

Devbhoomi Uttarakhand

Hub of Growth and Investment



Policy Reforms



Financial Incentives



Institutional Support

Under the visionary leadership of PM Narendra Modi and the impeccable governance of CM Pushkar Singh Dhami, policy reforms, financial incentives, and institutional support have made Uttarakhand a robust ecosystem for MSMEs and startups



The investment-related agreements made with the industry groups during the investor conference are now rapidly coming to the ground. This is also creating new employment opportunities in Uttarakhand. We are providing all possible assistance to set up industries. With strong infrastructure and peaceful environment, Uttarakhand has emerged as the choice of investors.

Pushkar Singh Dhami, chief minister



I congratulate the Uttarakhand government on the remarkable progress achieved in the last few years through sustained policy push and focus on key sectors such as tourism and renewable energy. The state has made significant strides in infrastructure, setting new benchmarks for sustainable growth. U'khand's commitment to harnessing its natural resources and promoting tourism will bolster its economy and showcase its potential on the global stage.

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister



The Uttarakhand government has unveiled a comprehensive action plan to bolster the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector, with a focus on positioning the state as a global hub for startups, green industries, and high-quality local products. The new MSME policy emphasises sustainable, inclusive, and employment-generating enterprises, while ensuring ease of doing business for investors.

MSMES AT THE CORE OF STATE ECONOMY

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of Uttarakhand's economy, driving employment, local enterprise and value creation. The government's renewed focus on the sector is encouraging startups that harness local resources, alongside investments in renewable energy, green industries and clean manufacturing. By strengthening infrastructure, easing business processes and promoting local enterprise, these initiatives are attracting fresh investment, expanding manufacturing and creating new employment opportunities. Together, they are enabling MSMEs to contribute more strongly to economic growth, livelihoods and inclusive development across the state.

POLICY PUSH AND ACTION PLAN

To accelerate economic growth, Uttarakhand is strengthening both new and existing enterprises through technology

upgradation, easier access to finance and markets, streamlined procedures and investment incentives. The One District One Product (ODOP) and One District Two Products (ODTP) initiatives, supported by GI-tagging, are helping showcase the state's distinctive products, strengthen local value chains and expand market opportunities. Aligned with national programmes such as Startup India, Stand-Up India, Make in India and MUDRA, these efforts are attracting investment, encouraging entrepreneurship and strengthening the "Make in Uttarakhand" identity in wider markets.

INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

The government is committed to ensuring that growth in the MSME sector is inclusive, providing special support to women entrepreneurs, the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities, and entrepreneurs with disabilities (Divyang). To assist these groups in scaling their businesses and accessing new opportunities, additional financial incentives, subsidies, and dedicated helplines are being introduced.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

District Industry Centres (DICs) are being modernised to provide technical facilities, project preparation, and advisory support to

Financial incentives and subsidies

The new MSME policy provides a range of financial benefits to enterprises:

- Stamp duty reimbursement of upto 100% based on the category
- Capital subsidy of up to 50% on plant and machinery
- Extra capital investment subsidy of upto 5% under 'Priority' categories and upto 10% under 'Most Priority' categories
- An additional 5% subsidy for SC, ST, women, and divyang entrepreneurs
- Interest subsidy reimbursement of up to ₹21 lakh, depending upon the category
- Reimbursement of electricity duty for five years for new enterprises with a sanctioned load of up to 500 KW
- Recognition through ZED certification
- To encourage quality manufacturing, MSMEs are being offered certification under the Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) scheme. Units certified under gold, silver, and bronze categories receive recognition along with a monetary award of upto ₹75,000 per unit

entrepreneurs. A single-window clearance system is being streamlined to ensure faster approvals.

Additionally, an Investment Promotion and Facilitation Centre has been established at the Directorate of Industries to serve as a one-stop solution for investors and businesspersons. Special helpline services for women and differently-abled entrepreneurs are also being introduced.

FOCUS ON SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND MODERN TECHNIQUES

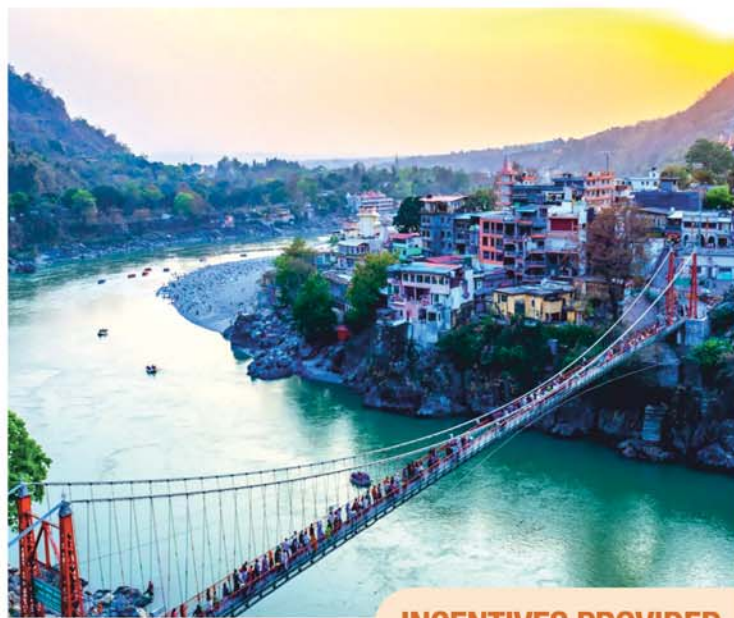
The policy also emphasises the need to equip young entrepreneurs with modern skills. To this end, the state is collaborating with reputed government and non-government organisations to provide training in:

- Manufacturing techniques
- Product design and packaging
- Marketing and branding strategies

MARKETING AND GLOBAL OUTREACH

The Uttarakhand Handloom and Handicraft Development Council is being engaged to promote state products in both national and international markets. Increased use of e-commerce platforms and commercial online portals will ensure that local enterprises gain greater visibility and a global reach. By encouraging innovation while preserving local traditions, the state aims to establish itself as a hub for sustainable and inclusive industries.

