demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 5,000 from an applicant seeking transfer of ownership of a house.

Following an investigation, the Vigilance Directorate filed a charge sheet against Das, who was then a serving official. After examining the evidence and hearing the case, the court on August 14, 2026, held the charges against him proved beyond reasonable doubt and pronounced the conviction.

The consequences of the conviction are also likely to extend beyond the jail term. The Vigilance Directorate would approach the

competent authority seeking stoppage of pension benefits of the convicted retired official, signalling that retirement will not shield public servants from the consequences of corruption committed during their service. The conviction underscores the Vigilance Directorate's continued action against public servants accused of misusing their official positions for personal gain. It also sends a message to citizens that demands for illegal gratification in routine government services, including property-related transactions, can attract serious legal consequences.

Fresh flood threat looms over State

Jalaka swells, 80,000 hit in Baleshwar

As rivers swell in several dists

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The State is facing a fresh flood threat as incessant rain over the past two days has caused several rivers to swell, triggering concern in Keonjhar, Baleshwar and Mayurbhanj districts.

The Baitarani river is flowing above the danger mark at Anandapur, while the Jalaka river has also crossed the danger level at Mathani in Baleshwar district's Basta block. With more rainfall forecast, authorities are closely monitoring vulnerable areas and have advised people living along riverbanks and in low-lying areas to remain alert.

In Keonjhar, water levels have risen in the Baitarani and other rivers in Joda, Champua and Anandapur areas. Water has reportedly started entering some areas again through a breach in the Anandapur ring embankment, where repair work is yet to be completed.

Several parts of Joda municipality have been waterlogged after the Suna River overflowed. Floodwater has reached roads near the riverbank market, Women's College and Bachu Halting. Several wards in Badabil have



also reported waterlogging, while water is flowing over the State Highway near Serenda on the Bhadrasahi road.

The local administration has shifted people from vulnerable locations to flood shelters and remains on high alert.

The situation in

Mayurbhanj has also triggered concern, particularly in Baripada. Floodwater from the Budhabalanga River has entered low-lying areas, including riverbank pockets in Wards 7 and 8. Authorities are taking steps to shift vulnerable

bridge in Bangiriposhi, raising fears of further inundation.

In Baleshwar, officials are keeping a close watch on the Jalaka River. At Mathani, the river was flowing at 7.84 metres at 6 am, well above its danger mark of 6.50 metres. Officials fear the water level could rise further if heavy rain continues in upstream areas.

Around 90 villages across 17 panchayats in Basta block could be affected if the rainfall persists. Vulnerable areas include Dudhahansa, Baharda, Natakata, Brahmandha, Mathani and Barungadia.

The rising levels of the Baitarani, Budhabalanga and Jalaka rivers have revived flood concerns across northern Odisha. Authorities are continuously monitoring river levels and vulnerable locations, while residents in low-lying and riverbank areas have been advised to exercise caution.

With more rainfall forecast in the coming days, the situation could deteriorate further if river levels continue to rise.

UBACHAK MOHANTY ■ Baleshwar

The flood situation in Basta area of Baleshwar district remained grim on Friday as the Jalaka river continued to flow well above the danger level, inundating residential areas and government offices and disrupting road communication in several parts of the block.

The fresh spell of flooding was triggered by a rise in the Jalaka following heavy rainfall in the upper catchment areas of Mayurbhanj district, coupled with continuous drizzle in Basta.

At Mathani, the warning level of the river is 6 metres and the danger level is 6.5 metres. The water level rose to around 7.4 metres by Friday morning before receding slightly to 7.26 metres at 6 pm, still remaining significantly above the danger mark.



Floodwater entered several houses, while walls of some kutchha houses collapsed. In several low-lying areas, knee-deep water flowed over roads, disrupting communication and leaving many villages virtually marooned.

The Basta police station premises were also

inundated, with around three feet of water entering the compound. The Basta SDPO office and electricity office were similarly affected.

District administration officials, along with Basta MLA Subasini Jena, monitored the situation and coordinated rescue and relief

operations. Fire Services personnel and ODRAF teams were deployed to evacuate affected people, including pregnant women requiring medical assistance.

According to official reports, the fresh wave of flooding has affected around 80,000 people in 167 villages under 41 gram panchayats and one urban local body covering 13 wards, mainly in Basta, Sadar and Soro areas.

More than 6,000 people have so far been evacuated, while around 2,700 affected persons are being provided cooked food through 16 free-kitchen centres. Chuda and gud are also being distributed in areas where required.

Two ODRAF teams and two NDRF teams have been deployed to assist in rescue and relief operations as the administration continues to closely monitor the rising water level and the situation in the affected areas.

J'suguda SP among top 100 IPS Officers in country

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA ■ Jharsuguda

Jharsuguda Superintendent of Police Gundala Reddy Raghavendra has been ranked among the Top 100 IPS officers in the country for his leadership, professional policing, innovation and contributions to crime control, law and order and citizen-centric policing.

Since assuming charge, Raghavendra has focused on technology-driven investigation, proactive crime prevention, narcotics control, cybercrime detection, faster disposal of cases, protection of vulnerable groups and strengthening public confidence in the police.

Under his leadership, Jharsuguda Police secured the No. 1 position in the State on the district-wise PRAGATI Dashboard. The district also achieved a 95.7 per cent tracing rate of missing children and recorded success in solving

several serious cases, including murder, dacoity and ATM robberies.

The police also made major seizures of narcotics and illegal arms and secured convictions in important POCSO and other criminal cases.

Several initiatives, including Operation NETRA, Cyber Kavach, Nasha Mukta Odisha Abhiyan, Mobile Hand-over Mela and the Smart Auto Tracking System, have further strengthened policing and public safety in the district.

The recognition has placed Jharsuguda Police's work on a national platform and marks a significant achievement for the district and Odisha Police.

Raghavendra dedicated the honour to his team. "This recognition is a collective achievement of the Jharsuguda Police family. We remain committed to serving the people with professionalism, sensitivity, innovation and zero tolerance towards crime," he said.

In Ganjam

Jail Warder found hanging in quarters

PNS ■ Brahmapur

A warder of the Digapahandi Sub-Jail in Ganjam district was found hanging in his residential quarters under mysterious circumstances on Friday.

The deceased was identified as Sibanand Swain. He had been transferred to the Digapahandi Sub-Jail from a prison in Puri district around 15 days ago.

According to reports, Swain did not open the door of his quarters in the morning, raising suspicion among fellow jail employees. The employees subsequently broke open a window and found him

hanging from the ceiling. They immediately informed the police.

A team of Patapur police reached the spot, recovered the body and launched an investigation. Sanakhemundi Tehsildar also visited the spot and spoke to jail employees.

Preliminary investigation suggests that Swain died by suicide, allegedly hanging himself from the ceiling with a rope. "Domestic discord could be the reason behind the warder's suicide. However, we are looking into all angles as part of our investigation," a police officer said. The exact circumstances leading to his death are yet to be established.

In Sundargarh

Couple die, 3-yr-old son hurt as truck hits bike

PNS ■ Sundargarh

A couple was killed and their three-year-old son critically injured after a speeding truck allegedly rammed into their motorcycle in Sundargarh district on Friday.

The accident occurred near Bardihi Square in the Bandhabahal area at around 4 pm. According to reports, the couple was travelling with their son on a motorcycle when the truck, bearing registration number OD-16P-5216, allegedly hit their bike

(CG-14-MH-2613).

The man and his wife died on the spot, while their three-year-old son sustained critical injuries. Local residents rescued the child and rushed him to a nearby hospital. He was later shifted to a health facility in Sundargarh after his condition deteriorated.

On being informed, Kinjirkela police reached the spot, seized both vehicles and launched an investigation into the accident. The identities of the deceased couple were yet to be ascertained.

सत्यमेव जयते
Government of India

Heartfelt greetings
to all fellow citizens on the

80th

Independence Day

“

I extend my best wishes to all of you on this great festival of Independence. There’s only one mantra for 140 crore Indians - Viksit Bharat. To build a Viksit Bharat, we will neither stop nor bow down, and we will build a Viksit Bharat in 2047.

— Narendra Modi”

Live telecast of the Independence Day celebrations from the ramparts
of the Red Fort on Doordarshan Network from 6:30 AM onwards.

CBC 22201/13/0029/2627

The black day of Partition: Tilak Raj Madan’s story of pain, faith, survival

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

For Tilak Raj Madan, the story of Partition is not something he learned from history books. It is a story he heard from his father, Laxmi Chand, in the form of loriyan — the bedtime stories and memories that were passed down to him when he was young.

Those stories began in a refugee tent near Kalkaji Mandir in South Delhi, where the family had arrived after losing almost everything in the Partition of 1947.

What may have sounded like a story before sleep was, in reality, the painful truth of a family uprooted from its home, separated from loved ones and forced to begin life again from nothing.

Today, as India prepares to celebrate Independence Day, the national flag will rise high, patriotic songs will fill the streets and millions will remember the sacrifices behind India’s freedom. But for Tilak Raj Madan, August 14 carries another memory too.

It reminds him of 1947 — the year of freedom, but also the year of Partition, a time that brought unimaginable suffering to millions of families.

A Home Left Behind

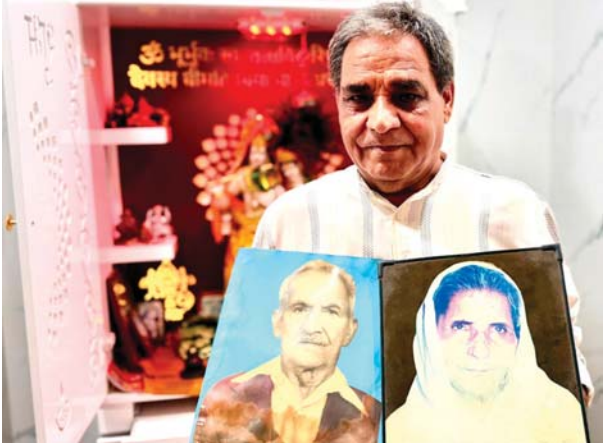
The Madan family originally belonged to Shorkot, Khanewal, in the Jhang-Migyana district, now in Pakistan. Before Partition, theirs was a settled and respectable life.

Tilak Raj’s father, Laxmi Chand, was engaged in the cotton business and also ran a popular sweet shop. The family had a home, livelihoods, relatives and, above all, the quiet security of knowing where they belonged.

Then came 1947. The announcement of Partition transformed that certainty into fear and displacement. Almost overnight, a place that had been home for generations became a place from which the family was forced to flee.

Laxmi Chand left with his three brothers and three sisters, along with his wife, Krishnawanti. There was no time to gather everything they owned or to make plans for a new life. They had to leave behind their home, businesses, possessions, memories and the community that had shaped their lives.

Their journey to India was one of uncertainty and hard-



ship. They travelled partly by bullock cart, partly on foot, and eventually by train, carrying with them only what they could manage. Behind them was everything they had known; ahead lay a country that was new to them and a future they could not yet imagine.

They did not leave because they wanted to start afresh. They left because they had no choice. “We had everything in our village,” Tilak Raj remembers with emotion his father told him the story of partition. “We had a popular cotton business and a sweet shop. We were a happy family. Suddenly,



we lost everything.” The words are simple, but behind them lies a lifetime of grief.

The Pain of Separation

Among the deepest wounds carried by the family was the separation from one of their sisters, who remained behind in Pakistan during the migration. For those who crossed the border, the journey to India meant leaving behind not only property but people. Some separations lasted years. Some lasted forever.

For the Madan family, the loss of their sister became a permanent wound — a reminder that Partition did not merely divide a country on

the catering and sweets business in the Nehru Place area to carry the legacy of his father.

There were no shortcuts. There was only hard work.

Day after day, year after year, the family rebuilt what Partition had taken away. Their story is therefore not only about loss. It is also about the extraordinary human ability to start again after everything has been destroyed. From a refugee tent to a settled life in Delhi, the journey took courage, patience and faith.

A Life Built From the Ashes

Today, Tilak Raj Madan lives in South Delhi’s Kalkaji area with his daughter, two granddaughters and son-in-law. When he looks at his family, he sees something that his father could perhaps only dream of in those difficult days of 1947 — a secure home, a family together and a future.

Yet the past has never disappeared. When Tilak Raj speaks about Partition, his voice carries the sadness of someone who inherited memories of a homeland he never truly got to know.

He remembers the home his family lost.

He remembers the business that was abandoned.

He remembers the sister who was separated from the family. And he remembers the stories his father told him.

There are tears in those memories, but there is also pride.

Faith That Carried the Family

For Tilak Raj, faith has always been an important part of his family’s survival.

He expresses deep gratitude towards Mata Rani lord Maa Durga, whom he believes gave his family the strength to survive its darkest days. With folded hands, he remembers those years not only with sorrow but with gratitude for having survived them. From the pain of Partition to the pride of rebuilding a life in India, the Madan family’s journey is a powerful reminder that even after history breaks a family apart, courage, faith and hope can help rebuild what remains. And perhaps that is the most important lesson Tilak Raj carries from the stories his father once told him before sleep.

Never forget what was lost. Never forget those who suffered.

And never take the freedom and life we have today for granted.

CM Rekha calls trade a pillar of Viksit Bharat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta attended the Bharatiya Vyapar Mahotsav 2026 at Bharat Mandapam on Friday. The Chief Minister described trade and entrepreneurship as strong pillars of India’s economic strength under the Viksit Bharat vision.

The festival, organised to coincide with Independence Day, serves as a national platform to showcase India’s trade potential, entrepreneurship, innovation and self-reliance. The Chief Minister extended her best



wishes to the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) and the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) for organising the event, calling it more than a trade exhibition. She said the festival was

an important opportunity to highlight the contribution of traders, entrepreneurs, manufacturers, MSMEs and startups to India’s economic progress. MP and CAIT Secretary

General Praveen Khandelwal, CAIT National President B C Bhartia and other dignitaries attended the event alongside the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister said that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership, the vision of “Vocal for Local,” “Local to Global” and “Atmanirbhar Bharat” has grown into a mass movement. She said traders, entrepreneurs, startups, MSMEs and manufacturers were now key drivers of this shift, with India-made products gaining recognition in global markets.

Delhi tightens security after bomb threat emails

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi was placed on high alert Friday after bomb threat emails were sent to major locations, such as Indira Gandhi International Airport, the Delhi High Court, and several Government buildings. The threats came just a day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s scheduled Independence Day speech at the Red Fort.

According to officials, the emails arrived around 11:30 AM, claimed that IEDs had been planted at key sites, and demanded the release of unnamed prisoners. At least three central government offices got similar messages. No explosives were found in the initial searches. However, the timing of these



threats has made security agencies more cautious.

Earlier intelligence reports had warned about possible disruption attempts by hostile groups before Independence Day celebrations and the rehearsal at the Red Fort on Friday. A senior Delhi Police officer said these

threats follow a pattern seen every year before August 15, with hoax messages meant to test response times and create public fear. Security agencies said they are taking all threats seriously.

Security measures have been raised to the highest level. Security has been tightened at the airport, court complexes, Metro stations, and all Independence Day event sites.

NSG commandos, bomb squads, and dog units are now stationed at Terminals 1, 2, and 3 of IGI Airport. Baggage and cargo are being thoroughly checked. At the Delhi High Court, lawyers and visitors were evacuated for about 90 minutes while police and fire services searched the building. Court sessions resumed once officials confirmed that nothing suspicious was found.

12-year-old girl killed as DTC runs over scooter in east Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A class 8 student’s trip to attend Independence Day celebrations at her school turned fatal when a DTC electric bus, allegedly driving in the wrong lane, hit the scooter she was riding with her uncle in the New Ashok Nagar area on Friday, police said.

Following the incident, angry locals pelted stones at the bus, damaging its front windshield and windows.

Police said they controlled the situation from escalating and arrested the bus driver, who had fled after the accident. The girl, identified as a 12-year-old Kayna Pal, was on her way to school for an Independence Day programme when the accident took place around 8 am on Dallupura Road.

According to police, she was travelling on a scooter with her uncle when the DTC bus hit them, causing her to fall and suffer fatal injuries. Her inconsolable

father, Aman Pal, was seen waiting outside the mortuary as the body was taken for a postmortem.

He said, “My younger brother was taking her to school for the programme when the bus came from the wrong side and struck their scooter. The impact threw the child onto the road, following which her head came under the wheels of the bus.”

Police said the girl died on the spot, and they shifted the body to Lal Bahadur



A DTC bus remains parked after a schoolgirl was run over by it in Ashok Nagar, New Delhi

Shastri Hospital for medico-legal proceedings.

The deceased’s other uncle, Virender Singh, said the girl died on the spot, and her uncle received injuries, but he is out of danger and was fit to give his statement to police.

Her grandfather, Dharam Singh, said the girl had left home for the school’s August 15 programme. He described her as a bright student and said the family was now waiting for the postmortem process to

be completed before taking her body home.

“The journey to school turned into an unimaginable tragedy. Kayna had left home expecting to attend an Independence Day programme, but within minutes, her family was rushing to the accident site and hospital,” said a resident.

Eyewitnesses and residents alleged that the driver fled the spot after the collision while several passengers were still inside the

bus. The accident left residents enraged, with some throwing stones at the bus.

Police said they are also probing the stone-pelting incident.

They said the DTC bus driver, identified as 45-year-old S K Murad, initially fled the scene out of fear but was subsequently apprehended.

A police officer said an investigation was underway to ascertain the circumstances that led to the fatal collision.

Delhi Metro sets up exhibitions remembering Partitions at two stations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has set up special exhibitions at Rajiv Chowk and Kashmere Gate metro stations to mark Partition Horrors Remembrance Day, observed annually on August 14. The exhibitions will remain open for public viewing till August 21, 2026.

According to a statement issued by DMRC, the displays portray the horrors of Partition and its lasting impact on the country’s

shared history. The corporation said the initiative was designed to highlight the agony and suffering endured by millions of people affected by the division of India.

The observance of Partition Horrors Remembrance Day serves as a reminder of what the DMRC described as the largest displacement of population in the country’s history, an event that claimed numerous lives and reshaped the nation’s social fabric.

The exhibitions aim to offer commuters a reflective and educational experience, providing deeper insight into



the events surrounding Partition.

DMRC said the exhibition at Rajiv Chowk, one of the busiest interchange stations on the network, has been

complemented by a similar display at Kashmere Gate, another major interchange point. The corporation said placing the exhibitions at these two high footfall sta-

tions would allow a larger number of commuters to engage with this chapter of history during their daily commute. The statement was issued by Anuj Dayal, Principal Executive Director, Corporate Communications, DMRC.

The initiative comes as several government bodies and institutions across Delhi organised events to mark the remembrance day this year. Union ministries, the Delhi government and political parties held seminars, cultural programmes and exhibitions through the day

to recall the events of 1947, when the partition of India led to the displacement of millions of people across the newly drawn border between India and Pakistan.

By placing the exhibition inside metro stations rather than a dedicated venue, DMRC’s initiative is aimed at reaching commuters who may not otherwise attend a formal remembrance event. Rajiv Chowk and Kashmere Gate together see substantial daily passenger traffic, given their role as interchange stations connecting multiple metro lines across the city.

MCD grants equal pay to 4,400 health staff

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has granted final approval for equal pay to around 4,400 Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS) employed on a daily basis contract (DBC) in its Health Department. The move will raise eligible employees’ salaries by nearly Rs 10,000 per month, Mayor Pravesh Wahi announced on the occasion of Independence Day.

Wahi described the decision as a significant Independence Day gift for MTS DBC employees, saying the need to extend equal pay benefits to this category of workers had existed for a long time. He said the approval came after the corporation completed various administrative, financial and legal formalities required to implement the decision.

The Mayor said the necessary groundwork was completed in coordination with Standing Committee Chairperson Satya Sharma and Municipal Commissioner Sanjeev Khirwar. He said the MCD administration’s objective was to protect employee interests and ensure fair pay in line with their duties and responsibilities.

Wahi had first announced the measure in his Budget Speech as Leader of the



House. He said the commitment made at that time was not left as a mere assurance, and that the administration worked through financial, legal and procedural hurdles to formally sign and approve the decision. “Today, I am pleased that after overcoming several hurdles and completing all the necessary formalities, final approval has been granted for this decision,” Wahi said. “This is not merely an administrative decision for us. It is a matter of ensuring the dignity and rights of MCD employees.”

According to the Mayor, the revised salary will be paid from the coming month as per applicable rules. Employees benefiting from the equal pay decision will continue performing duties associated with the MTS post.