STATE'S NEW TOURISM SECTOR POLICY



INCENTIVES PROVIDED UNDER THE POLICY

The policy provides the following incentives to eligible tourism units:

- Capital subsidy for hospitality (accommodation-related projects)
- Capital Subsidy
- Incentives for marketing and promotion
- Incentives for training and skilling
- Interest subvention
- Incentive for waste treatment
- Incentive for generating bookings through State Online Travel Agency
- Capital subsidy for investments in tourism products and services
- Subsidies for projects and units not eligible for capital subsidy
- Incentive for high-value premium hospitality
- Incentives for foreign tourists
- Organisation of MICE, art, social and cultural events, fairs and festivals
- Incentives for promotion of Helicopter transport
- Exemption on electricity duty
- Exemption on stamp duty

The geographical, cultural, and environmental diversity of Uttarakhand has positioned it as one of the most visited states in North India. The number of tourists visiting Uttarakhand has consistently increased from ~22 million in 2014 to ~39 million in 2019 and registered a CAGR of 11.97%. A recent WTO Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) report has pegged India as the 7th largest tourism economy globally in terms of absolute size and further forecasts the sector to grow at 7% between 2017 and 2027. The state of Uttarakhand is expected to match this trend in terms of tourist arrivals.

The state's new Tourism Policy envisages to chalk out a sustainable development strategy for tourism sector in the state. The role of the State Government and its Departments is envisaged to revolve around policy, regulation and promotion of tourism; while provision of services like accommodation, tourist facilitation, transportation, organisation of tours, activities, events, etc. will be the purview of the private sector, with State playing an enabling role.

LEVERAGING PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENTS

The policy underscores the fact that future tourism development in Uttarakhand would also benefit from private sector capital and expertise. In this regard, the government places immense faith in private-public sector relationships to further the cause of tourism development. For this to take effect expeditiously, the State would:

- i) reduce their role in areas where private

sector participation is encouraged (such as development and provision of accommodation), and ii) enhance ease of doing business (investor facilitation) by strengthening single window clearance process for faster approvals of tourism entities.

ELIGIBLE TOURISM UNITS

This policy supports and incentivises both existing and planned tourism projects. For the purpose of eligibility for capital subsidy¹ under this policy, those projects / enterprises which are new as well as those going for expansion / diversification as of the date of application for subsidy shall be considered.

For eligibility for turnover-linked incentives under this policy, those projects / enterprises which are operational as of the date of application for subsidy shall be considered.

The state intends to concentrate its efforts on the following 'Focus Tourism':

- Nature and Adventure Tourism
- Health and Wellness Tourism
- Religious and Cultural Tourism
- Heritage Tourism
- MICE Tourism



AYUSH Policy



AYUSH has remained a core part of Uttarakhand's culture and tradition over the years. The state has multiple natural and cultural endowments which make it an ideal destination for AYUSH.

Some key endowments include the presence of rare medicinal herbs, a well-established AYUSH manufacturing sector, a strong ancient community of practitioners and presence of destinations conducive for AYUSH healing.

KEY ACTIONS AND INCENTIVES

MEDICINAL PLANTS

- Promote Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), quality standards and technology such as drones for better cultivation and monitoring
- Develop cold-storage facilities and aggregation platforms
- Introduce assured buy-back mechanisms and promote medicinal-plant cultivation
- Build a distinctive Uttarakhand/ Himalayan brand for key medicinal



AYUSH hospitals and clinics through financial support and easier empanelment under state health schemes

- Strengthen government AYUSH hospitals and expand teleconsultation and digital healthcare services
- Promote Yoga as a tool for preventive healthcare and encourage private investment in AYUSH healthcare infrastructure

Develop AYUSH Grams to involve local communities

WELLNESS

- Provide additional capital incentives for eligible wellness centres, hotels and resorts in hill regions
- Promote AYUSH parks, yoga and meditation centres and wellness destinations through PPPs and private investment
- Undertake domestic and international campaigns to position Uttarakhand as a leading global wellness destination

EDUCATION & RESEARCH

- Incentivise NAAC accreditation and strengthen the quality of AYUSH education
- Introduce apprenticeships, internships and research programmes through collaborations with leading national and international institution
- Promote research in Yoga, Naturopathy and the integration of traditional and modern medicine
- Strengthen faculty training, professional upskilling and documentation of Uttarakhand's traditional AYUSH knowledge

AYUSH MANUFACTURING

- Provide additional capital subsidies for eligible AYUSH manufacturing units and encourage cluster-based manufacturing
- Promote WHO-GMP, AYUSH premium and AYUSH standard certifications
- Establish common testing laboratories and a dedicated Homeopathic Drug Testing Laboratory
- Position Uttarakhand as a leading AYUSH manufacturing hub

HEALTHCARE

- Encourage NABH accreditation of

Uttarakhand Pumped Storage Project Policy

This policy aims to set forth key objectives and mechanisms for development of Pumped Storage Projects in Uttarakhand. Pumped Storage Projects will be categorised in two main categories:

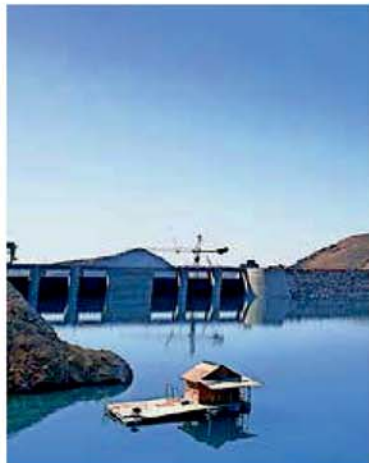
- On-stream projects:** At least one storage located on river stream. The state government designated agency will identify on-stream projects from time to time. The projects may be allocated to CPSUs or State PSUs on nomination basis and to private developers through competitive bidding. The period of allocation and terms and conditions shall be as defined under this policy
- Off-stream sites:** No storage located on river stream: The state government will invite developers to identify suitable sites for off-stream Pumped Storage Projects (PSPs) and submit proposals with details of their viability and storage potential. After evaluation, suitable projects will be

approved and formalised through an MoU/agreement with the developer

SUPPORT AND INCENTIVES

To encourage PSP development in state, the following support and incentives shall be offered:

- Exemption of intra-state transmission charges:** PSP Developers shall be billed not more than 50% of intra-state transmission charges for a period of five years from the project CoD, if project CoD is before end of FY2033-34
- Exemption of Local Area Development Fund:** Local Area Development Fund shall not be applicable to off-stream PSPs for the projects where power is purchased by state government
- Exemption of free royalty power:** The state government shall not collect any free royalty power from Pumped Storage Projects



Policy objectives

Facilitate development of Pumped Storage Projects in the state and support state's growing energy demand in a sustainable manner.

- Harness the PSP potential in the state and encourage development of self-identified off-stream sites
- Leverage PSPs to generate public and private investment
- Encourage integration of renewable energy sources into the grid by promoting PSPs
- Leverage PSP storage to fulfil the drinking and irrigation needs of the regions wherever required and feasible

CM to launch “Sambandha” cooperative drive on Sep 1

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha is set to script a new chapter in its cooperative history as Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi launches the mega membership campaign “Sambandha” on September 1.

The initiative aims to enrol at least one member from every rural household, expanding cooperative services to the grassroots, with a new mobile app introduced to ensure seamless and transparent digital registration.

For the first time in the State’s cooperative history, PACS and LAMPS will disburse dividends to farmer members. In the initial phase, over 3 lakh beneficiaries across 180 PACS and LAMPS will receive dividends worth Rs 14 crore, while the state government will earn Rs 4.22 crore as shareholder returns to be reinvested in cooperative development.

The event will also see the inauguration of 21 milk collection centres, 50 agro-service centres, 46 consumer centres and 200



Common Service Centres (CSCs). Additionally, 200 PACS will be

integrated into the National Level PACS Software (NLPS) to enhance

transparency and efficiency.

Foundation stones will be laid virtually for four model mandis in Cuttack, Khordha and Puri, as well as three warehouses under the Union government’s grain storage scheme. Appointment letters will also be distributed to 30 candidates selected for the Odisha State Warehousing Corporation (OSWC).

These initiatives are aimed at strengthening the cooperative sector and improving farmers’ access to markets, storage and financial benefits across the state.

Veteran tribal leader Dambaru Majhi passes away

PNS ■ Nabarangpur

Veteran Odisha politician, former minister and prominent tribal leader Dambaru Majhi passed away at the District Headquarters Hospital in Nabarangpur on Sunday morning. He was 86.

Majhi, who had been suffering from age-related ailments, was undergoing treatment in the ICU when he breathed his last around 5 am, hospital sources said.

A veteran of Odisha politics, Majhi was elected to the State Legislative Assembly five times, representing Dabugaon in 1967, 1971 and 1985, and Kodinga in 1977 and 1980. He served as minister between 1967 and 1990, handling Tribal Welfare and other portfolios, and worked extensively for tribal welfare and the development of health,



education and infrastructure in remote areas.

Known for his soft-spoken nature and humility, Majhi commanded respect across political lines. News of his death triggered widespread grief in Nabarangpur, with leaders, activists and residents gathering to pay their last respects and remember his contributions to tribal welfare.

Chinese-marked parachute found in Sundargarh



PNS ■ Sundargarh

A mysterious parachute bearing Chinese-language markings was found in the Kinjirkela police station area of Sundargarh district on Saturday, sparking curiosity and concern among local residents.

According to reports, the parachute was spotted after it reportedly fell from the sky. Locals subsequently informed the police, following which a team reached the spot, seized the object and launched an investigation to determine its origin and purpose.

Police are yet to ascertain where the parachute came from, how it landed in the area and who may have used it.

The Chinese writing on the

parachute has added to the mystery surrounding the object. However, there has been no official confirmation regarding the significance of the markings or whether it has any connection with a particular aircraft or aerial activity.

Police are examining the material and markings as part of the investigation. Officials are also expected to determine what is written on the parachute and identify its type and intended use.

Authorities have not disclosed further details so far. The exact circumstances behind the parachute’s appearance in the Kinjirkela area are expected to become clear after the investigation is completed.

In Bhadrak

Man accused of drugging, raping daughter-in-law

PNS ■ Bhadrak

In a highly disturbing case, a woman has accused her father-in-law of repeatedly raping her after allegedly drugging her food and waiting for her to become unconscious in a village under the Bansada police limits in Bhadrak district.

In her complaint, the woman alleged that the accused would secretly mix a sedative substance in her food and sexually assault her after she lost consciousness. She claimed that the alleged abuse was not an isolated incident and that she was raped more than 20 times over a period of time.

Acting on the complaint, police arranged for the woman’s medical examination, registered a case and launched an investigation into the allegations.

The accused father-in-law reportedly fled the house after the complaint was lodged. The woman’s husband and mother-in-law have also allegedly gone absconding.