Wahi said the decision, taken in recognition of the hard work and services rendered by these employees, would boost their morale. He called it an important step for both the employees and their families, coinciding with Independence Day.

Delhi BJP holds seminars to mark Partition Horrors Remembrance Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi BJP organised seminars across all 14 organisational districts of the city on Friday to mark Partition Horrors Remembrance Day. On the occasion, the senior party leaders recalled the pain of 1947 and called for national unity in tribute to those who suffered.

Delhi BJP President Harsh Malhotra addressed a seminar organised jointly by the Chandni Chowk District BJP and the social organisation Madhyam-Ek Vichar at Kashmere Gate. Speaking there, Malhotra shared his own family’s connection to Partition, saying his grandfather had an ancestral shop in Lahore, now in Pakistan,

which was left behind during the division. He said while his family belonged to Amritsar, many relatives and acquaintances had lived in areas that became Pakistan, and he grew up hearing accounts of trains arriving filled with bodies and neighbours turning against each other overnight.

Malhotra said the pain of Partition went beyond the division of land, extending to relationships, culture and a shared heritage built over centuries. He said refugees had spent days hungry and thirsty in camps before rebuilding their lives from scratch in Delhi and other parts of the country. He said the day was observed under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership to ensure

younger generations do not forget the price the country paid for what he called vote bank and appeasement politics. He described national unity as the truest tribute to those who suffered during Partition.

Member of Parliament Praveen Khandelwal, who also addressed the Chandni Chowk seminar, said millions of families in Delhi today trace their roots to cities like Lahore, Karachi and Sialkot, where their ancestors left everything behind. He said despite starting from nothing, these families never abandoned their patriotism. He said the remembrance day was meant to convey the truth of Partition to younger generations and said building what

he called “Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat” would honour those who endured the period’s horrors.

Seminars were also held in other districts under similar arrangements. In Naveen Shahdara, the event was addressed by MP Manoj Tiwari and state general secretary Mohan Lal Gihara. In North East Delhi, Tiwari spoke alongside former mayor Jai Prakash. South Delhi’s seminar featured MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri and state general secretary Vishnu Mittal, while Karol Bagh’s morning session was addressed by MP Bansuri Swaraj and Delhi minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa.

In New Delhi district, former Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva spoke

alongside Swaraj. Mehrauli’s seminar featured Bidhuri and former BJP vice president Shyam Jaju, while the Shahdara district event was addressed by Gandhi Smriti vice president Vijay Goel and BJP national general secretary Dushyant Gautam.

Mayur Vihar’s seminar was addressed by former Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta. MP Yogendra Chandolia spoke at both the Outer Delhi and North West Delhi district seminars, accompanied by state vice president Sunil Yadav and spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari. Najafgarh’s event featured MP Kamaljeet Sehrawat and state vice president Rajesh Bhatia, while Keshavpuram’s seminar was addressed by Delhi minister Ravindra Indraj Singh. In West

district, state general secretary Yogita Singh addressed the gathering.

Each seminar was organised under the respective district president’s leadership, with local party functionaries, councillors and workers in attendance across venues. The events formed part of a coordinated city-wide effort by the Delhi BJP to observe the remembrance day, which the central government instituted in 2021 to mark the human cost of India’s partition in 1947.

Party leaders across the seminars repeated calls for national unity and urged citizens to remember the sacrifices of Partition-affected families as part of building what they described as a stronger, undivided India.

Our blood has been sucked: Omar slams Pak over J&K’s water rights

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Srinagar

Accusing Pakistan of “sucking the blood” of Jammu and Kashmir by denying it the right to use its river resources, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday launched an attack on Islamabad for staking a claim over waters originating from the region, asserting that the neighbouring country cannot be selective in its sympathy for Kashmiris. Responding to remarks by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif regarding the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), Abdullah maintained that the people of Jammu and Kashmir have historically borne the brunt of the water-sharing framework.

“We have always been saying that our blood has been sucked — these are our rivers. We had the first right on this. Pakistanis say they are great sympathisers of Kashmiris. But when it comes to water, their sympathy dis-



appears. Where was their sympathy when we were denied permission to use our rivers?” Abdullah told reporters here.

Sharif had earlier warned that “every drop of water is our red line” and stated that Islamabad would issue a “direct response” if its water supplies were threatened.

Lashing out at the historical division under the IWT, Abdullah pointed out that out of the six rivers, India retained three belonging to Punjab, while the three rivers of Jammu and Kashmir were

handed over to Pakistan, causing long-term detriment to the local population.

“From then until today, we are suffering the consequences of this Indus Waters Treaty. We could neither draw drinking water from the Chenab, nor could we use the Jhelum for navigation by building a barrage on Tulbul, nor could we stop water by building a big dam on any of our rivers,” he said.

Noting that the IWT was kept in abeyance following the terror attack in Pahalgam, the chief minister asserted

that the treaty should remain revoked to allow Jammu and Kashmir to utilise its natural resources fully.

“Our blood has been sucked, and now that the Indus Waters Treaty has been suspended, it should remain suspended so that we can make proper use of this water,” Abdullah asserted.

Reacting to the assassination attempt on former Punjab deputy chief minister Sukhbir Badal, Abdullah condemned it and said the incident has raised serious concerns over security lapses.

“We strongly condemn this, and such attacks should not take place. Before this also, there was an attack in Amritsar, after which it was stated that special care would be taken of his security, that there will be Z-plus security.

“But where is the Z-plus? The attack took place for the second time, this time he was even injured, and had to be taken to the hospital for treatment,” Abdullah said.

Partition Horrors Remembrance Day observed at Sealdah

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Kolkata

Bengal observed the Partition Horrors Remembrance Day even as a Bhumi Pujan (ground-breaking ceremony) was held at the iconic Sealdah Station in Kolkata for the installation of a memorial statue dedicated to the victims of the Partition of 1947.

The memorial, which was likely to be completed by November, will exhibit and pay tribute to the countless people who endured the largest human displacement, suffering, violence and loss in recorded history during the Partition.

“Trains came from that side loaded with dead bodies and stink of blood ... it all told the grim stories of those who died there or en route and those who were left to die homeless, destination less far away from their homesteads in Kolkata and suburbs,” Bengal Industries Minister Tapas Roy said.

“The Partition of India was



not a simple drawing of a line through the courtyards, ponds, paddy fields or homesteads ... it was a partition of aspirations, sense of belonging, hope and everything ... lakhs of people came and went when population traversed from this side or that side of the border ... this mural will make us remember their sacrifices and pains suffered by that generation ... the next generation must know what happened to those who were the victims of the partition,” Bengal Minister Agnimitra Paul said

adding from now on the day would be observed on August 13 and 14 every year.

The Bengal Government extended the observance across August 13 and 14, making arrangements for district-level candle marches, documentary screenings, and archival photo exhibitions detailing the human cost of the 1947 Partition.

“Every day several thousand people come to Kolkata via Sealdah, which was a living witness to the horrors of Partition ... the mural and the statue will offer an

insight into what happened then for those who may have forgotten this or who have not known this side of the history,” Paul said.

The programme was held in coordination with the Union Ministry of Culture and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA).

Apart from Paul and Roy, Bengal Minister of State for Information and Cultural Affairs Purnima Chakraborty and senior Eastern Railway and IGNCa officials were present at the programme.

On why Sealdah station was to be chosen for the installation of the mural, a senior official said that “because most of the victims of the Partition arrived at Sealdah from living behind their homes, dead relatives and properties, Sealdah became a very important transit point”, adding that not a single day passed when fewer than 2000 refugees were camping at Sealdah Station for three years from 1947. “We still are bearing the brunt of Partition,” he said.

CBI arrests proclaimed offender Masad Sheikh in 2022 Bhadu Sheikh murder case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested proclaimed offender Masad Sheikh in connection with the Bhadu Sheikh murder case, originating from Wari Bander, Dongri, Mumbai. The accused had been at large since the FIR was filed in 2022 and had not participated in the investigation or trial proceedings. His whereabouts were determined through human intelligence and technical inputs.

The case was registered by the CBI on April 8, 2022, following an order from the Calcutta High Court dated the same day. It involved transferring FIR number 168/2022 from Rampurhat Police Station, concerning the murder of Bhadu Sheikh on

March 21, 2022, at Bogtui in Birbhum district, West Bengal.

Following the investigation, the CBI filed a chargesheet and supplementary chargesheets in 2022 and 2023 against nine accused individuals, including Masad Sheikh, before the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Rampurhat, Birbhum. The trial was later transferred to the Additional District and Sessions Judge, 4th Court, Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal.

The accused's prolonged absence delayed proceedings. As a proclaimed offender, he remained untraceable for over four years until CBI teams located him in Mumbai. The arrested individual will now be transported from Mumbai to Kolkata for presentation before the



appropriate court.

The CBI emphasised that the arrest highlights its commitment to ensuring the presence of all charge-sheeted individuals in cases transferred by higher judicial authorities. Further legal

actions, including remand, will be pursued once the accused appears in court in West Bengal. The Bhadu Sheikh murder case attracted regional attention due to the circumstances surrounding the crime and the High Court's

decision to transfer the investigation to the central agency. Authorities have not disclosed the specific role attributed to Masad Sheikh or the evidence against him beyond confirming his inclusion among the nine individuals already charged.

Additional details are anticipated following formal production and court proceedings. This development occurs amid ongoing efforts by the CBI to resolve pending absconder cases across multiple states.

The agency reaffirmed that sustained intelligence efforts remain vital to apprehending long-absconding suspects.

The production of the accused in Kolkata will mark the next phase of the legal process in this four-year-old case originating from Birbhum, an official said.

Jal Jeevan Mission completes 7 years, tap water reaches 15.91 crore rural homes



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

As India prepares to celebrate its 80th Independence Day on Saturday, the Jal Jeevan Mission is set to complete seven years of implementation, with rural tap-water coverage increasing from 3.23 crore households at the time of its launch on August 15, 2019 to more than 15.91 crore households now, according to the Jal Shakti Ministry.

Netaji row: BJP MP apologies after FIR

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Kolkata

Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Friday said that law would take its own course after FIRs were lodged against BJP MP Ananta Maharaj alias Nagendra Roy for his derogatory remarks against Nnetaji Subhash Chandra Bose. The erring leader from Cooch Behar however apologised for his statements.

The Chief Minister said that Roy had done an “unpardonable” wrong saying however that it was good that he had proffered an apology for his statements. “Though law will take its own course ... his video (seeking apology) uploaded on social media last night should be taken with positive note considering his age ... I don't have much to say about this,” Adhikari said adding how



the police had already arrested five persons and got deleted two more than 200 social media posts.

Earlier Maharaj appeared in a social media video seeking apology. He said, “regarding my statements I would like to state that if unintentional comments have hurt anyone emotionally then I feel sorry from the core of my heart.”

He had earlier referred to some documents that he

claimed authentic calling Netaji a “war criminal” and justifying the action taken by the British Government against him. When repeatedly reminded that by making such derogatory comments he was hurting national sentiments he said “the statements are not mine ... these are based on historical documents that I am referring to ... he had raised the Azad Hind Fauz by taking men from the British Army, and

then fought against the English...any other Government in the place of the British would have treated it the way they did ... he was a war criminal and was treated accordingly.”

Gopal Dey a local leader of Forward Bloc the party that was raised by Bose had filed an FIR against Maharaj. He said “Ananat Maharaj has insulted the whole nation ... such a derogatory statement merited an FIR and we did it ... He should be arrested and expelled from the Rajya Sabha.”

Earlier the Chief Minister too had warned legal actions against those making disrespectful statements against Netaji. Tathagato Roy a senior BJP leader and former Tripura Governor too demanded strong action against Roy saying, “he should be immediately expelled from the BJP.”

Luck strikes in Panna: 7 workers find 17.96-carat diamond worth ₹50 lakh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

A stroke of luck has transformed the fortunes of seven daily-wage workers in Madhya Pradesh's Panna district, who discovered a 17.96-carat diamond while working at a leased mine in Sarokha village. The diamond was found by Akhilesh Pal and six other workers, who had taken the shallow mine on lease around two years ago. After working for months without finding anything valuable, the group eventually abandoned the mine and left it untouched for nearly a year.

The workers later began operating another mine nearby. Following heavy rains, they returned to inspect the old site and spotted a stone lying near the surface. The stone was subsequently examined by diamond officials, who confirmed that it weighed 17.96 carats and was of gem

quality. Diamond official Ravi Patel described the discovery as a valuable find and said the quality of the stone made it particularly significant. The diamond is expected to be put up for Government auction, possibly in October, with buyers from India and abroad likely to participate.

The stone could fetch around Rs 50 lakh at auction, according to officials. Under the applicable arrangement, the Government will deduct 12 per cent royalty from the sale proceeds, while the remaining amount will be divided equally among the seven workers. The discovery adds to a series of significant diamond finds reported from Panna, where people working leased mining areas have occasionally struck valuable stones. In June, a tribal family found an 11.19-carat diamond in the district, estimated to be worth around ₹30 lakh.

ସ୍ଵାଧୀନତା ଦିବସର ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା

କୃଷକ ଶକ୍ତି ସଂଗଠନ, ନୂଆପଡ଼ା ଗଢ଼ିଆଳ - ୭୬୭୧୦୭

କୃଷକ ଶକ୍ତି ସଂଗଠନ ପକ୍ଷରୁ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ପବିତ୍ର ସ୍ଵାଧୀନତା ଦିବସର ହାର୍ଦ୍ଦିକ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ।

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E-AUCTION FOR PARKING STANDS

Auction Catalogue No.: SDCM-KUR-PKNG

Station & Location : (1) KHURDA ROAD - 4 WHEELER (EAST ENTRY SIDE), (2) CHATRAPUR-2 WHEELER (OUT SIDE STATION PLATFORM-1 SIDE), (3) BHUSANDPUR - 2 WHEELER (NEAR PUMP HOUSE AT PLATFORM-1A SIDE), (4) DHENKANAL- TWO WHEELER (ON PLATFORM-1 SIDE), (5) TALCHER ROAD - MIX (2-CUM-4 WHEELER) (IN CIRCULATING AREA), (6) PARADEEP - MIX (2-CUM-4 WHEELER) (PLATFORM-1 SIDE).

Auction Start date & time : At 1500 hrs. on 27.08.2026 (For all SI. No.).

Auction End time date & time : At 1530 hrs. (For SI. No. 1), At 1540 hrs. (For SI. No. 2), At 1550 hrs. (For SI. No. 3), At 1600 hrs. (For SI. No. 4), At 1610 hrs. (For SI. No. 5), At 1620 hrs. (For SI. No. 6) on 27.08.2026.

Note: Prospective bidders are advised to visit the www.ireps.gov.in and check the upcoming e-auctions leasing tab to get all required information regarding this e-auction.

SR-Divisional Commercial Manager/PR-362/R26-27 Khurda Road

32001/689/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
KHORDHA IRRIGATION DIVISION, KHORDHA
Dist: Khordha, Odisha - 751065
Tel/Fax: 06755-786308
Mail Id: sekhurdairrigationdivision@gmail.com

***e-Procurement Notice No. KHD- 04 OF 2026-27, Dtd. 12.08.2026**

- Name of the work : 29 (twenty nine) nos. of Civil Work
- Tender Cost : Varies from Rs.6.42 Lakhs to Rs.45.78 Lakhs
- Bid Document Cost : Rs.4,000/- & 6,000/-
- Bid Security : Varies from Rs. 6,500/- to Rs.45,800/-
- Class of Contractor : D C & B
- Period of Completion : 04 (four) & 06 (six) calendar months
- Other details are as follows.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender On-line for bidding		Date of Opening of Bid
		From	To	
Superintending Engineer, Khordha Irrigation Division, Khordha	KHD 04-01 of 2026-27 to KHD 04-29 of 2026-27	17.08.2026 at 11.00 A.M	28.08.2026 up to 5.00 P.M	28.08.2026 at 11.00 A.M

8. e-mail id sekhurdairrigationdivision@gmail.com

9. If required lottery may be held on 10.08.2026 at 11.00 AM

Further detail conditions can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Any addendum/ corrigendum/ cancellation, if any shall be posted online only

Superintending Engineer
Khordha Irrigation Division,
Khordha

OIPR-32001/320781/12627/0006

34001/636/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, BOUDH (R&B) DIVISION, BOUDH
E-mail - eeboudhrb@gmail.com
INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)

No. 4038 Date. 13.08.2026

1st corrigendum to tender call Notice no. SE BDH-08/2026-27 dated 12.08.2026.

The following changes are made in respect of the bid identification No. BDH. 08/2026-27.

- Approx. Value of works (In Rs.) for SI. No. 01, 02 & 03 in Column No. 03 may be read as 7,05,606.00, 22,36,829.00 & 26,26,979.00 respectively.
- EMD / BID Security (In Rs.) for SI. No. 01, 02 & 03 in Column No. 05 may be read as 7,100.00, 22,400.00 & 26,300.00 respectively.
- Period of completion for SI. No. 01, 02 & 03 in Column No. 08 may be read as 12 (Twelve) months respectively.

Superintending Engineer,
Boudh (R&B) Division, Boudh

OIPR-34001/340391/12627/0016

ଶ୍ରୀରାମ ତତ୍ତ୍ଵ ଭେଷଜ ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଏବଂ ହାସପାତାଲ, କଟକ ବିଜ୍ଞାପନ

10001/461/2627

ବଂଷ୍ୟ ଗଂଗା ଓ, ୧୩.୦୮.୨୬

ନାମ - ପ୍ରମୋଦ କୁମାର ବିହାରୀ
ପଦବୀ - ଚରାକାରି
ଗ୍ରାମ - ସାନପାଟଣା, ପୋଷ - ଉତ୍ତୁରାସପୁର
ଭାରତୀୟ - ଚରାକାରି
ବିଜ୍ଞା / ଆମ - ଚରାକାରି

ଏଡ଼ିଆର ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ କଣ୍ଠାର ବିଆପାରଣ ଯେ ଗତ 30.06.2023 ଠାରୁ ଶ୍ରୀରାମ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଭେଷଜ ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଏବଂ ହାସପାତାଲ, କଟକ ରୁ କାହାକୁ କିଛି ସୂଚନା ନ ଦେଇ ନୂଆଦେ ଚାଲିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି । ଆପଣଙ୍କ ଶାନ୍ତା ଚିକିତ୍ସାରେ ଗାରାଘରୀ ଯୋଗାଯୋଗ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ପତ୍ର ବଂଶୀ 7430 ଓ 18.07.2023, ପତ୍ର ବଂଶୀ 11297 ଓ 12.10.2023, ପତ୍ର ବଂଶୀ 1248 ଓ 02.02.2024, ପତ୍ର ବଂଶୀ 3705 ଓ 19.03.2026 ଙ୍କାର ଯୋଗାଯୋଗ କରାଯାଇଅଛି ମାତ୍ର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଥର ପ୍ରେରିତ ପତ୍ର ଗୁଡିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକାରୀକୁ ଟେକିଆସୁଛି । ଆପଣଙ୍କର ଅନୁପସ୍ଥିତି ଯୋଗୁଁ ସରକାରୀ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ବାଧା ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେଉଅଛି ଏବଂ ଅନ୍ୟ କର୍ମଚାରୀଙ୍କ ମାନବ ସତ୍ତାରେ ନିରାହାର ପ୍ରଭାବ ପଡୁଅଛି । ପୁନଶ୍ଚ ଯେଉଁ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ନିମନ୍ତେ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ଶ୍ରୀରାମ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଭେଷଜ ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଏବଂ ହାସପାତାଲ ରେ ନିଯୁକ୍ତି କରାଯାଇଥିଲା, ତାହାର ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ ସାଧିତ ହୋଇପାରୁନାହିଁ ବରଂ ଏହା ସରକାରୀ ଚାଲିବା ସର୍ବାବଦୀ ଉପରେ ଉପରାଜ୍ୟ ଓ ବିଚାରାଳୟ ଚାଲୁଅଛି ।

ଏହି ଏହି ବିଜ୍ଞାପନ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ଭେଷ ସୁରୋଚିତ ବିଆପାରଣ ଯେ, ଏହି ବିଜ୍ଞାପନ ପ୍ରକାଶନର 7 (ସାତ) ଦିନ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଶ୍ରୀରାମ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଭେଷଜ ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଏବଂ ହାସପାତାଲ ର ମୁଖ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ନିଜ କର୍ମରେ ଯୋଗଦାନ କରିବେ । ନିର୍ବାଚିତ ସମୟ ସମୟ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଯୋଗଦାନ ନ କଲେ, ଆପଣଙ୍କ ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ପ୍ରତିବନ୍ଧିତ ନିମ୍ନ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନାବଳୀ ଏବଂ ଅନ୍ୟ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକାରୀ ଗୁଣ ଉପରେ ବାଧା, ସାଧା ପାଇଁ ଆପଣ ନିଜେ ଦାୟୀ ରହିବେ ।

ଶ୍ରୀରାମ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଭେଷଜ ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଏବଂ ହାସପାତାଲ, କଟକ

OIPR-10001/100391/12627/0004

States Focus



ANNPURNA DEVI SLAMS RAHUL OVER REMARKS ON GIORGIA MELONI

Union Women and Child Development Minister Annpurna Devi on Friday said it was shameful of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to make an "objectionable" and "disrespectful" remark against a woman head of state, referring to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

"The Congress party and Rahul Gandhi are leaving no stone unturned in disgracing democratic values with their distorted mindset and reckless politics," Devi said in a post on X. The remark comes after Gandhi mocked Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "hug diplomacy" at a Congress convention in New Delhi by giving party leader Sandeep Dikshit a mock hug. Dikshit then said, "You weren't hugging me thinking I was Meloni?" The exchange has led to a backlash from several BJP leaders. (PTI)



CM NAIDU FLAGS OFF 58 MODERN FIREFIGHTING VEHICLES IN ANDHRA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday flagged off 58 modern firefighting vehicles for the State Fire Services Department. The flag-off ceremony was held at the second steel bridge on the newly inaugurated E3 Seed Access Road in Undavalli village of Tadepalli mandal in Guntur district.