Police said the case has been registered on the basis of the woman’s allegations and that all aspects of the matter are being investigated. Officials said the exact facts and circumstances will emerge after the investigation is complete.

In Sundargarh

ASI, aide held taking Rs 20K bribe

PNS ■ Sundargarh

Vigilance has arrested an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of Police and his associate for allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 20,000 from an eatery owner in Sundargarh district. The arrested was identified as Madan Mohan Pradhan, ASI posted at Lahunipada Police Station, and Mandeep Kumar Dasmodak, an individual and Pradhan’s associate.

According to Vigilance, the duo was caught on Saturday while demanding and accepting Rs 20,000 from the eatery owner. The money was sought in exchange for not arresting the complainant

and helping him in an excise case registered against him and his younger brother.

Vigilance said Pradhan had threatened the eatery owner that he would be arrested and forwarded to court if he failed to pay the demanded amount.

Following the threat, the eatery owner approached the Vigilance authorities and lodged a complaint. Acting on the complaint, a Vigilance team laid a trap and caught Pradhan and Dasmodak while accepting the bribe.

The entire bribe amount of Rs 20,000 was recovered from their



possession and seized, officials said.

Following the trap, Vigilance teams also launched simultaneous searches at three locations linked to Pradhan to investigate possible disproportionate assets.

Odisha extends paddy registration by 7 days

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The Odisha government has extended the paddy registration period by seven days, providing relief to farmers who were unable to complete the process on time.

Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra announced the decision on Sunday, citing connectivity issues and technical delays in several districts.

The registration drive, which was scheduled to end on Monday, will now continue for an additional week, with officials saying the extension aims to ensure that every eligible farmer is covered under the procurement system.

So far, more than 17 lakh



farmers have registered for the current season, compared to 19.67 lakh last year. The Minister added that discussions have been held with technical teams to resolve network problems in affected areas

and streamline the process.

The move is expected to benefit thousands of cultivators ahead of the upcoming procurement cycle, ensuring smoother participation and timely payments.

SI held for dowry torture in Bhadrak

PNS ■ Bhadrak

A Sub-Inspector posted at Bhadrak Town police station was arrested on dowry-related torture charges after his wife lodged a complaint alleging repeated harassment and assault.

The accused, identified as Gananath Sethi, was taken into custody following the complaint filed by his wife, Monalisa Sethi. According to police sources, she alleged that her husband and in-laws had been demanding additional dowry and subjecting her to physical and mental abuse.

The couple married on June 4, 2025, with dowry reportedly



including cash and household appliances worth over Rs 8.5 lakh. Within three months, further

demands of Rs 2 lakh allegedly led to repeated harassment, forcing Monalisa to return to her parental home in Balugaon, Puri district.

She later approached the Bhadrak SP and lodged a detailed complaint over the alleged continued abuse and threats. On August 29, Sethi reportedly assaulted her again at his police quarters, prompting immediate action by Bhadrak Town Police.

A case under Section 498A of the IPC and the Dowry Prohibition Act has been registered (Case No. 530/26), and the accused officer has been taken into custody.

Third flood fear looms over Baleswar

PNS ■ Baleswar

Even before recovering from the devastation caused by the recent floods, residents along the Subarnarekha river in Baleswar are staring at the possibility of another round of inundation as incessant rainfall and the release of water from Jharkhand push up the river’s level.

The threat of a third flood has emerged less than two weeks after floodwaters from the second spell receded, triggering fresh concern among people in vulnerable and low-lying areas.

Six gates of the Galudih Barrage in Jharkhand have been opened, resulting in a further rise in the Subarnarekha’s water level. Low-lying areas in Jaleswar, Bhograi and Baliapal blocks could face fresh inundation if the situation worsens.

The danger level of the Subarnarekha is 10.36 metres, while its water level was recorded at 8.84 metres at 6 am on Sunday. Several villages, roads



and agricultural fields remained submerged during the previous flood, disrupting normal life and communication in several areas.

Farmers, who are yet to recover from the losses caused by the earlier floods, are now worried that another spell of flooding could further worsen their situation. A further rise in the river’s water level could affect houses, roads and farmland in vulnerable areas.

A Jaleswar resident said the area had witnessed flooding three times last year and feared that a similar situation could arise again.

He said heavy rainfall had already damaged fields and crops, while preparations made by farmers after the second flood had also been washed away. He feared that another flood could completely submerge low-lying areas and destroy whatever remained.

The resident urged the authorities to create awareness among people living in vulnerable areas and take necessary precautionary measures in view of the rising water level.

In Brief

4 held after drugs, liquor seized in K’pada

The Excise Department intensified its drive against narcotics and illicit liquor in Kendrapada district, arresting four persons after seizing brown sugar, ganja and country liquor in separate raids.



According to Superintendent of Excise Bipra Charan Mandal, the raids were conducted on Friday at Kendrapada Sadar, Pattamundai and Mahakalpada by special teams led by Inspectors Priyadarshi Manas Ranjan Mishra and Triveni Mahant.

During the operation, officials seized 65 grams of brown sugar, 1.2 kg of ganja and 55 litres of illicit country and foreign liquor. The arrested drug peddlers and bootleggers have been identified as Dolagobinda Mallick, 31, of Harianka village; Akshaya Raut, 40, of Ramachandrapur; Ghanashyam Behera, 37, of Badasahi; and Jayajit Malik, 22, of Basaghara village.

Officials said 30 litres of liquor was seized from Dolagobinda Mallick, 25 litres from Akshaya Raut, 1.2 kg of ganja from Ghanashyam Behera, and 65 grams of brown sugar from Jayajit Malik. All four accused were forwarded to court, the excise officials said.

Awareness walk held on eye donation fortnight in Brahmapur



Brahmapur: The Friends Helping Club organised an awareness walk and street-corner meeting at Dumuduma Bus Stand here on Wednesday, as part of the 41st National Eye Donation Fortnight. Speaking on the occasion, club member K. Nandesh Senapati said a large number of people in India suffer from partial or complete vision loss due to corneal-related problems, adding that corneal transplantation using donated corneas can help restore vision in eligible patients. He stressed the need for greater public awareness to encourage eye donation and increase the availability of donated corneas, explaining that the eyes of a deceased person can be donated and the corneas collected for transplantation in patients suffering from corneal blindness. The speakers also said that family members of a deceased person who had expressed a wish to donate their eyes should immediately inform the nearest eye department, eye bank or the club, adding that corneas should preferably be collected within six hours of death.

Workshop on cyber safety, anti-drug campaign held at KC College

Paralakhemundi: A one-day workshop titled “POCSO, POSH, Anti-Drug Campaign and Cyber Awareness” was organised by the “Shaktishri Saathi” cell of Shri Krishnachandra Gajapati Autonomous College in association with Adarsh Police Station, Paralakhemundi. Keynote speaker IIC Prashant Bhupathi spoke on women’s safety and cyber fraud awareness. As president, college chairman Professor Radhakant Bhuyani spoke on the harmful effects of excessive social media use and the youth’s role in focusing on the future. Police officer Priyabrat Swain outlined the objectives of the anti-drug campaign. Dr Charu Prabha Nayak, Assistant Professor and Shaktisri Coordinator, coordinated the programme, while Sneha Behera, a student of the Odia Department, welcomed the guests and proposed the vote of thanks.



543 construction workers get aid worth Rs 2.18 cr in Jajpur

Jajpur: The district administration and the Labour Department organised a special camp at Sanskruti Bhawan in Jajpur Road on Saturday to distribute identity cards and welfare assistance to registered construction and unorganised workers. As many as 543 registered construction workers received various welfare benefits amounting to Rs 2.18 crore, with the assistance transferred directly to beneficiaries’ bank accounts through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system. Identity cards were also distributed among newly registered workers. Jajpur MP Dr Rabindra Narayan Behera, attending as chief guest, stressed the need to ensure economic security and social protection for workers and their families, saying workers were the foundation of society and development, and assured that efforts were being made to ensure every eligible worker benefited from government welfare schemes.

Heavy downpour in State till Sep 3

Bhubaneswar: Even as Odisha continues to recover from the impact of recent floods, fresh weather concerns have emerged with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) warning of another spell of extremely heavy rainfall across the State over the next few days.

The IMD has issued a Red Warning for Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Baleswar, forecasting extremely heavy rainfall exceeding 20 cm at isolated places.

An Orange Warning has also been issued for eight districts: Bhadrak, Jajpur, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Angul, Deogarh, Sambalpur and Jharsuguda, for very heavy rainfall. Another 19 districts have been placed under a Yellow Warning for heavy rain.

Heavy showers have already lashed several parts of Odisha, with Bhubaneswar witnessing persistent rainfall since Saturday night.

The weather system is likely to keep Odisha under a wet spell until September 3. The renewed rainfall has raised concerns about a possible deterioration of conditions in flood-affected areas, particularly in northern Odisha.

Western Odisha is expected to witness another spell of intense rainfall on Monday, with Orange Warnings issued for Nuapada, Bargarh, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda and Sundargarh.

Authorities and residents in the Red Warning districts have been advised to remain alert, as extremely heavy rainfall could trigger flash floods, waterlogging, disruption of road connectivity and a rise in water levels of rivers and other water bodies.

MANN KI BAAT

Modi hails Debrigarh women for forest conservation

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

Opposing the release of an animated film on Lord Citing the views of Shankaracharya Nischalananda Saraswati, August 28.

From depending on forests for firewood and forest produce to becoming their protectors, women in Odisha's Debrigarh region have drawn praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi for turning conservation into a source of sustainable livelihood.

During his Mann Ki Baat programme, Modi highlighted the inspiring journey of Maithili Bhue

of Dhodrokusum village in Bargarh district, who transformed her association with the forest through her involvement with Debrigarh Eco-Tourism.

Maithili would earlier visit the forest almost every day to collect firewood, Mahua flowers, Kenduleaves, bamboo shoots and other forest produce. The forest was a crucial source of livelihood for her family and several other households in the area.

Her association with Debrigarh Eco-Tourism gradually changed that relationship. Forest conservation became an alternative source of livelihood for her, while her efforts



also encouraged other women in the region to join conservation activities. According to Modi, more than 60 women are now actively

involved in forest conservation in the Debrigarh region. While some work to protect wildlife, others are engaged in developing grasslands and promoting eco-tourism.

The Prime Minister said the women of Debrigarh have demonstrated that environmental protection and economic prosperity can go hand in hand.

He also lauded Maithili and the other women for showing how community participation in conservation can simultaneously protect natural resources and create sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Sofia to contest 2029 polls on OJC ticket: Moquim

PNS ■ Cuttack

Barabati-Cuttack MLA Sofia Firdous will contest the 2029 Assembly polls from the newly-formed Odisha Janata Congress (OJC), announced her father and former MLA Mohammed Moquim on Sunday.

Moquim's statement put an end to speculation over Firdous's future political move, after she had won the Barabati-Cuttack seat on a Congress ticket in 2024.

"Sofia will not contest the 2029 Assembly polls on a Congress ticket. She will fight the elections from Barabati-Cuttack seat on an OJC ticket," said Moquim, the founder of the newly-formed regional party.



According to the former legislator, the Congress party has drifted away from its core ideology and has "no future" in the State or the country. "The Congress party has suffered repeated electoral defeats in many states, including Odisha, and at the national level due to poor leadership. The party is facing acute factionalism in the State. I was expelled from the Congress party for raising all these issues," Moquim said.