The new fleet, procured at a total cost of nearly ₹40 crore, comprises 25 advanced firefighting vehicles, 20 water bowsters and 13 Quick Response Multipurpose Firefighting Vehicles. "We are strengthening the Fire Services Department in phases with modern vehicles and equipment to better protect people's lives and property during fire accidents and disasters," Naidu said in a press release. (PTI)

I-Day: CRPF gets highest gallantry, service medals among CAPFs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) bagged the maximum gallantry and service medals — 86 in total — among the central paramilitary forces on the occasion of the 80th Independence Day.

The country's largest paramilitary force received 24 gallantry medals (GM), five President's Medals for Distinguished Service (PSM) and 57 Medals for Meritorious Service (MSM), according to a Ministry of Home Affairs notification on Friday.

The gallantry medals were earned from two counterterrorist operations in Jammu and Kashmir and one operation against insurgents in Manipur, both taking place in 2024, officials said.

The force is expected to get a few gallantry medals that



are issued by the Ministry of Defence too, they said.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) M Dhinakaran is among the PSM awardees.

The officer, who earlier served in the Special Protection Group (SPG), currently heads the CRPF Recruit

Training Centre in Avadi, Chennai.

Dhinakaran has served in the paramilitary force for over three decades, commanding units in the anti-Naxal operations theatre and providing leadership to the intelligence and VIP security

wings of the CRPF. "The PSM was awarded to the DIG in recognition of his long and distinguished service, integrity, dedication and exemplary professional performance," an official statement said.

The CRPF, with an estimated strength of 3.25 lakh personnel, is the country's lead internal security force with its units majorly deployed in three main combat theatres — anti-Naxal operations, counterterrorist tasks in Jammu and Kashmir and anti-insurgency duties in the northeastern states.

The Border Security Force (BSF) is the only other Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) that was decorated with gallantry medals (20).

The border guarding force received 47 service medals (PSM and MSM) in addition to the other CAPFs.

PM, Shah pay tribute on Partition remembrance day, urge unity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and several other ministers remembered the victims of the 1947 Partition on Friday, the eve of Independence Day.

The Modi Government has been observing August 14 as the 'Partition Horrors Remembrance Day' since 2021 in remembrance of those who lost their lives in riots after the country's division and the ensuing exodus.

"Today we mark #PartitionHorrorsRemembranceDay. We recall the courage of all those who

were impacted by Partition. It was a moment in history that tore apart several lives - families were uprooted, loved ones were lost and immense suffering was endured," Modi said on social media.

The prime minister said that despite the turmoil, people rebuilt their lives from nothing, turned adversity into achievement and contributed to the nation's progress. Their lives remind everyone of the strength of the human spirit, he said.

"May this day deepen our resolve to preserve harmony and brotherhood in our nation and collectively work towards building a 'Viksit Bharat,'" Modi said. "Let us



further strengthen the national spirit of goodwill and unity," he said. Home Minister Shah said August 14 stands witness to one of the most brutal

chapters in history and the scar of the country's partition, "which is a gift from the Congress", will never be forgotten by history.

BJP slams Rahul Gandhi over foreign policy jibe, says arrogance turning into madness

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The BJP on Friday slammed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his remarks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's handling of foreign policy, saying it seems his "arrogance" is now turning into "madness".

"The nation must decide whether what Rahul Gandhi has done is merely the childish antics of a frustrated, deranged and envious person consumed by jealousy towards Modi, or the nefarious act of an individual serving as an instrument in a systematic conspiracy orchestrated by forces across the border," BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi told reporters here.

The Congress and Gandhi have emerged as a "challenge" to the country's "healthy democracy", he charged.



This came a day after Gandhi referred to the BJP-RSS as a "bunch of jokers" who have no understanding of India and scoffed at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's handling of foreign policy which he claimed was all about hugging leaders.

Speaking at the Rachnatmak Congress National Convention here on Thursday, he also said it has somehow been ingrained in

Modi's mind that foreign policy is about hugging leaders.

Gandhi then hugged Rachnatmak Congress chief Sandeep Dikshit in a bid to demonstrate what the current Government's foreign policy was about.

"Imagine the ignorance... where did he get the idea that foreign policy was about hugging leaders?" he said. Dikshit then asked Gandhi,

"Ek cheez pooch sakta hoon? Meloni samajh ke toh nahi pakda tha?"

Gandhi responded by saying, "I have not reached there yet."

Trivedi condemned Gandhi's remarks, terming them "rude and indecent".

"What Rahul Gandhi has said makes it evident that his arrogance is now turning into madness. He appears to be losing his mental balance," the BJP Rajya Sabha MP said, when asked.

Use of such "rude, indecent and condemnable language" by Gandhi shows he is probably crossing "all kinds of extremes out of frustration" now, Trivedi charged.

"Until now, it seemed that he was competing with Maoist and Muslim League leaders. Now it seems he is competing with the comedians who make reels of abuses and profanity," the BJP leader added.

India prioritises defence modernisation, production jumps to ₹1.78 lakh crore, says Rajnath Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday said the Government is according the highest priority to the modernisation of the defence forces driven by a self-reliant and future-ready defence sector.

Stating this is his address to the soldiers through Akashvani on the eve of 80th Independence Day highlighted the transformative shift witnessed by the defence sector in the last 12 years due to initiatives such as 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make-in-India.'

He asserted that India has become a nation which is effectively catering to its own security needs, while emerging as a global defence manufacturing hub and a net defence exporter.

Rajnath Singh emphasised that the domestic defence



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh interacts with Indian Army contingent from Commonwealth Games held at Glasgow in New Delhi

PTI

production, which stood at just ₹46,000 crore in 2014, has skyrocketed to a record ₹1.78 lakh crore in the Financial Year (FY) 2025-26, nearly a four-fold increase over the last decade.

He added that defence exports, which stood at a mere ₹686 crore in FY 2013-14, surged to an all-time high of ₹38,424 crore in FY 2025-

26, an increase of over 5,500 per cent. Rajnath Singh also pointed out that the defence budget has risen from ₹2.53 lakh crore in FY 2013-14 to ₹7.85 lakh crore in FY 2026-27, which is a reflection of India's growing commitment to future defence technologies.

The defence minister said over the past year, the

Investigation (CBI) said in a statement.

Fifteen personnel have been awarded the Medal for Meritorious Service (MSM).

The awardees include Deputy Legal Advisor, Brijesh Singh, Senior System Analyst Girish Joshi, Deputy SPs Manoj Kumar, Om

Prakash Chandra, Zahir Akhtar Ansari, Ashish Anand, Inspectors Sarita Yadav, Sub-Inspectors Roshan Kumar, Assistant Sub-Inspector Dilbar Singh Bisht, Head Constables Balkar Singh, Govind Singh Bisht, Kamlesh Kumar Gurjar, Head Constable, CBI, Constables Pal Pandian R, Ajay Kumar Singh, and Kalyanadurgam Samiullah, it said.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Twenty-one CBI personnel have been awarded the coveted President's Medal for Distinguished Service and Medal for Meritorious Service on the occasion of Independence Day.

Assistant Sub-Inspector Ramesh Chand, Assistant Inspector Shobha Dutta, Additional Superintendent of Police Manoj Banerjee, Ginni Rana, Deputy Superintendent of Police Sanjay Kumar Samal, and Assistant Sub-Inspector Madan Lal Dhiman have been awarded the President's Medal for Distinguished Service (PSM), the Central Bureau of

PRESIDENT'S MEDAL FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE (PSM)				
				
Smt. Shobha Dutta Assistant Inspector General of Police (ISP, CBI, Complaint & Coordination Cell, New Delhi)	Sh. Manoj Banerjee Additional Superintendent of Police, CBI, BSFB, Kolkata	Smt. Ginni Rana Additional Superintendent of Police, CBI Academy, Ghaziabad		
				
Sh. Sanjay Kumar Samal Deputy Superintendent of Police, CBI, ACB, Visakhapatnam	Sh. Ramesh Chand Assistant Sub-Inspector, CBI, Head Office, New Delhi	Sh. Madan Lal Dhiman Assistant Sub-Inspector, CBI, IPCU, New Delhi		
MEDAL FOR MERITORIOUS SERVICE (MSM)				
				
Sh. Brijesh Singh Deputy Legal Advisor, CBI, ACB, Lucknow	Smt. Girish Joshi Senior System Analyst, CBI, TAFSU, Mumbai	Sh. Manoj Kumar Deputy Superintendent of Police, CBI, ACB, Delhi	Sh. Om Prakash Chandra Deputy Superintendent of Police, CBI, SCB, Kolkata	Sh. Zahir Akhtar Ansari Deputy Superintendent of Police, CBI, ACB, Ghaziabad
				
Sh. Ashish Anand Deputy Superintendent of Police, CBI, Complaint & Coordination Cell, New Delhi	Smt. Sarita Yadav Inspector, CBI, ACB, New Delhi	Sh. Roshan Kumar Sub-Inspector, CBI, SI, New Delhi	Sh. Dilbar Singh Bisht Assistant Sub-Inspector, CBI, SCU, New Delhi	Sh. Balkar Singh Head Constable, CBI, ACB, Chandigarh
				
Sh. Gyanid Singh Bisht Head Constable, CBI, ACB, Lucknow	Sh. Kamlesh Kumar Gurjar Head Constable, CBI, ACB, Jaipur	Sh. Pal Pandian R Constable, CBI, ACB, Malabar	Sh. Ajay Kumar Singh Constable, CBI, ACB, Patna	Sh. Kalyanadurgam Samiullah Constable, CBI, ACB, Bangalore

Amrit Udyan to open for public from August 16

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday graced the opening of the famed Amrit Udyan inside the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The summer annuals of Amrit Udyan will be open for the public from August 16 to September 15, between 10 am and 6 pm. It will remain closed on all Mondays for maintenance.

"President Droupadi Murmu graced the opening of Amrit Udyan Summer Annuals Edition 2026 at Rashtrapati Bhavan," her office said in a post on social media and shared pictures of the event.

Indigenous and native flowering plants, known for their vibrant colours and ecological significance, will be the major attraction of the Udyan this time.

The indigenous collection includes Balsam/Gul-mehndi, Aparajita, Rukmini, Barsha Phool, Lal Saag and Nagphana among others, showcasing India's rich floral heritage and enhancing the biodiversity of the gardens.

Sportspersons on August 29 and teachers on September 5 will get exclusive access to Amrit Udyan to



President Droupadi Murmu during the opening of Amrit Udyan Summer Annuals Edition 2026 at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Friday

PTI

mark the National Sports Day and Teachers' Day, respectively. Entry and exit for visitors will be from gate no 35, located near North Avenue Road.

Entry to Amrit Udyan will be free of cost, but visitors have to book their slots online at visit.rashtrapatibhavan.gov.in in advance.

Registrations for slot booking will close at 10 am on the previous day, and there will be no on-the-spot booking available.

Visitors can carry mobile phones, electronic keys,

purses, handbags, water bottles, baby milk bottles and umbrellas inside the Udyan.

For the convenience of the visitors, drinking water stalls, first aid posts, rain shelter and restrooms will be set up along the route of the visit.

A shuttle bus service with the banner 'SHUTTLE SERVICE FOR AMRIT UDYAN' will also be available from Central Secretariat Metro Station to the entry point to the Amrit Udyan at an interval of every 30 minutes between 9.30 am and 6 pm.

Sufferings of partition must be remembered so that they do not repeat: Vice President

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Vice-President CP Radhakrishnan on Friday said the suffering and sacrifices endured by people during the Partition must be remembered to ensure that such a "horror" is never repeated and stressed the need to preserve the country's unity and harmony.

Radhakrishnan, who is also the Chancellor of Delhi University, was speaking as the chief guest at an event organised by the Centre for Independence and Partition Studies (CIPS) and the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) on the Partition Horrors Remembrance Day.

The theme this year was "Story of India's Partition (1947)".

"It is just one day before we celebrate our Independence Day. We must remember that the joy of freedom must never be separated from the sufferings that our elders endured in 1947," Radhakrishnan said, adding, "Partition was one of the most tragic and dehu-



Vice President CP Radhakrishnan felicitates a Partition survivor on the occasion of Partition Horrors Remembrance Day at the University of Delhi in New Delhi

PTI

manising chapters in the history of our nation."

He said remembering the past was not about "opening old wounds", but about learning from history and moving towards greater harmony.

"It is to remember that freedom did not come without any cost, sufferings or sacrifice. The sufferings borne by our elders made India a free country. This type of horror must never happen again," he added.

The Vice-President also emphasised the responsibility of citizens to safeguard the country's integrity and respect its diversity.

"It is the prime duty of all of us to maintain the integrity of this nation. My mother tongue is important to me, but that does not mean I am to hate the mother tongue of others. We should be very proud to be Indians," he said.

An exhibition showcasing the Partition-era materials was organised as part of the event. The exhibition featured archival materials from the Prime Ministers' Museum and Library, besides extracts from books by ICHR chairman Raghuvendra Tanwar as well as documents from the ICHR library.

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao officially comes to West Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

West Bengal was formally adopting *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* scheme in Bengal, Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari said on Friday. The previous Mamata Banerjee Government had refused to implement the scheme in the State.

"The previous Government had repeatedly stalled the *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* project so conceived by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji... now we will implement this scheme in the State to ensure an all-round futuristic development of our girls."

Adhikari's statement came on a day when previous flagship Kanya Shree project of the former Trinamool Congress Government was replaced by the Kanyaratna scheme launched by the BJP regime.

Under the Kanyaratna scheme, a girl child would be entitled to receive ₹2,000 from next year, up from the earlier 1,000 rupees.

Besides, the girl students would also get a one-time grant of ₹50,000 for higher studies. This was ₹25,000 during the previous



Government. Adhikari said that the girl students who would score more than 60 per cent marks in Class XII exams would get a scholarship under the existing Swami Vivekananda Scheme. Besides a new scheme was also launched after Swami Vivekananda that would entitle students to get an additional grant for higher studies at national level or even abroad.

"Girls are our assets and our government will provide them with all possible support they deserve for their future development," Adhikari said adding 20.13 lakh schoolgirls will receive the ₹1,000 assistance this year for which the Government had earmarked ₹400 crore. Both the number of recipients and the amount would increase from the next year.

India can hit hard: Doval on Operation Sindoor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Sending out a stern warning to the perpetrators of terrorism, National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval has said India's generosity and tolerance should not be mistaken for weakness, asserting that the country can take risks and hit hard, irrespective of the consequences.

Breaking silence over Operation Sindoor for the first time, he said the objective of the 88-hour military operation was to destroy enemy camps, particularly those responsible for the Pahalgam terror attack.

Speaking in the upcoming Discovery docuseries "Declassified: Operation Sindoor", Doval said "We had decided the objective of the operation as destruction of the enemy camps, particularly those who had been responsible for the Pahalgam attack."

"Message to the world is very clear — India's generosity or India being tolerant should not be mistaken for its weakness. India can take risks, India can hit hard, irrespective of the consequences," he added.

The two-part docuseries brings together India's military and national security leadership to recount the decisions and events surrounding Operation Sindoor, with first-hand accounts from those who oversaw



India's response, Discovery said in a statement. In the show, Doval offers an account of the decision-making and resolve behind the military response, it added. "Declassified: Operation Sindoor" will premiere on Saturday at 9 pm on Discovery and streaming service discovery+.

Operation Sindoor was launched early on May 7 last year in retaliation for the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 innocents were killed, with Indian forces conducting precision strikes on multiple terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

The punitive action by the Indian armed forces killed more than 100 terrorists

deep inside Pakistan and destroyed several strategic assets including air fields and other installations.

Pakistan later also launched offensives against India, and all subsequent counter-offensives by India were also carried out under Operation Sindoor.

The military conflict between the two nuclear-armed neighbours, lasting nearly 88 hours, halted after they reached an understanding on the evening of May 10.

The remarks reiterate India's shift toward an active deterrence posture, signaling that restraint does not limit the country's capacity or willingness to respond forcefully to cross-border threats.

Doval's remarks offer a rare insight into the strategic

thinking behind Operation Sindoor and the resolve at the highest levels of India's national security establishment following the Pahalgam terror attack.

The two-part docuseries brings together India's senior military and national security leadership, operational commanders and frontline personnel who were involved in planning and executing the 88-hour response.

The series also examines the military thinking that followed once the objective had been set, including target assessment, decisions taken as the situation developed and the responsibility placed on those carrying out the mission.

Former Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan said the Pahalgam attack had deeply affected the country and that India had decided not to bow to such threats.

"Like, I think, all citizens of the country, we were actually hit by the brutality of this attack. I think it was most barbaric. It was decided that India would not bow down to such kinds of threats," Chauhan said.

He also stressed the importance of knowing when to bring a conflict to an end. "At a strategic level, I think that knowing when to stop a conflict is equally important. It is easy to start a war; it is very difficult to

stop it," the former CDS said. Chauhan also spoke about the decision to have two women officers represent the armed forces during press briefings on Operation Sindoor.

"From the armed forces, we were represented by two women officers, and it conveyed two important messages: that the women of India will not be deterred by these cowardly attacks, and that the social and emotional fabric of India will remain unaffected even by such kinds of challenges," he said.

According to Discovery, the first part of Declassified: Operation Sindoor traces the developments after the Pahalgam attack, including intelligence gathering, surveillance, target identification and preparations for the operation.

Teams carried out mock drills and planned for multiple scenarios as they worked towards a precise operation designed to minimise civilian and military casualties.

The second part moves from planning to execution, taking viewers inside the operation as it unfolded. It examines the coordination between the Army, Navy and Air Force, the tense moments before the strikes and the decisions taken in real time. The series then follows the operation through to confirmation that the mission had been completed.

Himanta inaugurates development projects in Jalukbari constituency

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma today inaugurated several development projects in the Jalukbari Assembly Constituency, including an RCC bridge connecting Bamonrajan Road with Forest School Road and 19 single-cell RCC box culverts constructed over the Kalmani stream at Azara.

As part of the Mukhyamantrir Unnata Paki Path Nirman Achni for 2024-25, Sarma formally inaugurated the RCC bridge, constructed at a cost of more than ₹2.56 crore. Speaking at the inauguration, the Chief Minister said that the old wooden bridge at the site was in a highly dilapidated condition, forcing residents of the Baripara area to take a longer route via Bamonrajan Road for their daily commute. The new bridge, measuring 32.40 metres in length, will provide direct and convenient connectivity to Forest School Road and significantly reduce travel time for students, office-goers, patients and other commuters. Sarma said several thousand people from nearby areas, including Garigaon, Baripara, Bhakunda, Jeutipara and Noapara, would directly benefit from the bridge.

The Chief Minister further said that the bridge would provide improved and direct connectivity from Forest School Road to the Dharapur area.

He also assured local residents that steps would be taken to prevent erosion at Bamonrajan. Meanwhile, Dr Sarma inaugurated 19 single-cell RCC box culverts constructed over the Kalmani stream at Azara at a total cost of ₹3.41 crore. The culverts, extending from Kalitapara to Hatkhowapara, will establish direct connectivity between the interior roads of Azara and National Highway-37.