Odisha-origin UK family missing in Nepal floods

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

Concern is mounting over an Odisha-origin millionaire family based in the United Kingdom, reported missing following the devastating floods in Nepal.

The missing family includes former Miss India UK Surabhi Sahu, her husband Santosh Sahu, their 18-year-old son Spandan and 13-year-old daughter Saina. According to reports, the family had travelled to Nepal last week as part of their journey to Kailash Mansarovar, but communication



with them has reportedly been lost following the floods that have caused widespread devastation in several parts of the country.

Their whereabouts remain unknown, with severely disrupted mobile and communication networks in the affected areas making it difficult to establish contact or obtain information about their location.

The Sahu family is reportedly based in London, where they run businesses in the IT and pharmaceutical sectors and are

said to have roots in Ganjam district of Odisha.

The family's disappearance has raised concern among relatives and well-wishers awaiting information about their safety, with efforts expected to trace them as rescue and relief operations continue in flood-hit areas of Nepal.

Authorities are yet to provide official confirmation of the family's exact location or current status, with further details awaited as rescue agencies continue operations in the affected regions.

Burla murder Kin gherao PS demanding fair probe

PNS ■ Sambalpur

Tension intensified in Burla town on Sunday after the family and relatives of a slain meat shop owner gheraoed Burla police station, demanding clarity on the motive behind the killing and a fair investigation.

According to sources, shop owner Md Anish was allegedly shot dead in broad daylight near Kirba Chhak by Raja Swami, who worked with him. The incident, which occurred on a public road,

triggered concern among locals and the victim's family.

Burla police arrested Swami following the incident and seized the firearm allegedly used, saying the killing stemmed from a personal dispute. Dissatisfied with this explanation, Anish's relatives and supporters staged a protest outside the police station, demanding an impartial probe into the exact circumstances of the murder.

The protest continued until the local Additional SP reached the

spot and assured protesters that the case would be thoroughly investigated with strong legal action against the accused, following which the gherao was withdrawn.

An investigating officer said Swami, who hails from Jharsuguda district and worked at Anish's shop, is suspected to have had personal issues with him, and allegedly shot him with a country-made pistol, which has since been recovered. Swami is being further questioned.

Operation Anweshan Odisha Police to scan 17 States for missing children



PNS ■ Cuttack

In a major push to trace missing and trafficked Odia children, the Odisha Police has launched "Operation Anweshan," a statewide campaign to locate and rescue children who may have been taken to other parts of the country.

The campaign, scheduled to continue till September 8, will see 17 Odisha Police teams visiting 17 states identified as possible destinations where the missing children are expected to be found.

Two teams have been constituted under each police

range for the operation, with each team comprising five police personnel and a legal-cum-probation officer from the Women and Child Development Department.

After rescuing the missing children, the police teams will take steps to facilitate the reintegration of Odia children currently staying in Child Care Institutes in other states with their families.

Range IGPs/DIGPs and the Additional Commissioner of Police, Bhubaneswar-Cuttack, will coordinate the activities of the different teams in their respective destination States.

Odisha T20 League season 2 from Sep 20 at Barabati



PNS ■ Cuttack

Cricket lovers in the Silver City will get to witness exciting matches and the talent of promising young cricketers, as the second edition of the Odisha T20 League kicks off from September 20 to 29 at the historic Barabati Stadium.

Organised by the Odisha Cricket Association (OCA), the tournament will provide a platform for some of the state's promising young cricketers to showcase their skills and gain valuable match experience.

A major highlight of the second season will be the introduction of the prestigious "CM Trophy,"

with the official tournament logo and trophy unveiled on Saturday.

Six franchise-based teams will compete in the league, Bhubaneswar Tigers, Cuttack Panthers, Puri Titans, Sambalpur Warriors, Keonjhar Miners and Rourkela Steelers. The player draft is scheduled for September 6, when young cricketers from across Odisha will be picked by the six participating teams.

OCA President Pankaj Lochan Mohanty said the league would serve as an important platform for emerging players to gain competitive experience and progress in their cricketing careers.

Dharmendra seeks C-DAC centre, STPI expansion in S'pur Writes to Vaishnaw

PNS ■ Sambalpur

Former Union Minister and Sambalpur MP MP Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday urged Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw to establish a regional centre of the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) at Gangadhar Meher University in Sambalpur and to expand the existing Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) centre in the city.

Pradhan said the C-DAC regional centre at Gangadhar Meher University would boost research and development in emerging technology domains, including artificial intelligence (AI),



cybersecurity, data analytics and cloud infrastructure, and provide students and researchers in the region with greater opportunities to engage in advanced technological research and innovation.

Pradhan also urged expansion of the STPI centre in Sambalpur, with a focus on semiconductor design, AI and information technology, saying the move is expected to provide a stronger ecosystem for startups, innovation and skill

Odisha-born Bagchi named Karnataka skill body chief

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The Karnataka government has appointed Odisha-born entrepreneur Subroto Bagchi as chairman of an advisory body on skill development.

Bagchi, co-founder of Mindtree, has been appointed chairman of the "Vision Group for Skill Development" in Karnataka. The advisory body has been constituted to provide strategic direction to the skilling ecosystem in the state, in accordance with the Karnataka State Skill Policy 2025-



32, which aims to build a future-ready, industry-relevant workforce across all regions and sectors of the state, reports said.

"At the behest of Govt of Karnataka, honoured and delighted to be Chairman of the Vision Group on Skill Development. We will build the landing ground for

development in the region.

"Such an initiative could create high-quality employment opportunities for the youth of Odisha while strengthening the state's capabilities in emerging technology sectors. It would also help promote entrepreneurship and attract technology-driven investments to western Odisha," he said.

Pradhan added that the establishment of a C-DAC regional centre and expansion of STPI in Sambalpur would further strengthen the city's digital and technology ecosystem, and contribute to Odisha's growing technology sector while supporting India's broader ambition of emerging as a global technology hub.

the future to arrive. We have done it before. We will do it again. It is a privilege to be here to serve the Youth of Tomorrow," Bagchi said in a social media post on Sunday.

Bagchi had earlier served as chairperson of the Odisha Skill Development Authority for around seven years during the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) rule in the state. He had also worked as chief advisor to the Odisha government for institutional capacity building across all civil services training institutions in the State.

‘No need to panic over scrub typhus reports’ Says Health Department

PNS ■ Angul

The State Health Department on Sunday advised people not to panic over reported scrub typhus cases in Angul, stating that the initially reported positive cases were based on rapid kit tests and not confirmatory.

According to the Directorate of Public Health, all nine cases that tested positive in the first phase through rapid tests were subsequently found negative in confirmatory ELISA tests. Testing of the remaining samples through ELISA is underway.

The department said the situation was being closely monitored, with a district health team already on the spot to assess the situation and ensure necessary medical care. It added that precautionary and preventive measures, including active surveillance and other public health interventions, had been initiated promptly.

The Health Department reiterated that the situation remains under continuous monitoring and all necessary steps are being taken to safeguard public health.

85 kg ganja seized at BBSR Rly Station in 5 days

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

In just five days, officers at Bhubaneswar railway station have seized more than 85 kilograms of ganja and arrested four persons, exposing an inter-state network that is swapping crowded highways for packed trains.

The latest raid came after a joint operation by the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and the Odisha Excise Department. About 30 kg of ganja, valued at roughly Rs.3 lakh, was recovered and two men from Uttar Pradesh, identified as Ajab Singh and Upendra Singh.

Keonjhar DLO held for taking bribe

PNS ■ Keonjhar

Vigilance officials on Sunday arrested Kendujhar District Labour Officer (DLO) Akash Bisoi for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe from an electrical contractor for issuing a labour licence.

According to Vigilance sources, the contractor had been assigned electrical installation work by TPNODL and was required to obtain a labour licence to engage workers for the project. The contractor had submitted an online application for the licence on August 14, in accordance with the rules of the Labour and ESI

Department, Government of Odisha.

Two days later, on August 16, when the contractor enquired about the status of the licence, Bisoi allegedly demanded Rs 20,000 for processing and issuing it. The contractor subsequently approached Vigilance authorities and lodged a complaint, alleging harassment by the officer.

Acting on the complaint, a team of Odisha Vigilance laid a trap and apprehended Bisoi on Sunday evening while he was allegedly accepting the bribe from the complainant.

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■ GRAPEVINE ■

WhatsApp emotions for Divya Mittal

The sudden announcement of quitting the high-profile job of IAS, and that too in a very popular State of Uttar Pradesh, by Divya Mittal has raised many eyebrows in the bureaucratic circle and particularly amongst her batchmates. The social media announcement by Divya, sharing “voluntarily stepped away from an unforgettable 13-year journey by resigning from the IAS”, was shared by one of her batchmates in the WhatsApp group of the 2013 batch where she was flooded with questions and simultaneously hailed her tenure in the State. One of them termed it as ‘unfortunate’, while another commented, ‘A couple of them are also planning to quit the IAS and go back to corporate. Smileys, exclamation marks and question marks dotted the WhatsApp group, which Divya exited, but quickly someone added her, stating that the group is not an official one and is created to learn about updates in career and life. Divya was IIT, IIM and was handsomely engaged in London, after which she took the call to serve the nation and now the abrupt ending. “I was a fool to think I had come to give something. The truth is, I received the most, and that debt only grew deeper. People were happier for my joy than I was myself,” Divya noted, which has given rise to speculations about the trouble within, if any.



Speaker thinking renovations?

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla is seriously thinking of renovations in the new Parliament building. Whenever it rains, within minutes, the newly built Parliament is flooded, and the Speaker is very upset, says officials. Birla has already raised this issue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Drainage lines outside the Parliament building in the NDMC area are not capable of accommodating water flow after rains, say engineers. According to the new plan, first renovate NDMC pipes to accommodate water flow from the Parliament complex, apart from construction of porticos at all entrances.



Subhash Chandra vs Mukesh Ambani

Debt-sunk media baron Subhash Chandra has now picked fights with Billionaire Industrialist Mukesh Ambani. Delhi and Bombay Clubs of Bureaucracy and Business are shivering on this battle of tycoons and thinking where to stand. Banks (Read: Govt) has decided to go against the NCLT Order favouring Subhash Chandra, who has now decided to give direct live in Social Media to answer public questions. After a long time – Dhirubhai Ambani Vs Nusli Wadia – Delhi and Mumbai Clubs are witnessing such a battle after three decades.



Man gets Seven years’ imprisonment by NIA court in ISIS case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bengaluru

On Sunday, a special court of the National Investigation Agency sentenced Syed Fasiur Rehman, also known as Syed Faseeh Ur Rehman, to seven years in prison and fined him ₹48,000 for his involvement in an ISIS-linked terror plot. Investigators said the plan aimed to carry out targeted killings to spark communal riots and support the banned group’s agenda. This conviction is part of the Al-Hind ISIS case, which was first registered by Karnataka police in Bengaluru on January 10, 2020, and later taken over by the NIA on January 23. So far, the agency has filed three chargesheets against 20 people, all of whom have been arrested. Rehman is the second person to be convicted. Earlier, Mohammed Haneef Khan received the same sentence and fine on July 14 after pleading guilty during a trial that started in October 2025.