He said that before the project was implemented, local residents had to use old and dilapidated wooden bridges to cross the Kalmani stream. Keeping in view the convenience and transportation needs of the



people, the Public Works Roads Department undertook the initiative to replace the unsafe wooden bridges with permanent RCC culverts.

According to the Chief Minister, the new culverts will directly benefit patients requiring ambulance and emergency medical services, fire and emergency response teams, school students, daily commuters and local residents by improving connectivity and transportation facilities.

Dr. Sarma also stated that further measures would be undertaken in the coming days for the overall development of the larger area.

Later, the Chief Minister visited Sri Sri Maa Mansa Temple at Keotpara, Azara, and Sri Sri Banshi Gopal Temple at Gosaipara, Azara, where he offered prayers and sought the well-being and prosperity of the people of Assam.

At Sri Sri Maa Mansa Temple, Sarma said that the State Government would take all possible steps to complete the remaining infrastructure development works at the temple and address the demands raised by the people for the development of the surrounding area.

Kerala to implement flood resilience initiative: CMO



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The State Government will implement the 'Kerala Flood Resilience Initiative' to scientifically address floods and other rain-related disasters caused by climate change, the CMO said on Friday.

A team of experts from IIT Roorkee, IIT Palakkad, and IIIT Kottayam met Chief Minister VD Sathesan and presented a comprehensive roadmap for a state-of-the-art flood-resilience system using advanced technologies, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said in a statement.

The experts suggested scientific preparedness to tackle extreme rainfall, urban flooding, riverine floods, landslides and mudslides, among other natural disasters.

The initiative will use Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, remote sensing, hydrodynamic modelling and

accurate rainfall forecasting systems to identify flood-prone areas in advance and issue precise warnings, according to the statement.

The IIT team also recommended that any measures to remove silt and soil from rivers, lakes, and backwaters be undertaken only after a scientific assessment of their impact on the environment and water flow.

The chief minister directed the Water Resources Department and the Disaster Management Department to examine the technical feasibility, financial implications and implementation modalities of the initiative in detail.

The two departments have been asked to jointly examine the proposal and submit a report within a month.

Further steps to implement the project in the state will be taken based on the report, the statement said.

Certain forces do not want peace in Punjab: Sukhbir Singh Badal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Nanded

A day after he was injured in a *kirpan* attack, former Punjab deputy chief minister Sukhbir Singh Badal said on Friday that some groups are against peace in Punjab and the country, and see the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) as standing in their way.

He said he would follow the example of his late father, former Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal, and would not let such groups take control of the state. He added that he is committed to keeping unity.

Badal, who is president of the SAD, was attacked with a *kirpan* by a member of the

Nihang order inside Gurdwara Mata Sahib Devan Ji Mugat on the edge of Nanded city on Thursday. He had surgery at a local hospital and was released on Friday afternoon.

After leaving the hospital, Badal told reporters, "A lot of forces do not want peace in Punjab and this country. They feel that the Shiromani Akali Dal is a hindrance to their mission. My father, Parkash Singh Badal, never compromised with these forces. He always stood for the idea that all communities and religions should live together happily."

"My father was a chief minister. He kept peace among communities and



respected all religions. These groups tried to attack me a year ago. Their goal is to take control of Punjab and disturb the peace, but as president of the Shiromani Akali Dal, I will never let that happen. My father did not allow it either,"

he said. Badal also said he had been targeted at two of Sikhism's holiest sites. Despite these attacks, he said he would keep standing up to any effort to cause unrest. "Both times, they attacked me in the holiest

Opposition making mockery of democracy: Shivraj Chouhan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chandigarh

Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday slammed the opposition, saying it did not let Parliament run and it was making a "mockery of democracy".

Chouhan also attacked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The agriculture and farmers welfare minister was speaking during an event organised to launch the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)



Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan addresses an event organised to launch the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) in Chandigarh on Friday

under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) in the Union

Territories of Chandigarh and Dadra & Nagar Haveli. Union Minister for

Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Pralhad Joshi, Punjab Governor and Chandigarh Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria were among those present on the occasion.

During his address, Chouhan said that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the Government is leaving no stone unturned in ensuring that benefits reach the eligible beneficiaries.

He said that Parliament is for discussion and debate over issues of farmers and the poor.

Slamming the opposition, Chouhan said, "but they will not allow it to run. When we

accepted their one demand, they put another one and then came up with another one. It pains me to say these people are making a mockery of democracy," he said.

"Samvidhan ko kalankit karne ka paap kar rahe hai (They are committing the sin of disgracing the Constitution)," Chouhan further said.

The Monsoon Session of Parliament saw relentless protests by the opposition over the police action against students protesting against irregularities in exams and the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple.

14 ITBP officials awarded Police Medals on 80th Independence Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A total of 14 officials of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) have been announced to be conferred with Police Medals on the occasion of the 80th Independence Day, 2026.

Of the 14 officials, three will receive the President's Medal for Distinguished Service, while 11 will be conferred the Medal for Meritorious Service.

President's Medal for Distinguished Service

The three ITBP officials selected for the President's Medal for Distinguished Service are:

1. Mandhir Ekka, Inspector General (GD)
 2. Nishith Chandra, Deputy Inspector General (GD)
 3. Mohan Singh, Inspector (GD)
- Medal for Meritorious Service
- The 11 officials selected for the Medal for Meritorious Service are:
1. Rahul Yadav, Commandant (GD)
 2. Chhering Tashi Bodh, Commandant (GD)
 3. Arvind Chandra, Second-in-Command (GD)
 4. Jagdish Chand Masiwal, Deputy Commandant (Office)
 5. Rajendra Singh, Subedar Major (GD)



6. Bishan Dass, Inspector (Telecom)
7. Mohan Singh Dogra, Inspector (CM)
8. Narendar Singh, Sub Inspector (GD)
9. Nandan Kumar Singh, Sub Inspector (Pioneer)
10. Chain Singh, Assistant Sub Inspector (GD)
11. Til Bahadur Chhetri, Head Constable (KS)

The Director General, ITBP, along with the entire force family, conveyed congratulations and best wishes to all the medal recipients for their distinguished and meritorious service.

Serious doubts on intent, no discussion with parties: Congress attacks Govt on caste census

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Congress on Friday attacked the Government over the caste census issue, saying that not carrying a list of castes with responses recorded as shared by respondents raises "serious doubts on intent" and there had been no discussion with political parties.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said it had been widely expected that the caste question will be asked with a pre-prepared state-wise list as had been done in the Bihar and Telangana caste surveys with the response being just ticked appropriately.

"This has, unfortunately, not happened, raising serious doubts on intent," Ramesh said on X. Ramesh also shared on X Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's letter of May 5, 2025 to Prime



Minister Narendra Modi on the caste census. "His very first and fundamental suggestion has been completely ignored. There has also been no discussion with political parties as demanded by Kharge ji," Ramesh said.

Kharge had written to Prime Minister Modi in May last year on the Government's caste census decision, urging him to draw upon the Telangana model as well as have a dialogue with all political parties soon on this issue.

Kharge had made three suggestions with the first one being about the design of the census questionnaire. Caste information has to be collected not for counting purposes but for achieving larger socio-economic objectives, Kharge had pointed out.

"The recently-concluded Telangana caste survey was designed and implemented with such goals in mind. The Union Home Ministry must draw upon the Telangana model—both the methodology adopted for finalising the

questionnaire as well the final set of questions asked," the Congress president had said. The Centre on Friday notified 40 questions with caste, place of Covid vaccination being two of them to be asked of respondents during the population enumeration phase of the Census, set to begin from September 1 in snow-bound areas, a Government order said.

The order from Registrar General of India Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan notifies questions such as whether the person belongs to a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe and their caste.

The population enumeration in Ladakh and snow-bound non-synchronous areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, will take place from September 1 to 30, according to a gazette notification issued earlier this month.



cell, serious illness, accident and suicide.

Maharashtra has 500 Government-run and 513 aided ashram schools, which are residential facilities for tribal children, the official said.

"In the past two years, 384 deaths were reported in Government ashram schools and 200 in aided schools," a senior official from the department said. The official said that 170 ashram school students died in 2024-25, while 214 deaths were reported in 2025-26. Of these, 36 died on school premises and 348 at home, he said.

In aided schools, 81 deaths were reported in 2024-25 and 119 in the next financial year. Of these, 30 deaths took place on school premises and 170 at home.

Editor's

TAKE

Milestones and missing pieces

Since the midnight of August 15 1947 made India an independent nation, each anniversary invites an honest audit, not just a celebration

It has been quite a long time, 79 years since India gained independence from the British yoke. Indeed a moment of joy and cause to celebrate. We have come a long way from the shadow of the Raj. The single most consequential number is 248 million - roughly the number of people who were uplifted from poverty between 2013-14 and 2022-23 alone, as the national poverty rate fell from 29 per cent to 11 per cent.

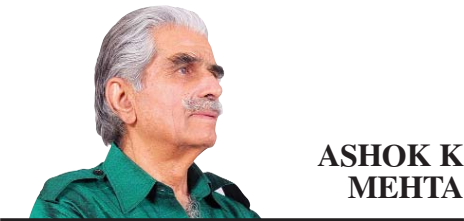
India remains the world's fastest-growing major economy, expanding above 6.5 per cent even as a rebased GDP series and a weaker rupee pushed its dollar ranking from an anticipated fourth place to sixth - a reminder that headline rank matters less than what growth does for a household budget. Elsewhere the gains are more unambiguous: Chandrayaan-3's 2023 lunar landing, a Unified Payments Interface that now moves close to half of the world's real-time digital payments, a February 2026 trade deal that cut US tariffs on Indian exports from 50 per cent to 18 per cent after a bruising year of friction over Russian oil purchases, and last year's Operation Sindoor, fought substantially with indigenous defence systems – a genuine inflection point for "Atmanirbhar Bharat".

Set against this is unfinished business. Annual unemployment sits at a low 3.2 per cent, but this year's data show urban youth joblessness climbing past 15-18 per cent, worse for young women, alongside a labour-force participation rate drifting down when it should be rising to capture the demographic dividend. The UNDP ranks India 130th of 193 countries on human development - better than before, but still 'medium,' with inequality alone erasing nearly a third of its score.

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, reserving a third of legislative seats for women, passed unanimously in 2023 and remains unimplemented. India breaches seven of nine planetary boundaries, by one recent assessment, with extreme weather recorded on 99 per cent of days in 2025; and it has fallen to 157th of 180 nations in press freedom – its worst showing yet, a genuine embarrassment for a democracy of this scale. None of this diminishes what India has built; it argues for finishing the job with equal seriousness. Growth needs to become job-rich, not just fast, through skilling matched to real demand and the formalisation of an economy still mostly informal. The demographic dividend has a shelf life, and this decade - not the next - will decide whether India converts a young population into a productively employed one. Institutions – a free press, an independent judiciary, functioning federalism – deserve the same attention as ports and highways. Climate adaptation must be built into spending now, before the next flood erases a decade of poverty gains. Viksit Bharat by 2047 is a plausible destination, not a guaranteed one – it depends on implementing laws already passed, not just announcing new ones. Eighty years ago, freedom was won in a single extraordinary year. Development has to be won again every year after.

Time to break the Agniveer deadlock

For nearly six years, the historic Gorkha connection between India and Nepal has remained caught in an unusual silence. As the Army Chief visits Nepal, a growing movement among former servicemen and political leaders is seeking to break the recruitment deadlock and reopen the door to Agniveer, in a bid to preserve the centuries-old Gorkha warrior tradition



ASHOK K MEHTA

Just as Indian Army Chief, Gen Dhiraj Seth makes his first foreign trip; to Nepal on 16 Aug, a flicker of hope is seen of Nepal Domiciled Gorkhas (NDG) being allowed to be recruited in the Indian Gorkha Brigade after a gap of nearly six years (including two COVID years) following Nepal suspending recruitment in the Agnipath scheme introduced in June 2022, Kathmandu claiming it was infringement of the 1947 Tripartite Treaty for recruitment of NDG into Indian and British Armies. Since then, only Indian Domiciled Gorkhas (IDG) and hill troops from Garhwal and Kumaon have filled up the 60 per cent annual quota of approximately 1400 soldiers from Nepal.

Neither India nor Nepal has sought to break the strategic silence over recruitment, Kathmandu viewing introduction of Agniveer as political and diplomatic breach. Further, Nepal considers the four years service and 25 per cent retention terms of engagement as a security risk - release into the marketplace of combat-trained youth as new supply chain for insurgency-wracked Nepal following 10 years of Maoist civil war. Other dangers and disadvantages were also painted about Agniveer, seen as a bolt from the blue.

On 29 July, in an astonishing turn of events the Indian Ex Servicemen Development Committee of Lamjung led by activist Sub Khem Jung Gurung launched a massive movement demanding permission for joining Agniveer due to the abysmal jobs state in the country where 2000 youth leave Kathmandu every day. A former politician, Gurung said: 'young lads travel abroad to take up menial jobs when their centuries old skill as Gorkha warriors is being unutilized in Agniveer'.

The movement has picked up traction all over Nepal, especially in the nursery of soldiering, Pokhara. Petitions have been forwarded to Prime Minister Balen Shah and Home Minister Sudan Gurung. On 6 August, Rashtriya Swatantra Party MP from Syangja- another warrior recruitment treasure house- Dr Dhananjay Regmi, son of a 5/9 Gorkha Rifles Indian ex-serviceman raised the Agniveer issue for the first time in the new Parliament backing Gurung's advocacy of Agniveer. These two events could catalyse the unarticulated urge to accept Agniveer - a sea change from the erstwhile womb-to-tomb engagement of service- because, Gurung said, "something is better than nothing".

The bulk of Gen Seth's 16 to 20 August programme is in Kathmandu where he will be anointed honorary General of Nepal Army, a lifetime honour tracing its tradition to the legendary Field



NEPAL
CONSIDERS THE
FOUR YEARS
SERVICE AND 25
PER CENT
RETENTION TERMS
OF ENGAGEMENT
AS A SECURITY
RISK - RELEASE
INTO THE
MARKETPLACE OF
COMBAT-TRAINED
YOUTH AS NEW
SUPPLY CHAIN
FOR INSURGENCY-
WRACKED NEPAL
FOLLOWING 10
YEARS OF MAOIST
CIVIL WAR

The writer, a retired Major General, served as Commander, IPKF (South), Sri Lanka, and was a founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, now the Integrated Defence Staff

Marshal Sam Bahadur Manekshaw in 1972, who also introduced several welfare reforms including young Indian Gorkha officers getting to know their soldiers by trekking in remote areas of Nepal. Seth will meet PM Balen Shah who is his own Defence Minister before visiting Pokhara the Bhu Pu (ex-servicemen) citadel for a grand rally. Weather permitting, he will go to Mukthinath temple where a former Army Chief, Gen Bipin Rawat, had presented bells for the temple. As no press meet is held for a visiting Chief, there is little chance of the Agniveer issue cropping up, though it could be raised during the rally in Pokhara. Seth's reply will take cue from what follows.

Recently, former CDS Gen Anil Chauhan of 11 Gorkha Regiment said that when Agniveer was implemented, NDG were considered as Indian citizens and it was not feasible to make an exception for them, alluding to their enlistment on separate terms of engagement, adding that the decision to allow Nepali citizens to enlist now rests with Kathmandu. Chauhan could have made a special case out of it by attaching strategic significance to the bonding and reminding Prime Minister Narendra Modi of what he had said in Nepal's Parliament in 2014: "India has fought no war where Nepali blood has not been shed". But the good Chauhan let it pass; a fait accompli. Like the voices now being heard from Nepal about maintaining the warrior legacy and centuries-old tradition of Gorkhas, no similar sentiment has been publicly expressed in India by hundreds of General-rank retired Gorkha officers including a former Army Chief. That tells another story.

Meanwhile, last week, Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal told BBC Nepali service that 'Nepal was ready to discuss the Tripartite Treaty if it needed to be reviewed and if a formal proposal was received from India'. Khanal has pushed the ball in Delhi's court when he knows

neither side has tried to break the impasse for the last five years. Delhi's contention is that Tripartite Treaty has not been violated. Its two key features are Recruitment and Terms of Engagement bound by 'equal treatment'. These provisions of treaty are in tact. But as India claims special and unique relations with Nepal Delhi should have followed diplomatic nicety - at least informed Kathmandu about the bolt from the blue. The truth is: India's unilateral action is seen as unfair and Big Brother-ly. In previous Nepali governments the Communists commanded majority in parliament and have sought to curtail Nepali citizens joining foreign armies. In the new Parliament they are in extreme minority. There is an economic angle too. Nepal earns nearly Rs 5000 crore annually from soldiering in Indian Army and pensioners enormous benefits in India and Nepal. If Nepal keeps the door to recruitment shut, the Nepal Gorkha connection will burn out in 20 years; only pensioners will be around for another 30 years.

In February 2025, Nepal's Supreme Court in a case over pensions of British Gurkhas pre 2009 had suggested that Nepal should negotiate new bilateral treaties with Britain and India as Tripartite Treaty does not meet present conditions. Agniveer does not provide a level playing field for Nepal like substantial reservations for demobilized Agniveers in India in para-police, para-military and several other institutions. A smaller economy like Nepal cannot comfortably absorb the retired Agniveers. Party Chairman Rabi Lamichhane, Prime Minister Shah, Home Minister Gurung and other legislators have been made aware of the groundswell movement for joining Agniveer among the Nepali youth. Some immediate incentives from India for encouraging Nepal to greenlight Agniveer will receive a key strategic asset, make COAS Gen Seth's visit historic and testify special and unique relations.

PIC TALK



Students take part in a 'Tiranga Yatra' ahead of Independence Day, in Jammu
PHOTO: PTI

Why science alone cannot keep us healthy



RAJYOGI
BRAHMA
KUMAR
NIKUNJ JI

2ND OPINION

Recently many Indian metro cities witnessed a worst outbreak of dengue, chikungunya and malaria with death toll rising to hundred's even as the number of cases of the vector-borne disease had crossed a thousand numbers in most of these cities. These figures have once again posed a serious question for our society: why is it so that despite the advancement in science and technology, there is an upsurge in diseases everywhere? Who is to be blamed for this?

There are various factors responsible for it. Firstly, let us have a look at the physical environment which has degraded over the decades. Today the quality of natural elements like air, water, soil - and everything around us has been deteriorating, which can be attributed largely to unchecked man made activities that exploit nature



for development. Similarly, the quality of raw materials, the five elements that constitute our bodies, is also becoming poorer. Our bones, spine, teeth, delicate organs like eyes, heart, kidney, liver and others are impacted right at the time of their formation.

Synthetic fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides that sustain the crop production seep into our food, as a result of which our resistance power against diseases has lowered and we contract various infections than before for physical reasons alone. Secondly, we need to examine the psyche of the 21st century modern man who faces high levels of worry, fear, anxiety at work as well as at home due to lack of values like tolerance, respect, patience and value-based co-existence.

Today, negativity of all kinds has increased and ethical and moral values have taken a nosedive. As a

result, the moral stamina of the society has been affected. Lastly, the third reason which is the root cause, for the present scenario is the huge accumulated stock of past negative karma that is the biggest link between disease, environment & lifestyle.

We live in an impure world because of the devastation we have inflicted on our external nature, which in turn has deteriorated under the influence of the vicious internal nature of human beings. We receive pain and suffering from people and situations in return for having created negative energy in the form of negative thoughts, words or actions in the past.

This process is a continuous vicious circle and despite the knowledge of the right and the wrong, humans are unable to change the course of their present action. This is where meditation comes to our rescue, as it helps us to connect to the Supreme Source and helps us to burn our past sins. It helps us to use HIS unlimited powers to absolve the burden of past negative actions so that we may regain and sustain our physical, mental, social and spiritual health.

In other words, regaining health and peace is a process possible only through spiritual elevation of human beings. So, let us get rid of our sick mentality to move into the age of enlightenment where our thoughts will be constantly loving, pure and harmonious.

The writer is a spiritual teacher and a columnist

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

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VANDE MATARAM AND A NEW NATIONAL SPIRIT

The inclusion of Vande Mataram in the 80th Independence Day celebrations at the Red Fort marks an important moment of cultural renewal. Commemorating 150 years of the National Song alongside the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 creates a meaningful bridge between India's historic struggle for freedom and its aspirations for the future.

The emphasis on youth participation, with thousands of NCC cadets and MyGov competition winners becoming part of the celebrations, is particularly welcome.

It places India's national identity in the hands of its young citizens and recognises the country's growing Yuva Shakti.

Equally significant is the decision to move away from

VIP-centric nomenclature and use the names of Indian lakes. Such symbolism can make national celebrations more inclusive and rooted in India's diverse geography and heritage.

The spirit of decentralisation should be carried forward. Future celebrations could encourage regional innovation, local participation and community-led initiatives across the country.

Vande Mataram is not just a song it is the spirit of freedom that every Indian must have in his heart. What was true 150 years is true now.

Blending heritage with youthful ambition can give India's national celebrations a renewed meaning and help turn the idea of Viksit Bharat into a shared national endeavour.

VIJAYKUMAR H K | RAICHUR

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

RANGANATHAN SIVAKUMAR | CHENNAI

Violence has no place in a place of worship

The reported attack on Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal at a gurdwara in Nanded is shocking and deeply condemnable. A place of worship is meant to provide peace, prayer and reflection; there can be no justification for violence within such a sacred space.

The fact that Mr Badal was attacked while performing darshan makes the incident particularly disturbing. It is reassuring that security personnel acted swiftly and prevented the assault from becoming more serious. His receiving timely medical attention and undergoing surgery is also a matter of relief. Such incidents go beyond an attack on an individual.

They threaten the atmosphere of peace, communal harmony and mutual respect that society must preserve. Political disagreements and grievances, however serious, must be addressed through democratic and constitutional means, never through violence. The authorities must conduct a thorough and impartial investigation, establish the motive and examine whether there were security lapses. Political and religious leaders should meanwhile appeal for restraint and harmony. I hope Sukhbir Singh Badal makes a speedy and complete recovery.

SANJAY CHOPRA | MOHALI

Humanity beneath the rubble

A devastating 7.4-magnitude earthquake struck western Colombia on Monday, turning the quiet rhythm of life in Cali, Pereira and communities across Chocó into scenes of destruction and despair. Homes collapsed, walls fractured and, within seconds, years of memories and dreams were buried beneath concrete and rubble. The disaster is a stark reminder of how fragile life can be. One moment brings tranquility; the next, cries for help and grief fill the streets. Yet amid the devastation, the enduring strength of humanity is visible.

Neighbours are digging with their bare hands in search of loved ones. Strangers are comforting one another amid the dust and ruins. Communities are refusing to surrender to despair. Statistics will record the number of casualties and authorities will assess the material damage, but no figure can capture the anguish of families searching for children, parents, brothers and sisters. Colombia must not be seen merely through the lens of destruction. It is a nation showing courage, solidarity and hope amid unimaginable suffering. Its people are not alone. Our prayers, compassion and support must cross borders to help Colombia rise from the rubble.

Public property must serve the public

The Karnataka government's proposed Bill to regulate the use of government premises and public property by organisations, including unregistered bodies, has opened another chapter in the state's continuing confrontation with the RSS. Under the proposed Karnataka Regulation of Use of Government Premises and Public Property Bill, 2026, organisations would need permission from the concerned authority before holding events on government premises or public property.

The move could affect RSS shakhas conducted in government schools, colleges, public grounds and other government-owned spaces. The proposal follows Home Minister Priyank Karge's earlier demand that RSS activities in government institutions and public spaces be restricted. Karge had questioned the organisation's activities and sought greater transparency regarding its legal status, office-bearers, finances, expenditure and tax compliance. The dispute has since widened from the question of shakhas to a larger debate over the use of public property by organisations that are not formally registered.

Public spaces belong to citizens and must be governed by clear, neutral and transparent rules. At the same time, such rules must be applied impartially and not become instruments of political vendetta.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Eight decades of transformation: From scarcity to self-confidence

The India of 1947 could scarcely have imagined the India of 2026. The India of 2026 must now show the same courage and imagination in building the India of 2047. As we salute the Tricolour, let us renew our commitment to a strong, prosperous, inclusive, self-reliant and just India and to the Constitution that has made this possible



VIJENDER GUPTA

As India celebrates its 80th Independence Day, we are not merely marking another anniversary of freedom. We are reflecting upon a remarkable national journey, one that began in 1947 amid hope, sacrifice and enormous uncertainty, and has brought us to an India that is increasingly confident, capable and determined to shape its

own destiny. The India that became independent on 15 August 1947 was very different from the India we see today. We inherited poverty, widespread illiteracy, inadequate infrastructure, food insecurity, weak industrial capacity and the deep wounds of Partition. Yet, our founding generation possessed something more powerful than material resources: a profound faith in the Indian people and an unwavering commitment to democracy.

India's journey since then has not always been easy or linear. For decades, India continued to grapple with shortages, inadequate infrastructure, limited economic opportunities and the immense difficulty of delivering development to a population of continental scale. Yet, when we look at India today, we see a country that has progressively overcome many of the limitations that once appeared insurmountable. This transformation has acquired unprecedented scale and momentum over the last twelve years.

India today is among the world's leading economies and has emerged as a major centre of technology, digital innovation, manufacturing, entrepreneurship and human talent. Infrastructure is being created at a scale once difficult to imagine. Highways, railways, airports, digital networks and public infrastructure are connecting people and regions faster than ever before.

Technology has transformed the relationship between citizens and the State. Public services can increasingly reach beneficiaries directly and transparently. A new generation of Indians is growing up with aspirations very different from those of previous decades. Our youth are not merely seeking opportunities; they are becoming entrepreneurs, innovators, scientists, professionals and creators of opportunities themselves.

The journey from scarcity to aspiration, and from aspiration to self-confidence, is perhaps one of the defining stories of modern India. But India's greatest achievement cannot be measured only through economic statistics, infrastructure or technology. Equally remarkable has been the endurance of constitutional democracy in a country of extraordinary social, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity. When the Constitution came into force on 26 January 1950, India became a Republic founded on the ideals of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. The Constitution gave institutional expression to the values for which generations of Indians had struggled. It established a democratic system in which sovereignty ultimately rests with the people, governments derive legitimacy through elections and State power remains subject to constitutional limitations. India's constitutional journey has not been without turbulence. The Emergency of 1975-77 was perhaps its gravest test, when democratic freedoms and constitutional rights came under severe strain. It remains a reminder that constitutional democracy can never be taken for granted. Yet, India's response demonstrated the remarkable resilience of its democratic system. That experience demonstrated an enduring truth: our democracy is resilient because the Constitution gives citizens not only rights, but also the institutional means to defend them.

Parliament and State Legislatures are the principal forums through which the aspirations, concerns and expectations of citizens are translated into laws and public policy. They are also institutions through which governments are questioned, public expenditure is scrutinised, competing viewpoints are debated and the executive is held accountable. Over the decades, our Constitution and laws have continued to evolve in response to changing social and national requirements.

An important milestone came through the 86th Constitutional Amendment of 2002 under the government of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, which inserted Article 21A into the Constitution and recognised free and compulsory education for children



INDIA'S CONSTITUTIONAL JOURNEY HAS NOT BEEN WITHOUT TURBULENCE. THE EMERGENCY OF 1975-77 WAS PERHAPS ITS GRAVEST TEST, WHEN DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS AND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS CAME UNDER SEVERE STRAIN. IT REMAINS A REMINDER THAT CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY CAN NEVER BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED. YET, INDIA'S RESPONSE DEMONSTRATED THE REMARKABLE RESILIENCE OF ITS DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM. THAT EXPERIENCE DEMONSTRATED AN ENDURING TRUTH: OUR DEMOCRACY IS RESILIENT BECAUSE THE CONSTITUTION GIVES CITIZENS NOT ONLY RIGHTS, BUT ALSO THE INSTITUTIONAL MEANS TO DEFEND THEM

Vijender Gupta is Speaker of Delhi Legislative Assembly

between six and fourteen years of age as a Fundamental Right. In more recent years, legislative reforms have increasingly sought not only to regulate society but also to make governance simpler, more transparent and more responsive to citizens. The introduction of the Goods and Services Tax through the constitutional framework created a unified indirect taxation system and strengthened the idea of India as a common economic market. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code created a time-bound framework for dealing with insolvency and represented a significant change in India's economic and financial architecture. One of the most interesting shifts in the philosophy of governance can be seen in the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023. For decades, many relatively minor administrative and procedural defaults carried criminal consequences. The Jan Vishwas legislation decriminalised a large number of such minor offences across several Central laws, replacing imprisonment in many cases with monetary penalties.

It represents a change in the relationship between the citizen and the State, from a system based excessively on suspicion and criminalisation towards one based increasingly on trust. India has also undertaken a major transformation of its criminal justice framework through the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam. These laws seek to move India's criminal justice system away from structures inherited from the colonial period and towards a framework suited to the needs of a modern Republic. Another historic development came with the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, which provides for reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.

These developments underline an important truth: A successful democracy must constantly respond to new aspirations, technologies, economic realities and social expectations while remaining anchored firmly in its constitutional values. As Speaker of the Delhi Legislative Assembly, I believe a legislature must never be viewed merely as a place where Bills are passed. It is where the people's voice must be heard, where the government must answer questions and where public grievances must find expression.

It is where differing political viewpoints must encounter one another through debate rather than confrontation outside the democratic process. Our parliamentary traditions teach us that disagreement is not a weakness of democracy. Democracy does not require unanimity; it requires respect for institutions, rules, constitutional boundaries and the legitimacy of differing opinions.

This is why the responsibility of protecting the Constitution cannot rest with institutions alone. It belongs equally to every citizen. The Constitution acquires strength not merely from the words written in it, but from the faith that citizens place in it and from the willingness of governments, legislatures, courts, political parties and citizens to respect its true spirit.

India's experience over eighty years tells us that institutions may be tested, political circumstances may change and the democratic journey may occasionally become difficult. But when citizens retain faith in constitutional processes, democracy possesses an extraordinary ability to correct itself and move forward. Many challenges that constrained India for decades are today being overcome. There is a growing confidence that India need not merely adjust itself to a world shaped by others; it can help shape that world. This confidence must become the foundation of our journey towards Viksit Bharat @ 2047. The next phase of development must combine economic growth with social responsibility, technological progress with human values, opportunity with inclusion and national ambition with constitutional morality.

Our young generation will be the principal architect of this future. Along with opportunity, we must give them faith in the Constitution, respect for democratic institutions, pride in India's civilisation and confidence in its future.

Independence Day: Why the sword Is still overhead



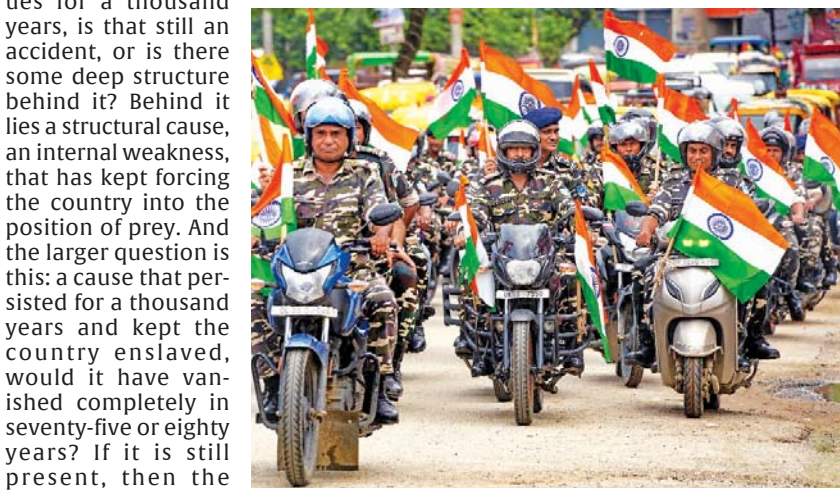
ACHARYA PRASHANT

is born anyone's slave. An animal in the forest is free, a bird in the sky is free. You catch the bird and put it in a cage; only then is it subjugated. A nation is no different, and its natural condition too is freedom.

So what India celebrates on Independence Day begins to look a little strange. Freedom is the given; the more honest and more useful question is this: if everything is born free, where did bondage enter later? Was India always enslaved? No. Then where did the slavery come from? This is why I would want Independence Day observed as a day of self-examination. Eat the sweets of freedom today, by all means, but first ask how the bondage arrived, and whether it has truly left, or whether it still hangs over the country like a sword.

This slavery is not a matter of ten or twenty or fifty years: nearly a thousand years, sometimes a part of the land, sometimes the whole of it, under someone else's dominion. Whoever could come, came. From Europe the Portuguese came, the French came, the Dutch came, the British came; the only ones who did not come were those who could not, for reasons of geography.

From nearby came the Afghans, the Iranians, the Turks, the Arabs. Something that happens once, or twice, you may call an accident. Something that continues for a thousand years, is that still an accident, or is there some deep structure behind it? Behind it lies a structural cause, an internal weakness, that has kept forcing the country into the position of prey. And the larger question is this: a cause that persisted for a thousand years and kept the country enslaved, would it have vanished completely in seventy-five or eighty years? If it is still present, then the danger is still equal to what it was; the sword is still overhead.



So what is that cause? Political it cannot be; no political cause lasts this long. Coincidence it cannot be; that much is settled. The cause is cultural, something that has, by misfortune, dissolved into the air of India and settled there as culture, something held sacred and clung to. I call it lokdharma, the folk-religion.

Lokdharma is no external power; it is one's own ego, hardened into rite, tradition, custom and fantasy. It is the structure that merely looks like dharma, resting on Smriti texts severed from Shruti, on the Puranas and on ritual, while the real dharma, the Shruti-dharma of the Upanishads, of Advaita, of truth and freedom, stays far away. Where the very root of a religion lies in fantasy and fear, what price will fact carry there, or the question, or free thought? India is not a religious country; it is a folk-religious country. It accepted fear, superstition, division and self-interest in the name of dharma, and so it felt no hesitation in accepting its own defeat. This is the dishonesty within, the one that turns its face from fact and is afraid of the question.

In the age when the powers of Europe were working out their exact position at sea, what was India doing? While they were racing ahead in astronomy, India was tangled in the auspicious hour, and is tangled there still. The world moves ahead in science; this country moves ahead in casting horoscopes. This is the very astrology that pushed India back; had India attended to astronomy, its defensive strength at sea and on land would have been something else.

There was a news item these days: at a temple in Madhya Pradesh, the religious observance of Independence Day was held on the eleventh of August, because by the temple's panchang the true tithi of independence fell on that day. The train may arrive at seven in the evening; you will still reach the station at ten at night, because your reckoning says the moment is now.

A country that gives no value to fact will give none to knowledge; and for a country that gives no value to knowledge, there is no surprise in its subjugation. Today's Gen-Z is buried in astrology apps too. Lokdharma is still dominant; its grip has not loosened, it has only come forward in new shapes.

So on this Independence Day my request is only this: celebrate, but even amid the celebration, let the gaze turn inward for once. The sword that has hung over the country for a thousand years has not lifted yet. The danger is equal, the danger remains, and the cause of that danger is internal.

The greatest enemy sits within, not in the house next door but in the very heart, in the very lokdharma. It will not come from outside; it lies in that inner dishonesty which turns from fact, is afraid of the question, walks by fantasy instead of Shruti and invests in ritual in the place of knowledge. And so, even as this Independence Day is celebrated, remember that vigilance has no single day.

The festival is today; the watchfulness must be from today too, and every day after. This is not a matter of any declared result, of any medal of victory; it points a direction, and nothing more. Be careful, wake up.

The direction is inward, and no one has promised a destination. Freedom asks to be lived as a responsibility rather than enjoyed as a festival; otherwise the sword stays where it is, and the next slavery, different from the old, will be no less deadly.

Acharya Prashant is a philosopher and author whose work centres on self-inquiry and its application to contemporary life



MP AJITH KUMAR

Of the many ancient knowledge systems humanity developed, India's Religion proved outstanding. She developed a coherent system, harmonizing values of inclusivity, and

concordance into a balanced worldview. "India is an epitome of the world", commented the philosopher historian Arnold Joseph Toynbee who hailed her as the 'living civilization' that would unite and enlighten the future humanity.

India's was a turbulent history with invaders pounding her recurrently, leaving her geographically and psychically torn. Bled white in terrorist violence, her glory often seemed almost irretrievably lost with enemies disturbing her national life. Denunciation of the motherland, derogatory writings against her and declining it for pay-offs were common. Problems confronting our nation are legion. Yet, she sojourns to her destination, determined and untouched by the turbulent surroundings.

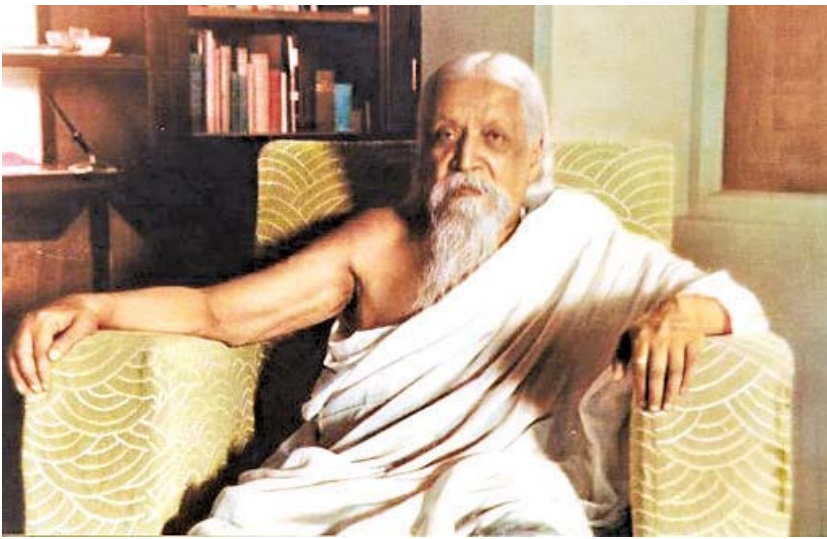
India's all-inclusiveness, its readiness to imbibe and harmonize the noble aspects steeled her spirit. Greece was an aesthetic culture that glorified everything beautiful notwithstanding whatever defect what it deemed beautiful had. They would ignore

everything but Beauty. Hence the aesthetic nature of the Greek culture, opined Sri Aurobindo. Ancient Romans ran in contrast. They discarded Beauty for the ethical aspects. Aesthetics gave way to ethics and disciplines of life.

A strong and muzzled body was preferred to the beautiful. Romans never thought of a beauty attainable through discipline like the Greeks who never cared the discipline leading to a higher beauty. Beauty and discipline thus had run parallel, never to meet in a creative unity. But India harmonized the both, making discipline a means to realize the beauty.

Ethical life helped her realize the ultimate beauty, Saundarya which is a "joy forever". India's culture was both ethics and aesthetics perfectly mixed. It was satyam-sivam-sundaram - Truth-Bliss-Beauty, synonyms of the divine.

Though many in modern times interpreted Sanatana Dharma, Sri Aurobindo's emendation looms most important. dharayateti dharma - that which sustains is dharma. To sustain what is not specified, and hence the meaning 'sustain all and everything' including the very cosmic order. Rhythm or in Sanskrit the rita is the law of cosmic



order. What is not rita runs in contrast to the natural order. Everything moves in symmetry as if directed by an unseen power. This symmetry and harmony found in cosmic dynamism puzzled even scientists like Einstein as to whether God plays dice.

Even the very aim of diversity, it appears, is to lead things to a creative unity requiring coherence at all levels. For this, one must identify oneself with the entirety, see oneself in others and vice-versa which is the quintessence of Sanatana Dharma. This universal mutuality is the

dharma the ideal of national life. To Aurobindo India represented this dharma and believed, nation is parasakti or universal energy in geographical entity and dharma the priestess in its sanctum. Sidetracking this eternal dharma, nothing can thrive, especially the dharmarashtra or the spiritual nation that is India. Hence the content of his Uttarapara speech, 'The Sanatana Dharma, that is nationalism'.

Man making was the mission of this dharma and turning the life divine was its end. To it man was of prime importance and the love of man

was pivotal to Aurobindonian vision which is centered on the worship of man. It aims at discovering and acknowledging the inherent divinity and the intrinsic superiority of man. Summing up India's religion of man Sri Aurobindo wrote: "Man must be sacred to man regardless of all distinction of race, creed, colour, nationality, status, political or social advancement. The body of man is to be respected, made immune from violence of outrage, fortified by science against disease or preventable death. The life of man is to be held sacred also, given scope, protected from violations, from suppression, from mechanization, from belittling influences.

The mind of man is to be released from all bonds, allowed freedom and range and opportunity, given all its means of self-training and self-development and organized in the play, of its powers for the service of humanity. And all this too is not to be held as an abstract or pious sentiment but be given full and practical recognition in the presence of men and nations and mankind".

This intellectual religion of man reflects a nation's aspiration, to quote Aurobindo, "to raise the world to god in deathless light, to bring god to the world on earth we come, to change the earthly life into life divine". This is the 'eternal religion' of India that stands above all fetters, limitations and confinements of creed, group or narrow minded nationalism.

Author is Kerala State President, Bharatiya Itihasa Sankalan Samiti



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Odisha: Man gets life for raping girl last year



A fast-track court in Odisha's Angul district sentenced a 23-year-old man to life imprisonment for raping a girl in May last year, an official said on Friday.

The Ad-hoc Additional District & Sessions Judge-cum-Fast Track Special Court on Thursday pronounced its judgment and imposed a fine of 30,000 on the convict, Satyabrata Mishra alias Kalia.

If he fails to pay the fine, the convict will undergo imprisonment for another year, the Government counsel said. The court directed that upon realisation of the fine amount, the entire sum will be paid to the victim.

It also directed the authorities concerned to pay 7 lakh compensation to the victim under the provisions of the POCSO Act. The court convicted Mishra under the provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the SC & ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the Government counsel said.

The convict lured the seven-year-old girl to a deserted place near their village before he committed the crime.

According to the prosecution, the incident took place on May 19, 2025. The victim's mother lodged a complaint the next day, and the police arrested Mishra on May 22.

Days before the incident, the convict had also sexually assaulted the minor. (PTI)

SC quashes criminal defamation complaint against Rahul Gandhi



The Supreme Court on Friday quashed the criminal defamation complaint and summons issued by a trial court against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his remarks against Hindutva ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, saying the required sanction under the law was not obtained.

The defamation case stems from Gandhi's comments on Savarkar made on November 17, 2022 during his Bharat Jodo Yatra at a rally in Maharashtra's Akola district.

Allowing Gandhi's plea, a bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Sheel Nagu noted that the criminal proceedings lacked sanction required under the law to prosecute the Leader of the Opposition in this case.

Under Section 196 CrPC, sanction of the state Government is mandatory to take cognisance of an offence under Section 153A IPC (promotion of enmity between groups). "Additional Solicitor General and advocate for complainant, in the affidavit filed by UP, submits there is no disclosure of sanction.

In such view of the matter, the complaint and orders passed by magistrate stands quashed," the bench said. The top court had earlier censured Gandhi for "irresponsible" remarks on Savarkar at a rally in Maharashtra but stayed the criminal proceedings against him. (PTI)

SC stays Madras HC order on Karur jobs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

In a relief for the Tamil Nadu Government, the Supreme Court on Friday stayed an order of the Madras High Court which quashed Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay's order providing Government jobs to relatives of people who died in a stampede at Karur last year.

On July 10, Chief Minister Vijay distributed appointment orders to 31 relatives of those who died in the stampede on September 27, 2025 at Karur.

The stampede occurred at a rally addressed by Vijay, leaving 41 people dead and over 60 injured.

A bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and K Vinod Chandran issued notice to the petitioners who challenged the Government order and others.

"Who are you to question the policy of the Government? Suppose the sole member died in the tragedy, shouldn't the Government give some



employment to son or daughter? the bench told the PIL petitioner who had challenged state Government order. The top court's order came on a petition filed by the State and others challenging the high court's judgment.

The Madras High Court on July 27 had quashed Vijay's order providing Government jobs to relatives of people who died in the stampede,



CJI flags misuse of court clips

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Voicing concern over the circulation of clips of court proceedings on social media without adequate context, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant has said that his oral remarks were "misquoted" and misused with "malicious intent" to mislead the youth of the country.

On May 15, 2026, the CJI, while hearing a case in the Supreme Court, had compared certain individuals with fraudulent degrees to "cockroaches" who become social media or RTI activists to attack the system.

The CJI's comment sparked widespread youth backlash, inspiring the satirical online movement "Cockroach Janta Party" (CJP).

In an interview with DD News, the CJI said clips of court proceedings are being circulated nowadays on social media without adequate context.

CJI Kant said whatever happened was truly unfortunate and clarified that he could never imagine such things regarding the people



involved.

"My comment was misquoted and misused. What was not said is presented as though it was said. This is extremely unfortunate. Particularly, it is a major malicious attempt to mislead the youth of the country," the CJI said.

Asking the media to report responsibly on judicial proceedings, the CJI said every citizen has a duty to maintain harmony in society.

"You are on social media, print media or any form of

media or you are simply a citizen. All of us have rights and constitutional duty and responsibilities.

"When we speak of rights, we must also possess the capacity to fulfil our obligations. Therefore, I would urge them to keep their responsibilities in mind; we must all make tireless efforts to ensure that harmony prevails in society," he said.

The over-a-month-long CJP-led protests at the Jantar Mantar against the NEET-UG paper leak led to a clash

between the agitators and police on July 20, which left several individuals from both sides injured. The protests resulted in the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan as the Union education minister.

The CJI also referred to his recent order barring the unauthorised dissemination, reposting, uploading and monetisation of audio and video recordings of judicial proceedings on social media and other digital platforms.

Gujarat HC orders DCP transfer for impartial probe into assault

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ahmedabad

The Gujarat High Court on Friday observed that the deputy commissioner of police (DCP) who allegedly slapped and beat handcuffed accused persons in public in Surat must be immediately transferred to ensure an impartial probe into the incident. A division bench of Chief Justice Sunita Agarwal and Justice DN Ray took up a suo motu PIL over the July 14 incident, after taking cognisance of a written complaint filed by a lawyer.

The case stems from an incident in which a deputy commissioner of police (DCP) and a group of policemen were allegedly seen in video footage parading the handcuffed accused persons publicly and subjecting them to repeated physical assault.

The Government pleader informed the bench that the



issue had come to the attention of the Director General of Police, who ordered an inquiry under the assistant commissioner of police (crime), and statements of all people identified in the videos have been recorded.

Chief Justice Agarwal, in her oral remarks, observed that the preliminary inquiry into the incident cannot be impartial if the police officer in question is in his post.

"Apart from the people present on the spot, there must be some police personnel who were witnesses. They will not speak. He is such a

senior officer, and he did something unacceptable. You continue with your preliminary inquiry, but you will have to transfer him. He should be posted somewhere else," the court noted.

The incident took place in a public place, and everybody saw it, and videos were also circulated, she said.

The matter will be heard next on August 21.

The amicus curiae submitted that the state home department had issued a circular dated May 7 following two High Court orders on similar incidents.

SC slams BCI's move against NALSAR students, says they have right to protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

"It's a dialogue between students and me," Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said on Friday as he sharply pulled up the Bar Council of India for its order that the 2026 graduates of Hyderabad's NALSAR University of Law not be enrolled as advocates following their objections to his proposed campus visit.

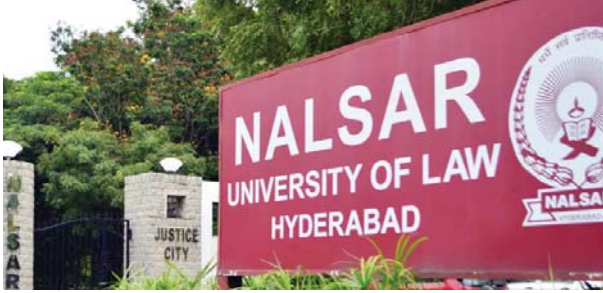
Students have a right to protest, the CJI-led bench said a day after the BCI directed all state bar councils not to enrol any 2026 graduate of the university until further orders. The order was reversed within hours after

an uproar on social media.

"It's a dialogue between students and me. Who are they (BCI) to interfere? This is totally uncalled for," the chief justice said after a plea challenging the BCI's circular was mentioned before it for urgent hearing.

"I myself, in my student days, was actively involved in student activities," he said.

The bench, also including Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, asked NALSAR to tell its students to get enrolled as advocates at the earliest and said, "We will empanel them for legal aid cases." A section of students of the premier law institute had written to the vice chan-



cellor, registrar and professors of the institution, opposing any proposal to invite the CJI as chief guest to the varsity's convocation, the date of which is yet to be announced.

"Assuming even if they (students) are wrong, they have a right to protest. BCI

does not have any business in this," the bench said, terming the BCI's action "absolutely unnecessary".

Observing that students have the right to protest peacefully and nobody can stop them from doing so, the apex court asked the BCI's counsel whether a

SC backs Chandrababu Naidu in Amaravati case

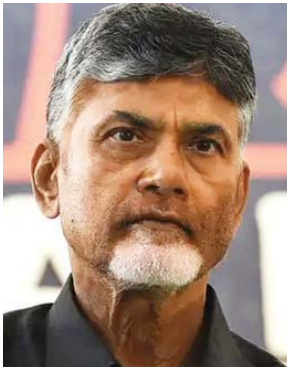
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to interfere with the Andhra Pradesh High Court order quashing a case against Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and minister P Narayana in connection with alleged irregularities in the land pooling scheme in capital Amaravati.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana said it is not inclined to interfere with the high court order and clarified that the outcome of the petition will not have bearing on other cases, which should be adjudicated on its own merits.

Senior advocate Ranjit Kumar, appearing for Alla Rama Krishna Reddy, submitted that there were large-scale irregularities in the case which involved land of around 30,000 acres of over 25,000 farmers.

The bench told Kumar, "On the larger issue of farmers, we are with you. Whatever they are entitled to, we will



protect."

The CJI, however, pointed out that the present criminal proceedings were at the instance of a political rival and no farmer had come forward.

"Political battles should not be fought in court," the CJI told Kumar and disposed of the petition filed by Reddy challenging the July 15 order of the high court at Amaravati.

The FIR was registered under the Prevention of Corruption Act on March 12, 2021, following a complaint by then MLA Alla Rama Krishna Reddy over the land pooling scheme announced as per a 2016 Government order.

Calcutta HC seeks balance between census duties and students' education

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

The Calcutta High Court on Friday said it wants both the Census exercise and education of students to continue smoothly, while hearing petitions by school teachers who claimed difficulties in performing Census duties within the prescribed timings.

A section of teachers challenged a Government notification appointing them as enumerators and supervisors for the Census exercise.

Justice Krishna Rao said the court wanted the Census work to continue without affecting the education of students, but the administration should ensure that those assigned the task are able to perform it despite their personal difficulties. The petitioners contended that they have to travel long distances to their respective schools and, with only Sunday as a weekly



holiday, find it difficult to perform Census duties within the prescribed timings.

"If a teacher is working 10 am to 4 pm everyday, coming from 40 or 60 km away, and gets a holiday only on Sunday, do they need to work on that day for some remuneration for the Census?" the court asked. Justice Rao said if teachers were required to undertake Census work during weekends, he would also seek the Chief Justice's approval to sit on Saturdays

and Sundays, as several petitions, including those related to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), were pending before the court.

The court's observations came after the West Bengal Government's counsel submitted that the notification clearly stated that Census work should be carried out in a manner that does not affect academic activities in schools and should be undertaken after class hours or during weekends.

POCSO case: Delhi HC rejects doubts over homeless minor's testimony in case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court has refused to interfere with the conviction of a man accused of sodomising an 11-year-old homeless boy, asserting that a child surviving on the streets cannot be expected to share details of date, time or clothing with the same accuracy as a witness living in a settled environment.

In a judgement passed on the accused's appeal on August 10, Justice Chandrasekharan Sudha upheld the trial court's August 2025 decision to convict him under Section 377 (unnatural offences) IPC and Section 6 (Punishment for aggravated penetrative sexual assault) of the POCSO Act.

The judge, however, modified the trial court's 20-year jail term to ten years on the grounds that at the time of the offence, the corresponding



sentence was a decade.

Section 6 POCSO Act became punishable with a minimum term of 20 years with effect from August 16, 2019. The minor alleged that in November 2016, the accused sexually assaulted him while he was sleeping under a railway bridge at Kashmir Gate.

The incident was reported on the police helpline by some social workers, who had organised a programme in the area for providing free medical aid to the homeless, after the minor

informed them about it.

The accused's counsel claimed that he had been falsely implicated. He argued that the prosecution failed to prove the boy was under 12 years of age and that there were several inconsistencies in his testimony regarding the incident and the dress he was wearing.

Rejecting the defence, the court said the boy's inability to state his exact age or date of birth or other specific details would not benefit the accused. It said although in his testimony, the survivor

claimed that he was about 15 years of age, given his social background, it was "unrealistic" to expect him to know his exact age.

The school record showed his date of birth as October 12, 2005, making him 11 years old at the time of the incident, the court observed.

The court stated that the accused's identity, the place of incident, the nature of the sexual assault and the sequence of events immediately after the incident remained substantially unchanged throughout all versions testified by the minor boy.

The discrepancies with respect to the exact time, the description and colour of the clothes worn by the boy, the precise order in which the NGO workers and the police reached the spot, etc, do not "detract from the consistent allegation of forcible anal intercourse", it stated.

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LG Electronics India posts strongest quarterly growth

LG Electronics India reported its strongest quarterly performance since listing in Q1 FY27, with revenue rising 15.5% to ₹72.33 billion. EBITDA grew 26.2% to ₹9.04 billion, expanding margins to 12.5%, while profit after tax surged 27.2% to ₹6.53 billion. Growth was broad-based across televisions, refrigerators, air conditioners and washing machines, supported by premiumisation and strong consumer demand.

Home Entertainment led the performance, with revenue rising 22.3% and EBIT margins expanding to 19%. Home Appliances & Air Solutions revenue grew 13.6%. Managing Director Hong Ju Jeon said the results reflected India's shift towards premium, technology-led and energy-efficient products. The company expects further momentum from the festive season, B2B expansion, exports and new capacity at Sri City, while managing geopolitical and commodity pressures through localisation and calibrated pricing.

(PTI)

Industry hails MMDR Bill over greater clarity on levies

Industry leaders on Friday welcomed the passage of the MMDR Amendment Bill, saying it will create a more uniform and investment-friendly regulatory framework for the mineral sector.

The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, would improve ease of doing business, provide greater clarity on state-level taxes, cess and other levies on mineral rights and mineral-bearing lands, and help unlock the country's mineral potential.

Vedanta Ltd Chairman Anil Agarwal welcomed the passage of the bill, saying the changes would improve ease of doing business and help the country unlock its mineral potential.

In a social media post, Agarwal congratulated the Centre on the passage of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 and highlighted its potential to strengthen the mining sector and contribute to India's economic ambitions.

"The changes to the law will greatly improve ease of doing business. This will help raise production, create massive jobs and promote self-sufficiency," the Chairman said.

Sumit Jhunjhunwala, Vice President, Sector Head, Corporate Sector Ratings, ICRA Ltd, said the bill will enhance clarity and predictability around uneven state-level taxes, cess and other levies on mineral rights and mineral-bearing land, including retrospective tax claims and potential contingent liabilities for mining companies.

He further said greater visibility on the overall fiscal burden on the mining sector could support investment decisions and improve the viability of projects, particularly those that are capital-intensive and have long gestation periods.

(PTI)

Exports to FTA partners gain momentum in Q1 FY27

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

India's exports to key free trade agreement (FTA) partner countries witnessed strong growth in the first quarter of 2026-27, with outbound shipments to Singapore and Sri Lanka more than doubling, according to the commerce ministry data.

India has so far signed 17 FTAs with a number of countries and groups, including Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, Mauritius, the UAE, Australia, the European Union, Asean and the EFTA bloc. Out of this, 16 are operational.

The data showed that exports to Singapore surged 101.2 per cent to USD 6.52 billion during April-June 2026, from USD 3.24 billion in the year-ago period, while shipments to Sri Lanka rose 123.8 per

cent to USD 2.35 billion from USD 1.05 billion.

The shipments to the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) region grew 61.6 per cent to USD 14.61 billion in the first quarter of this fiscal, from USD 9.04 billion in April-June 2025-26.

Exports to the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) region rose 36.6 per cent to USD 8.40 billion from USD 6.15 billion.

Among individual countries, Malaysia recorded a

The Pioneer

BHUBANESWAR | SATURDAY | AUGUST 15, 2026

Coal demand to hit 1.6b tonnes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

India's coal demand is likely to touch 1.6 billion tonnes per annum by 2030, a top Government official said on Friday, underlining the need for transparent and market-driven pricing for the commodity.

Speaking at the Global Commodities Conclave here, Union Coal Secretary Vikram Dev Dutt said that the setting up of the 'coal exchange', a Government-established platform designed to work as an independent marketplace will be of help.

He said in each of the last two fiscal years, domestic coal production has crossed 1 billion metric tonnes and the demand is continuing to grow as the commodity is a mainstay of energy needs.

"Coal demand is projected to rise further to an estimated 1.6 billion tonnes by 2030," Dutt said, adding that we are at an "inflection point" where we are shifting from a scarcity scenario to one of surplus.

Such a shift underscores the need for "more efficient, transparent and market driven mechanisms for coal trade", he said, pointing out that till now the state-run Coal India has enjoyed a virtual "monopoly".

"While this model did serve its purpose for the time that it was designed, it

does not fully reflect the competitive, transparent and efficient price discovery that a market of India's scale and India's maturity deserves," he added.

The coal exchanges will provide commercial and captive miners ready and transparent access to a wider market, wherein

buyers and sellers can bid simultaneously enabling efficient, competitive, and market-driven price discovery, he said.

The Government plans to operationalise the coal exchange concept in "the months ahead", he said, without sharing affirm timeline.

FCNR, ECB measures to draw \$90-95 b capital inflows in FY27: Report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

The RBI's concessional swap windows for FCNR (B) deposits, external commercial borrowings and overseas foreign currency borrowings are likely to draw capital inflows of USD 90-95 billion in 2026-27, according to a report.

CareEdge, in its report, has revised its projections for FCNR flows, considering the inflows observed in the last two months. It now expects FCNR (B) inflows to reach around USD 80 billion, while external commercial borrowings (ECBs) and overseas foreign currency borrowings (OFCBs) are projected at USD 10-15 billion.

Taken together, the measures are likely to generate USD 90-95 billion of capital inflows in FY27.

The report said that considering the inflows received so far and expected to come, India's capital account surplus is now likely to increase to approximately USD 108 billion compared to a surplus of just USD 2 billion in the previous year.

As a result, India's balance of payments (BoP) is expected to improve to a surplus of USD 64 billion in FY27 compared to deficits of USD 23.6 billion and USD 5 billion in FY26 and FY25, respectively, the report added.

Between June 5 and July 31, 2026, these measures have

attracted USD 40.8 billion, with FCNR (B) inflows accounting for USD 36.7 billion, and ECBs and OFCBs together accounting for USD 4.1 billion.

Large banks are currently offering deposit rates in the 6.0-6.5 per cent range, while some smaller and newer

banks are offering rates close to 7 per cent for FCNR deposits.

Additionally, the availability of significant leverage for investors, with some foreign banks reportedly offering leverage as high as 19x-29x in some cases, appears to have enhanced the attractiveness of

the scheme and supported stronger-than-expected participation, the report said.

The inflows received through these measures will have a positive impact on banking system liquidity, with CareEdge expecting core liquidity to boost around ₹8.6 lakh crore.

However, this could be partly offset by a seasonal rise in currency demand and the maturity of the RBI's short forward book. The report estimates that currency in circulation (CiC) could rise by around ₹1.1 trillion in December from levels in June amid a seasonal uptick in festive periods.

The report said that assum-

ing maturity of around USD 30 billion in the RBI's forward position (short-forward book maturing in 3 months and within 1 year stands at USD 16 billion and USD 40 billion, respectively), this could create a drag of roughly ₹3 trillion. After accounting for the incremental CRR requirement on deposit growth, CareEdge estimate core liquidity could still reach a surplus of around ₹9 lakh crore.

This is expected to prompt the RBI to use liquidity management tools such as long-tenor variable rate reverse repo (VRRR) or Open Market Operation (OMO) sales to absorb excess liquidity, the report said.

Stock markets end lower amid geopolitical uncertainty

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Friday as elevated oil prices and the prolonged US-Iran impasse weighed on investor sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 70.71 points, or 0.09 per cent, to settle at 78,009.25. During the day, it declined 395.59 points, or 0.50 per cent, to 77,684.37.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dipped 29.85 points, or 0.12 per cent, to end at 24,366.

From the Sensex pack, Asian Paints, InterGlobe Aviation, NTPC, Power Grid, State Bank of India and HCL Tech were among the major laggards.

Bharti Airtel, Adani Ports, ICICI Bank and Titan were among the winners.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.17 per cent to USD 87.15 per barrel. "Indian equity markets ended largely unchanged on

Top Gainers	Top Losers
Asian Paints: +1.68	Asian Paints: -1.68
InterGlobe: +1.39	InterGlobe: -1.39
Adani Ports: +1.82	Adani Ports: -1.82
ICICI Bank: +0.57	ICICI Bank: -0.57
NTPC: +0.36	NTPC: -0.36
Power Grid: +0.36	Power Grid: -0.36
TITAN: +0.36	TITAN: -0.36
SBI: +0.36	SBI: -0.36

Friday, struggling to build on supportive global cues as persistent uncertainty surrounding the US-Iran stand-off and the Strait of Hormuz kept investors cautious heading into the weekend. Despite a softer US inflation reading and record closes on Wall Street, elevated crude oil prices and the absence of any diplomatic breakthrough continued to cap risk appetite," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said. Geopolitical tensions

remained the dominant market driver, he added.

"Indian equity markets ended lower on Friday as renewed geopolitical tensions in the Middle East pushed crude oil prices higher, overshadowing the positive global cues from Wall Street's record close. A notable positive for the domestic market was the Nifty-50's ability to defend the 24,325 support zone for the second consecutive session," Hariselman Radhakrishnan, Founder & CEO of HST Wealth, a Research Analyst firm, said.

The BSE SmallCap Select index declined 0.65 per cent and the MidCap Select index dipped 0.13 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, Housing Finance declined 1.40 per cent, MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt 0.58 per cent, MidSmall Private Banks 0.46 per cent, Oil & Gas 0.45 per cent, Energy 0.44 per cent and Services 0.39 per cent.

Rupee finds lift as dollar weakens

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

The rupee appreciated 3 paise to close at 95.42 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, due to weakness in the greenback against major rivals overseas.

According to forex traders, the rupee stayed under pressure due to foreign fund outflows and rising crude oil prices amid geopolitical uncertainties.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.39 and moved in a tight range of 95.38 to 95.44 against the American currency before ending the session at 95.42 (provisional), up 3 paise from its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee closed 12 paise lower at 95.45 against the US dollar.

Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst — Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said the rupee traded with a weak bias this week, although the overall movement remained largely

Date	Rate (₹ per US\$)	Change
7	95.17	+0.05
8	95.30	-0.13
9	95.36	-0.06
10	95.33	+0.03
11	95.42*	+0.03
12	95.45	-0.12
13	95.42	+0.03
14	95.42	+0.03

range-bound.

"Crude had surged around 25 per cent during July and continues to remain elevated, keeping the import-cost pressure on the rupee. Meanwhile, the dollar index remained below the 100-mark near 99.50, limiting the rupee's downside. Technically, the rupee is expected to remain in the 95.10-95.80 range in the near term, with crude and the dollar remaining key directional triggers," Trivedi said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies,

was trading 0.08 per cent lower at 99.78.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading higher by 0.99 per cent at USD 87.93 per barrel in futures trade.

Analysts said the dollar index retreated after a fall in US Treasury yields, and the data showed inflation in the world's largest economy at lower levels.

Also, they said that oil prices bounced back after days of easing, as hopes of a deal to end the West Asia crisis remained uncertain, with both the US and Iran contradicting each other over ship transit conditions through the Strait of Hormuz.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex fell 70.71 points, or 0.09 per cent, to settle at 78,009.25, and Nifty dropped 29.25 points, or 0.12 per cent, to 24,366.

Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth ₹510.69 crore on a net basis on Thursday, according to exchange data.

WPI inflation eases to 9.78%, first dip in nine months

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Wholesale price inflation softened month-on-month for the first time in nine months to 9.78 per cent in July on easing in fuel and food prices.

Wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation was 9.87 per cent in June.

This is the first time since October 2025 that WPI inflation has fallen month-on-month. The softening in July numbers is mainly on account of lower inflation in fuel and power even as inflation in primary articles and manufactured products accelerated.

"Across groups, mineral oils (containing petroleum products), food articles, manufacture of basic metals, non-food articles, manufacture of food products, and manufacture of chemicals and chemical products have been major drivers of WPI inflation in July 2026," the commerce and industry ministry said while releasing the

monthly Wholesale Price Index (WPI) data on Friday.

Wholesale inflation in fuel and power dropped to 20.05 per cent in July, as against 27.41 per cent in June.

Inflation in food articles too eased marginally to 5.44 per cent in July from 5.49 per cent in June. However, manufactured products saw an uptick in inflation at 8.29 per cent in July, as against 7.48 per cent in June.

As per the data, the output Producer Price Index (PPI) — which the Government has said will eventually replace

the WPI in about 5 years — remained unchanged at 9.6 per cent YoY in July vis-a-vis June. Output PPI saw lower inflation in manufacturing and mining, but higher agriculture and electricity PPI nullified those gains.

In a research note, Barclays said the direction of the WPI has reversed and WPI inflation should soften in coming months as global prices seem to have peaked.

"In our view, WPI inflation has peaked and gradual and modest disinflation from hereon should continue, in

line with relatively lower global commodity prices in general and crude oil price in particular (since June)," Barclays said.

The war in West Asia war which began on February 28 and the resultant blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, through which the majority of crude oil is imported into India, has kept WPI elevated with pressure on global crude and fertiliser costs.

ICRA Principal Economist Rahul Agrawal said the moderation in July WPI was not broad-based and was entire-

ly led by the fuel and power group whereas all the other groups witnessed a hardening in their inflation prints vis-a-vis June 2026.

"Looking ahead, we anticipate a larger easing in the WPI inflation to below 9.5 per cent in August, after peaking at 9.9 per cent each during May-June 2026. Nevertheless, prints are likely to remain elevated through much of the year, with an average WPI inflation forecast of around 8.5 per cent for FY27," Agrawal said.

The WPI data is in contrast to the retail inflation numbers released earlier this week.

The consumer price index based retail inflation rose to 4.45 per cent in July from 4.38 per cent in June, on high food prices.

The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee, earlier this month, kept benchmark policy rates unchanged at 5.25 per cent and has projected retail inflation at 5 per cent for FY27.

BUSINESS

11

FROM THE WORLD

LONDON

2 injured as train derails

A passenger train derailed in southern England, seriously injuring two people and leaving nine others with minor injuries after three carriages overturned, the British Transport Police said.

The Southern Rail train from Victoria station in London to Eastbourne was carrying about 150 people when it went off the tracks outside the tourist town of Lewes on Thursday. Passenger Rob Bradley said the train began rocking as it picked up speed and the carriage he was riding in with his six-year-old daughter jumped upward and the brakes immediately engaged.

All passengers were evacuated within about three hours, the transport police said.

The cause of the derailment is under investigation. (AP)

PAKISTAN

Rubio greets Pak on I-Day

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio greeted the people of Pakistan on their Independence Day and said the two countries, through cooperation on regional mediation and critical minerals, were delivering “real results.”

“On behalf of the United States of America, I extend warm congratulations to the people of Pakistan on their Independence Day,” Rubio said.

“Together, through our cooperation on regional mediation, critical minerals, energy, counterterrorism, cultural heritage, and trade and investment, we are turning potential into progress and delivering real results for Americans and Pakistanis alike,” he said. “On this special occasion, we commemorate the partnership between our nations and the bonds of friendship between our peoples,” Marco Rubio said. (PTI)

India, Bangladesh weigh Tarique’s Delhi visit

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

No date has been announced, but a series of high-level contacts suggests Bangladesh and India are laying the groundwork for a possible Prime Ministerial visit.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman’s possible visit to India is increasingly becoming a focal point of Dhaka-New Delhi diplomacy, with both sides signalling a willingness to deepen engagement even as the timing of the trip remains undecided.

Rather than a confirmed itinerary, the latest developments point to an active diplomatic process. Indian officials have reiterated that an invitation is on the table, while Bangladesh has indicated that a final decision will depend on the Prime Minister’s schedule

and the outcome of ongoing discussions. India has extended two separate invitations to Tarique Rahman: one for a bilateral visit and another to attend the outreach session of the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi on September 12-13.

Indian Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal confirmed that both invitations remain valid, saying India would provide an update if there is progress.

For Tarique Rahman, such a visit would carry significance beyond protocol. It would provide an opportunity for the new Bangladesh government to engage directly with India on a broad range of issues and potentially establish a new framework for bilateral relations.

The possible meeting comes as the two neighbours seek to navigate a number of



complicated issues. Relations have faced tensions over the extradition request for former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, border security, trade and transit, water-sharing, energy cooperation and people-to-people movement.

At the same time, both governments have shown signs of wanting to keep communication channels open. Indian High

Commissioner to Bangladesh Dinesh Trivedi recently held separate meetings with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman and Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed.

During his meeting with Tarique Rahman, Trivedi conveyed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s greetings and expressed New Delhi’s intention to pursue relations

with Bangladesh in a positive and forward-looking manner.

The discussions also covered areas of mutual interest and possible avenues for expanding people-centred cooperation.

Trivedi later met Modi in New Delhi and briefed him on his discussions with the Bangladeshi leadership, indicating that the recent diplomatic exchanges are being closely followed at the highest level in both capitals.

The BRICS invitation has added another possible route for Tarique Rahman to travel to India. Bangladesh currently chairs BIMSTEC, and India has invited Tarique Rahman to participate in the BRICS outreach session in that capacity. New Delhi has described the invitation as part of the established practice of invit-

ing heads of regional organisations to BRICS outreach meetings.

If Tarique Rahman attends, the event could provide an opportunity for an informal or formal interaction with Indian leadership alongside the multilateral programme.

However, Bangladesh has not yet confirmed whether the Prime Minister will participate. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam said recently that there was still time to decide, noting that the Prime Minister’s schedule and ongoing discussions would be important factors.

While the proposed visit remains uncertain, energy cooperation has already emerged as a practical area of engagement between the two countries.

Bangladesh currently

receives diesel from India through a cross-border pipeline and has requested an increase in supply. Indian officials have said the request will be examined in light of India’s domestic requirements, refining capacity and the availability of diesel.

The issue could become an important component of wider economic and energy discussions between the two governments. For Dhaka, securing reliable energy supplies is a major economic concern, while for New Delhi, any expansion of exports must be balanced against domestic demand and supply conditions.

The most politically difficult issue in the relationship remains Bangladesh’s request for the extradition of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from India.

Two UAE tankers attacked while transiting Strait of Hormuz

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dubai

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is blaming Iran for firing drones at two tankers operated by a state-owned oil company as they sailed through the Strait of Hormuz, saying Friday that the attacks were acts of piracy. The attacks caused no casualties but underlined the dangers faced by vessels seeking to move cargo through the critical waterway that leads from the Persian Gulf to the open oceans as Iran keeps a firm grip on the passage.

Here’s a look at the latest developments in the Iran war and the wider Middle

East. Full coverage can be found here.

Two tankers owned by Abu Dhabi’s state-owned oil and gas company ADNOC were attacked Thursday evening while transiting the Strait of Hormuz, the company said. It added that the attack caused no injuries and that “the situation has been brought under control.”

The British military’s United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Centre said two vessels were reported to have suffered minor damage when attacked by drones while transiting the Strait of Hormuz. It did not identify them as the ADNOC ships,



but it appeared to be the same incident.

The UAE’s Foreign Ministry blamed the attacks on Iran and said they were a “fla-

grant violation” of the United Nations’ principles of freedom of navigation.

“Targeting commercial shipping and using the Strait

of Hormuz as a tool of economic coercion or blackmail represents acts of piracy by Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps, and constitutes a direct threat to the stability of the region, its peoples, and global energy security,” the Foreign Ministry said.

There was no immediate response from Iran.

President Donald Trump’s son-in-law and negotiator Jared Kushner will travel to the Middle East next week to try to advance plans for an end to the conflict in Gaza after a deal recently announced by the Trump administration ran into Israeli opposition.

Trump orders Navy to return to older carrier jet-launch system

KONSTANTIN TOROPIN ■ Washington

President Donald Trump is ordering the US Navy to remove the advanced system used to launch fighter jets from its newest type of aircraft carrier and return to using older steam catapults that he has long said he prefers, according to a directive issued.

The new mandate would likely cost billions of dollars and revert the Navy’s most advanced ships to a system that takes more sailors to operate and is more difficult



to maintain. The memo directs the Pentagon and the Navy to present Trump with plans to remove the Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System, also known as EMALS, within two

months. It also says the Ford-class carrier’s electromagnetic weapons elevators should be replaced.

The move comes after years of Trump railing against the new, magnetical-

ly powered catapult system that shoots fighter jets off the deck of the carriers. It also comes at a time when the US military is trying to find funding from Congress for all its desired equipment and as the Navy is struggling to fill its ships with enough sailors.

Trump’s ire with the new technology goes back to at least 2017 in his first term, when he claimed the new system is “not good” and “doesn’t have the power” of the older, steam systems in an interview with Time magazine.

“You’re going to god-damned steam,” Trump said

at the time. The topic has frequently come up since then at rallies and other events.

While Trump is looking to roll back the latest technology, the newest Chinese aircraft carriers employ electromagnetic catapults and France said it plans to use the system on its new carrier.

Trump’s memo directs the fourth Ford-class carrier, the USS Doris Miller, to be the first ship to include the new changes. That will leave the USS Gerald R Ford, as well as the forthcoming USS John F. Kennedy and USS Enterprise, untouched. (AP)

Heavy rain causes flooding near Tokyo; kills five, disrupts train, air travel



MARI YAMAGUCHI ■ Tokyo

Record-breaking rainfall that pounded cities east of Tokyo overnight flooded roads and dozens of homes, stranded thousands of people, caused power outages and left at least five people dead and one missing.

The Japan Meteorological Agency downgraded its most severe warning for heavy rain in more than a dozen municipalities in Chiba prefecture as rain subsided Friday morning but forecast more rain later in the day.

Photos and television footage showed widespread damage after daylight, with homes, cars and parts of railway tracks flooded with muddy water.

The Ground Self-Defense Force said it dispatched buses to pick up about 4,000 stranded people who stayed overnight at the Soga train station, a local route that also serves Tokyo Disney, an operation finished later Friday. The theme park did not report any damage.

Thousands of people who were stuck overnight at the Narita airport serving the Tokyo region gradually left

as train service partially resumed Friday morning with delays. Flights in and out of Narita were operating normally Friday, with many people returning home at the end of Japan’s Bon Buddhist holiday week.

Hundreds of people took shelter overnight at the Chiba prefectural government building.

The prefecture said five people were found dead and another person was missing. The victims included a man found floating on a flooded road in Ichikawa city and a woman who had been stuck in a flooded car in Sakura city. Two people were presumed dead after being pulled from flooded cars in Kashiwa city and in Chiba.

More than 170 homes were flooded in the prefecture and more than 300 people were taking shelter at public facilities as of Friday afternoon, Chiba officials said.

The torrential rain and flooding also knocked out power to about 18,000 homes Friday morning, down from 68,000 earlier, according to the TEPCO Power Grid. (AP)

Cook Islands PM Mark Brown expected to return to power following election

CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-MCLAY ■ Wellington

Cook Islands Prime Minister Mark Brown is expected to lead the South Pacific nation’s Government for a second term after his party won more seats than any other group in this week’s election.



Cook Islands Prime Minister Mark Brown

Voting continued for one of 24 Parliamentary seats in the country of 17,000 people, which is made up of 15 islands. Bad weather prevented electoral officers from reaching the island of Nassau earlier in the week and results there were expected late Friday New Zealand time.

However, Brown’s Cook Islands Party, a nationalist group that has governed

since 2010, was already celebrating victory after winning 12 seats which promised a fifth term in power. A 13-seat majority is required to form a government, but Brown’s party has joined with independent lawmakers to pass laws before.

“Today my heart is full of gratitude,” Brown wrote on

Facebook. “Thank you to everyone who came out and voted, for taking part and making your voice heard. This is what makes our country strong.”

In the seat yet to be decided, the incumbent, a member of Brown’s party, is competing with an independent candidate. (AP)

N Korea slams US-South Korea military drills, threatens to exercise self-defence

HYUNG-JIN KIM ■ Seoul

North Korea on Friday threatened to exercise its right to self-defence in a statement that slammed the upcoming US-South Korean military drills as a war rehearsal that would be more provocative than last year.

The US and South Korean militaries are to start their annual large-scale drills Monday and have described the scope of this year’s training as similar to past years.

The allies have said the Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises are meant to strengthen their readiness against North Korean threats and reiterated that they are defensive in nature.

The North Korean warning signals the country could conduct more weapons tests in coming days after its neighbors detected two ballistic missile launches off North Korea’s east coast in the past week.

North Korea hasn’t commented on the launches, but outside experts assess they were likely meant to protest the US-South Korean drills or upgrade weapons systems.

In a statement carried by state media Friday, North Korea’s Foreign Ministry called



North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Un

the US-South Korean training “a rehearsal for an aggressive war” that is triggering a different level of instability in the region.

“It is our consistent principle of ensuring security to respond to a new level of a threat with a new level of a deterrent,” the statement said. North Korea “will more clearly express its stance on the enemies to cope with any threats and challenges through the responsible and decisive exercise of the right to legitimate self-defence.” (AP)

Democrats set to finalise 2028 presidential primary calendar

MIKE CATALINI ■ Austin

Democrats are gathering to finalise their 2028 presidential primary calendar this week, setting the stage for a wide-open contest to succeed President Donald Trump and chart a path ahead as the party’s voters oscillate between progressive and more moderate candidates.

The Democratic National Committee is expected to vote at its summer meeting in Austin, Texas, on the new order that frontloads states with more diverse populations.

The meeting comes ahead of bitterly contested midterm elections that will decide control of Congress later this

year. Democratic voters have delivered mixed messages on the direction they want to see the party go -- backing candidates viewed as more left-wing as well as moderates in consequential primaries across several states.

The group also is convening at a time of internal turmoil, with some members calling for DNC Chairman Ken Martin to be replaced. Critics have questioned Martin’s leadership decisions and the party’s fundraising, which lags well behind that of Republicans just months before the crucial midterms.

Martin had his defenders, though, on Thursday. William Owen, a committee member from Tennessee, pointed to the victories in special elec-



Democratic National Committee chair Ken Martin

tions that Democrats have won under Martin.

“I think all of us are working as hard as we can to elect Democrats across the country,” Owen said

during a resolutions committee hearing. He added later: “I’m tired of people criticising Ken Martin and criticising the DNC.”

Martin himself addressed

the spotlight he’s been under during remarks on Thursday.

“There’s all these stories about Democrats in disarray’ and Ken Martin this,” Ken Martin that,” he said, adding an expletive. “You know, who’s not focused on that? Me. You shouldn’t be either. I want you to focus on power and support.”

New calendar would cement South Carolina as first primary

The party is expected to give final approval to a calendar that has South Carolina’s primary first on January 22, followed by Nevada on Feb. 1. New Hampshire, New Mexico, Michigan and Virginia would round out the early states, voting throughout February.

The overhaul shows Democrats’ effort to give greater influence to states reflecting the party’s coalition, particularly Black and Latino voters. It follows years of a calendar led by Iowa and New Hampshire, two states with overwhelmingly white electorates.

The proposed calendar would cement South Carolina at the start of the calendar, reflecting a change former President Joe Biden pushed for after that state revived his struggling 2020 campaign.

South Carolina has long been the first Southern contest and has served as a key test of candidates’ support among Black voters. (AP)

The Met Office, the official weather agency, said 38.1 degrees Celsius was recorded in west London on Thursday, marking the hottest day of the year. While temperatures cooled slightly on Friday, many parts of the country have seen little to no rain for weeks. This July has been the driest in England and Wales since records began in 1836. (AP)

PROSPECT



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman receives a dividend cheque of ₹259 crore for FY 2025-26 from Swarup Kumar Saha, MD and CEO of Punjab & Sind Bank, on Friday.



A team led by the Director, Directorate of Sainik Welfare, Assam, undertook an outreach initiative to extend support and assistance to people affected by the devastating floods across Upper Assam



Tiranga Yatra headed by ACEO (PR) and General Manager (Water Supply and Electrical & Mechanical) with their team in Sector 65



The Bhartiya Vyapar Mahotasav 2026 at Bharat Mandapam is showcasing the strength, innovation and diversity of India's business community, with more than 700 startups, manufacturers, exporters, women entrepreneurs, traders and companies participating. Among the attractions are the Siddharth Fashion stall, led by Siddharth Doshi, which has drawn strong interest for its retail and B2C offerings. The festival, jointly organised by CAIT and IPTO from August 12-15, aims to connect Indian businesses with new markets and create greater domestic and international opportunities for Indian products.



BIPIN KUMAR TIWARI

On 14th August 1947, India was partitioned into three parts. The main actors of this tragic partition were the British, the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress. On the request of Liaquat Ali Khan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah returned from London in 1934 and assumed leadership of the Muslim League. Under Jinnah's leadership, the Muslim League passed the Pakistan Resolution at its Lahore session on March 23, 1940. While addressing this session, Jinnah gave the 'Two-Nation Theory'. He said, "By any definition, Muslims are a nation. It is nothing short of a nightmare to imagine that Hindus and Muslims could coexist as citizens of the same nation. In reality, they represent two distinct civilisations. Muslims will not accept any constitution of India that results in a Hindu-majority government."

The foundation for the country's partition was laid much earlier, with the Partition of Bengal on October 16, 1905, and the establishment of the Muslim League on December 30, 1906. With the partition of Bengal, Muslim elites began to believe that, based on demographics, they could establish dominance and rule over certain regions of the country. The

The tragic Partition of India

League became the proponent of it. The Congress responded to the Muslim League's separatist policies with a policy of Muslim appeasement; the Lucknow Pact and the Khilafat Movement are some examples of this approach.

Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, the founder of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and an active member of the Congress began to perceive that the rhetoric of "Hindu-Muslim Bhai Bhai" is, in fact, a policy of Muslim appeasement and an attempt to make Hindu society forget its true history. The consequences of the idea would prove disastrous for the nation.

Although the increasingly toxic atmosphere in the country since 1940 had instilled a fear of impending calamity within Hindu society, people still placed their trust in the triumvirate of Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, believing they would not allow the country to be partitioned. To force the Congress and British government to accept the demand of separate Pakistan, the Muslim League under the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah gave a call to the Muslims to observe August 16, 1946, as Direct Action Day: 'The Muslims of India would not rest contented with anything less than the immediate establishment of an independent and sovereign state of Pakistan... Now the time has come for the Muslim Nation



to resort to the direct action.'

As 16th August 1946 approached, meetings, processions and calls for jihad against Hindu were held in all big cities. On 16th August 1946, the massacre of Hindus was carried out in Kolkata under the leadership of Bengal premier Hussain Suhrawardy. Later, Hindus were massacred in Noakhali and other parts of the country.

On 22nd March 1947, Lord Mountbatten arrived in India, and the fate of India was sealed. 3rd June 1947, in the House of Commons, British Prime Minister Attlee announced the partition of India. In his book 'The Tragic Story of Partition', HV Sheshadri writes, 'Between the date of announcement of partition 3rd June and 15th August, hardly 72 days were left for carrying out the stupendous task of division of the vast country... The idea was to jostle a settlement through

either Congress or the Muslim League had too much time to think about it, and before any really effective opposition to the partition of the country had time to develop.' The basis for the demarcation of boundaries was 1941 census figure. Congress had issued a call to the people to boycott the Census of 1931 as it entailed communal enumeration. Same repeated in 1941. This resulted in tilting the balance in favour of Muslim in several districts.

According to Prof A N Bali, it was a mistake on the part of the Congress leadership to accept a one-man boundary commission and Sir Cyril Redcliffe as its chairman, who was legally incompetent and also politically biased. The partition of India became the biggest tragedy of humanity. Overnight, crores of innocent people became homeless. The fate of Sikhs and Hindus in the whole of West Pakistan was left

entirely to the mercy of murderous Pakistani jihad monger. Not a single Congress leader felt it was their duty to hasten to their rescue in that hour of grave peril.

During this period, the Sarsangchalak of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Madhav Sadashivrao Golwalkar: Shri Guruji, was in Sindh and Punjab. He urged all the Swayamsevak to defend the Hindus and Sikhs by sacrificing their own life. He asked the Swayamsevak not to leave undivided India until every Hindu and Sikh reached India safely.

In the book Now It Can Be Told, Prof A N Bali writes, 'Who else came to the rescue of the people of this state but a band of young selfless Hindus, popularly known as the RSS? They organised the work of evacuation of the Hindus and the Sikhs, women and children from the dangerous pocket to the comparatively safe centre.

They ensured and arranged for their clothing and health care. Arranging transport from Pakistan to India was a task. The young man were the first to come to the The horror of the partition of India should not be forgotten. We have to remember this so that it can never be repeated. The solution to this partition is Akhand Bharat.

The author is journalist and political analyst, president of Centre for Policy Research and Studies (CPRS) and editor of Nitipost

ITC celebrates 150 years of Vande Mataram with *Desh Ek Raag 3*

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

On the occasion of India's 80th Independence Day, ITC Limited celebrated 150 years of Vande Mataram, India's National Song, with a soulful tribute, rendered through a music video, 'Desh Ek Raag 3', created by the ITC Sangeet Research Academy (ITC SRA).

The composition has been anchored in Raag 'Desh' and was brought alive by the gurus, scholars and tutors of ITC SRA alongside other musicians. The production reflects ITC's deep homage to a song that has remained one of India's most enduring symbols of national awakening, pride and unity.

In the run-up to Independence Day, ITC Chairman Sanjiv Puri shared the heartfelt creation through a post on LinkedIn. Puri is also the Chairman of the Board of



Trustees of ITC SRA.

In his LinkedIn post, Puri mentioned, "On the eve of India's 80th Independence Day, it gives me immense pleasure to present Desh Ek Raag 3, commemorating 150 years of Vande Mataram, our National Song, whose timeless message of devotion, unity and love for our motherland continues to inspire generations. Specially conceived and performed for this momentous occasion by the Gurus, Musician Tutors and Shishyas of the ITC Sangeet Research Academy,

Desh Ek Raag 3 is ITC's heart-felt tribute to our great nation and its rich cultural heritage. This exclusive rendition of Vande Mataram beautifully brings to life the vocal and instrumental traditions of our nation that ITC SRA has nurtured and preserved for nearly five decades."

The third edition of the Desh Ek Raag series also marks ITC SRA's journey towards its Golden Jubilee in 2027. At the heart of the presentation is the Academy's timeless Guru-Shishya Parampara, with gurus and scholars coming together to present Vande Mataram through the spirit of Hindustani classical music.

Their collective performance reflects a living tradition in which musical knowledge, discipline and artistic sensibility are passed across generations of gurus and scholars.

National vendor meet held in Kolkata to accelerate PM-Surya Ghar Scheme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

A National Vendor Meet under the PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGY) was jointly conducted by West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (WBSEDCL) and REC Ltd on August 13 at Hotel Taj Bengal, New Alipore, Kolkata, with an aim to strengthen the implementation of the scheme and accelerate rooftop solar installations across West Bengal.

The meeting was chaired by Santanu Basu, IAS, Principal Secretary, Power Department, Government of West Bengal. Officials from REC Ltd, CESC, the Government of West Bengal, State and National Vendors, and Training Partners also participated in the meeting.

Addressing the gathering, the Principal Secretary,



Power Department, Government of West Bengal, emphasised that the implementation of PMSG: MBY in the State would be further strengthened through the active participation and coordinated efforts of both State and National Vendors.

He affirmed the collective commitment of the Government of West Bengal, REC Limited, WBSEDCL, Vendors, DISCOMs, financial institutions and other stakeholders towards accelerating rooftop solar adoption

and strengthening the implementation of PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana in West Bengal.

REC Ltd (PMSG: MBY team) headed by S Jayanthi, ED, presented the perspective of the scheme as Nodal Agency for implementation of PMSG:MBY. She urged National Vendors to deploy adequate manpower and requested Brand Owners to expand their channel partner network across West Bengal to facilitate faster installation of rooftop solar systems.

NCC Cadets of 1 Assam battalion mark Har Ghar Tiranga across Kamrup district

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

On the eve of the 80th Independence Day Celebrations, the NCC outfits of 1 Assam Battalion NCC, Guwahati Group, organised and participated in a series of patriotic events across Kamrup District under the national campaign 'Har Ghar Tiranga'.

At KC Das Commerce College, a total of 40 NCC cadets participated in a Tiranga Rally and distributed national flags among citizens as a symbol of unity. The event was followed by an inspiring lecture by Brigadier Ranjit Borthakur, SM (Retd), on



the theme 'The Horrors of Partition'.

Cadets of Guwahati Commerce College also joined the celebrations with 20 NCC cadets taking out a Har Ghar Tiranga flag rally around the college campus.

At Gauhati College, NCC cadets along with cadets from 60 Assam Girls Bn NCC participated in a Tiranga Rally. The programme con-

cluded with a drawing and poster-making competition aimed at promoting national integration and patriotism.

In Jawaharlal Nehru College, Boko, 60 NCC cadets participated in a Har Ghar Tiranga Rally followed by the mass singing of 'Vande Mataram' and a Drawing & Poster Making competition.

The events witnessed enthusiastic participation from cadets and faculty members. The celebrations reflected the spirit of 'Unity and Discipline' and reaffirmed the commitment of NCC cadets to the nation on the occasion of the 80th Independence Day.

Former IAF chief RKS Bhadauria joins LOHUM as strategic advisor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

LOHUM, a diversified producer of sustainable critical minerals and advanced materials, has appointed Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria (Retd), former Chief of the Air Staff of the Indian Air Force, as Strategic Advisor to support its Defence Materials Sovereignty Programme.

The initiative, being undertaken in partnership with VishvaSutra, aims to establish a structured ecosystem for recovering critical minerals and advanced materials from decommissioned defence assets and advancing indigenous technologies for their refining and reuse.

The programme will focus on three key areas: creating secure and transparent path-



ways for recovering strategic materials from retired defence platforms; developing indigenous technologies for refining materials such as gallium, titanium and rare earth elements; and contributing to a national framework for strengthening critical-mineral security in the defence sector.

India's dependence on imports for several critical minerals has made domestic recovery and refining increas-

ingly important. Decommissioned aircraft, vehicles, radar and communication systems, batteries, cables and specialised equipment contain valuable materials including titanium, aluminium, copper, nickel, cobalt, rare earth elements, specialised steels and high-performance alloys. Recovering and reintroducing these materials into domestic supply chains can help reduce import dependence and strengthen industrial resilience.

LOHUM brings expertise in advanced refining and recycling of critical minerals and materials, while VishvaSutra contributes strategic capabilities across defence, aerospace, technology, policy and institution-building.

UCO Bank opens new branch in Noida Sector 135



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Noida

The Noida Sector-135 branch of UCO Bank was virtually inaugurated on Friday by Rajendra Kumar Saboo, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer (In-charge) and Executive Director of the Bank. Customers and members of the general public were also invited to attend the inauguration ceremony.

On the occasion, Gautam Patra, Chief General Manager, and Rajesh Kumar Tiwari, General Manager & Zonal Head, from the Zonal Office, New Delhi, along with officers and employees of the Zonal Office and nearby branches, participated in the programme. During the programme, customers were apprised of the latest banking products, schemes and customer-centric services being offered by UCO Bank.

The officials encouraged customers to avail themselves of the Bank's various schemes and benefit from modern banking facilities for a better and more convenient banking experience. On the occasion of the branch's inauguration, the Bank officials expressed their commitment to providing better banking services in line with the needs of customers in the area and further strengthening UCO Bank's presence and outreach in the region.

DAILY SUDOKU

		9						3
5	2					1	9	
			5			7		2
2				1	4	3		
	1		5				4	
	7	6	3					5
3		8			6			
	9	1					3	7
6					4			

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9×9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3×3 box, using elimination and logical deduction—no maths involved.

SOLUTION (14.8.26)

7	2	3	5	8	1	4	6	9
5	9	6	4	2	7	8	3	1
4	8	1	9	3	6	5	2	7
3	7	2	1	9	4	6	8	5
1	5	4	8	6	2	9	7	3
9	6	8	7	5	3	2	1	4
2	3	9	6	1	5	7	4	8
6	4	5	3	7	8	1	9	2
8	1	7	2	4	9	3	5	6

DOUBLE CROSSWORD

SATURDAY | AUGUST 15, 2026

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		9					
10						11	
				12			
13	14					15	16
17					18		
				19			
20	21					22	23
24					25		
				26			
27						28	
				29			
30							31

SOLUTION (14.8.26)

ACROSS	23. Left alone	DOWN	1. Consider	words	22. Hi-at-us
9. Over-nigh-t	25. Appointed	2. Retaining fee	3. Ign-O-rant	24. On the level	
10. A-V-Alanche	26. Shed	4. Strike	5. Passable	28. Bass-inet	
12. Stay	27. Stable	6. Making it up	7. Sadi-Sis	29. It-allians	
13. P-on-ies	29. Intoned	8. Well-heeled	30. Dressers		
14. Initial	32. Off-end-ers	11. CH-ll			
15. Den-l-grate	34. Clad-stone	16. G-alley-ay	31. O-N-an-d-on		
17. B-a-g-at-elle	35. Flource	19. Shi-amle	33. Fr-own		
18. Ring-let	36. Italic	37. Coes			
19. Sheat-H	37. Coes	38. Cant-one-se			
20. O-p-Ai	39. Con-tender	21. Put into	34. (B)C-lance		

BRIEFLY

Chennai Open WTA event to be held from November 2-8



Chennai Open International Tennis Championships, a WTA 250 event, will be held from November 2-8, Tamil Nadu Tennis Association (TNTA) announced on Friday. It is being held for the third time here. "A WTA 250 event is returning to India for the third time and the players expected to participate in the event would be amongst the top 100 in the world," Indian tennis legend and TNTA President Vijay Amritraj said. "The conduct of such an international women's event will fulfil a longstanding need of promoting women's Tennis and will encourage more girls in the state to play the sport which will immensely help them." He said the staging of the tournament will benefit the Indian and local players. "There is no doubt as to the impact of staging major international sports events. Our own Chennai Open, the earlier ATP event and the current WTA event, are an outstanding example. "Not only the best in the world came to Chennai and everyone knows the exploits of our own players who used the home opportunity to the maximum to move onto the top world stage." (PTI)

South Korea soccer players push for K League season shift



South Korea's Pro Footballers Association is calling on the K League to overhaul the domestic soccer season to avoid playing during the height of summer, as local temperatures reached record highs in August. "The K League must transition to the Fall-Spring schedule to protect players from the worsening climate crisis and punishing summer heat," the KPFA said in a statement this week, "and to maintain the league's leadership within Asia and its global competitiveness." On August 2, the southeastern city of Yangsan recorded a temperature of 42.5 degrees Celsius, the highest in decades of official records, prompting authorities to warn residents to stay indoors. The Korean baseball league was suspended for a week because of the extreme heat. The high temperatures also had an impact on the size of the crowd for Manchester City's friendly exhibition against a K League All Star team last week, although the Premier League club's pre-season exhibition win over Atletico Madrid attracted a full crowd on Sunday. (AP)

Churchill set for ISL entry after acquiring Jamshedpur FC's stake

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi/Jamshedpur

Churchill Brothers are set to feature in the upcoming Indian Super League (ISL) season starting September 4 after Tata Steel on Friday sold its entire stake in Jamshedpur Football Club (FC) to the Goan side. The Goan club is expected to pay the full ₹1.1 crore participation fee to the All India Football Federation (AIFF) by Friday's deadline set for all participating ISL 2026-27 clubs. Jamshedpur FC had pulled out of the ISL and disbanded the first team on July 31, hours after the deadline for paying the first installment of participation fee amounting to ₹55 lakh. The AIFF had said

that all the 13 other ISL clubs have paid their participation fees. On Friday, Tata Steel transferred Jamshedpur FC's Indian Super League sporting licence. The transfer of ownership for a nominal amount of ₹100 includes the transfer of Jamshedpur FC's 12 players and two coaches to the Goan club. Churchill will take over the contracts of all Jamshedpur FC players and coaching staff with effect from September 1. The transfer of ownership is expected to be completed by August 31. "Tata Steel has agreed to transfer its equity shares in 'Jamshedpur Football & Sporting Private Limited' (JFSL) to Churchill Brothers Football Club for a token consideration," Tata Steel said in a release.

Pulling out of FIFA ASEAN Cup is a bad decision: Bhutia slams AIFF

TAPAN MOHANTA ■ Kolkata

Indian football icon Bhaichung Bhutia on Friday questioned the AIFF's decision to pull out of the inaugural FIFA ASEAN Cup to prioritise a high-profile friendly against Brazil, saying the reported ₹50-70 crore expenditure on the marquee fixture was difficult to justify at a time when the country's club football is grappling with a financial crisis.

India will face the record five-time world champions in a friendly slated in Kolkata on October 3, with the All India Football Federation choosing the invitational fixture over participation in the FIFA ASEAN Cup following a scheduling clash. Bhutia said he had no objection to Brazil coming to India for a "free friendly", but argued that spending crores on the match at a time when clubs are struggling to survive was simply the "wrong priority".

"If Brazil were coming free of cost to play a free friendly match, I have no problem with that. But to pay Brazil ₹50-70 crore to come and play a friendly in India at this



moment, the timing is not right. The timing is completely wrong," Bhutia said.

He also took aim at AIFF president Kalyan Chaubey, accusing the federation leadership of "completely misguiding" the government and those around Indian football.

"Why do you want to pay ₹50-70 crore at this moment when ISL clubs are shutting down, club after club, and I-League clubs are struggling to pay their entry fees?" he asked. Bhutia's criticism comes against the back-

drop of a turbulent period for Indian club football. The previous AIFF-FSDL commercial arrangement around the ISL ran into prolonged uncertainty after the Master Rights Agreement approached expiry, forcing the 2025-26 season to be delayed before it eventually began in a truncated format following the Sports Ministry's intervention. The crisis also saw Tata Steel exit Jamshedpur FC, as the club was transferred to Churchill Brothers for a symbolic ₹100 on Friday.

Against this backdrop, Bhutia said decision to sacrifice FIFA-recognised competition for a single friendly was difficult to justify. India had initially accepted FIFA's invitation to participate in new tournament and were subsequently drawn in Division 1 Group A alongside Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. (PTI)



Sinquefield Cup: Praggnanandhaa bounces back; crushes Van Foreest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ St Louis (USA)

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa bounced back from his previous loss to crush Dutchman Jorden Van Foreest in the fourth round for a share of the second spot at the Sinquefield Cup here. The victory helped

Praggnanandhaa reach 2.5 points from four games in the 10-player-nine-round event.

Having lost the previous round against Vincent Keymer of Germany, this comeback is surely going to boost his chances for the podium to qualify for the finale of the Grand Chess tour. Incidentally, this was the lone decisive game of the day as the

remaining four ended in draws leaving Wesley So of United States still in lead on three points after his draw with compatriot Levon Aronian. In the other all-American clash, Fabiano Caruana was held to a draw by Sevan Samuel while Anish Giri drew with world championship contender Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan. In the other

game of the day, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave signed peace with Vincent Keymer of Germany leaving the field wide open in this \$4,75,000 prize money tournament. Praggnanandhaa yet again reclaimed the tag of hero-of-the-day with his simple yet effective tactical display right from the word go. It was a King pawn game that the

Indian decided to keep close and his strike came very early as by move 12 itself, he was on the path to victory. Van Foreest did not have a clue as he lost his queen for a rook and a minor piece. As has been the case study before, when it comes to technique there are very few who can match Praggnanandhaa and he did not disappoint his fans.

Michael Carrick says Manchester United needs more signings

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Manchester

Manchester United manager Michael Carrick has called for more signings in a summer when the club's spending on new players has been below all of its main Premier League rivals.

United has spent around 85 million pounds (\$115 million) combined on three players - midfielders Andrey Santos and Youri Tielemans and goalkeeper Karl Darlow - during the offseason, while also welcoming back Marcus Rashford from his loan spell at Barcelona.

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- सुरक्षित एवं पर्यावरण के अनुकूल
- परिष्कार एवं पोषक तत्वों का समुचित उपयोग
- मजदूरी, मजदूरी एवं मजदूरी
- समय पर उपलब्ध
- उत्पादन में वृद्धि

इफको नैनो डीएपी तल

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- उच्च पोषक तत्व से युक्त
- उत्पादन में वृद्धि
- उत्पत्ति की गुणवत्ता में वृद्धि
- सुरक्षित एवं पर्यावरण के अनुकूल
- परिष्कार एवं पोषक तत्वों का समुचित उपयोग
- मजदूरी, मजदूरी एवं मजदूरी
- समय पर उपलब्ध
- उत्पादन में वृद्धि

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