According to the NIA, the conspiracy was. The NIA said that Mehaboob Pasha, the main accused, led the conspiracy by holding several meetings at his home in Gurappanapalya, Bengaluru. During these meetings, participants allegedly discussed plans for targeted killings to spark communal violence and support ISIS’s goals.

The agency said the group aimed to set up an ISIS province in India, focusing on Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Investigators found that Rehman attended these meetings and bought tents and knives from a Decathlon store for jungle-camp training of Al-Hind members. Another ISIS-linked individual was



Khaja Moideen. Investigators identified remote forest areas around Shivanasamudra in Chamarajanagar district and Gundlupet as potential sites for training camps and hideouts. In the earlier conviction, Haneef Khan was found to have been part of a reconnaissance team that surveyed those forest locations.

The NIA said Pasha gave him two pistols and 60 live rounds, and that the group also planned to get more weapons and explosives. Khan reportedly drove several co-accused from Bengaluru to West Bengal in a rented car as part of the plot. The NIA said it is still investigating and trying to identify the online handler who planned and coordinated the group.

This case shows the NIA’s efforts to break up networks that tried to radicalise people, run paramilitary-style training, and use violence to cause unrest. Officials said the sentencing is part of ongoing legal action against those accused of supporting a banned group and planning terrorist acts. The other accused are still on trial. The court examined evidence of meetings, equipment purchases, reconnaissance, and the group’s stated goal of establishing a base in India.

The case was registered in 2020 following intelligence reports on the formation of the Al-Hind module.

BJP hails Uzbekistan’s top honour for PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Sunday hailed the conferment of Uzbekistan’s highest state honour on Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a “proud moment for every Indian” and said it is a reflection of the growing “global recognition” of his leadership and India’s influence.

Modi was on Sunday conferred with Uzbekistan’s prestigious ‘Oliy Darajali Do’sklik’ Order, which he dedicated to the “enduring” bond between India and Uzbekistan.

The prime minister is in Uzbekistan on a two-day visit to bolster ties in a range of areas, including trade, clean energy and connectivity.

Modi was conferred with the honour by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Congratulating the prime minister on being conferred with the prestigious award, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on social media, “A grand moment of pride for every Indian, as the Modi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev witness the exchange of MoUs in Tashkent, Uzbekistan

PTI

doctrine of diplomacy pushes new frontiers, bolstering the voice of the Global South and advancing our civilisational goal of the welfare of humankind by fortifying bonds between nations.”

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said this prestigious recognition is a testimony to PM Modi’s “visionary leadership” and his “steadfast efforts” to deepen the enduring friendship between India and Uzbekistan.

“It is also a proud affirmation of India’s rising global

stature, growing influence and the strong partnerships that New India is building across the world. It is a moment of great pride for 1.4 billion Indians,” he said on social media.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said the award is a recognition of PM Modi’s “steadfast efforts” to deepen India-Uzbekistan friendship.

“Pleased to witness the conferment of Uzbekistan’s Highest Award for Foreign Leaders, ‘Oliy Darajali Do’sklik’ Order on PM @narendramodi,” he wrote

on social media.

“Confident that this honour, along with the landmark visit, will provide new momentum to our ties,” he added.

BJP president Nitin Nabin hailed the conferment of the award on Modi as a “proud moment for every Indian” and said it is a reflection of the growing “global recognition” of his leadership.

“As the 36th international state honour bestowed upon PM Shri Narendra Modi ji, it reflects the growing global recognition of his leader-

ship and India’s rising stature, while celebrating the enduring bond of friendship and partnership between India and Uzbekistan,” the BJP chief said on social media.

In a post, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the conferment of the prestigious award on PM Modi reflects his efforts to deepen India-Uzbekistan relations and underscores India’s “rising global stature”. Congratulating the prime minister on being honoured with Uzbekistan’s highest

state award, Union minister J P Nadda said this marks PM Modi’s 35th global recognition, reflecting the world’s appreciation for his leadership, commitment to global peace and vision for development.

“India’s global rise, recognised!” Nadda said in a post. “A proud moment for 140 crore Indians and a testament to the enduring friendship between India and Uzbekistan,” he added.

Several other BJP leaders also hailed the conferment of Uzbekistan’s highest state honour on Modi.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said this reflects Modi’s “visionary leadership” and his steadfast efforts towards deepening the “historic bonds of friendship and strategic partnership” between India and Uzbekistan.

“It is a proud moment for every Indian and yet another recognition of New India’s growing stature on the global stage. Wishing Hon. Pradhanmantri ji continued success in strengthening Bharat’s global partnerships,” Adityanath said on social media.

BJP MP Hemang Joshi to take charge as BJYM chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

BJP MP from Vadodara Hemang Joshi will take charge as the national president of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) at a function at the party’s headquarters on Monday. Joshi was appointed as the national president of the BJYM, the youth wing of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), earlier this month.

According to a statement issued by the BJYM, Joshi’s appointment marks his rise from student activism and grassroots-level organisational work to Parliament and now to a key national organisational responsibility.

Joshi was elected to the Lok Sabha from Vadodara in 2024 at the age of 33, making him one of the youngest MPs from Gujarat, the statement said.

He was the president of the BJYM’s Gujarat unit, a responsibility he held prior to his elevation to the national post.

Joshi’s political journey

began during his student days at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, where he was associated with the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP).

He subsequently held various organisational responsibilities and worked at the grassroots level before becoming the president of the BJYM Gujarat.

Joshi completed his bachelor’s degree in physiotherapy in 2015 and master’s degree in human resource management in 2016 from the Maharaja Sayajirao University. He has also pursued doctoral research on leadership.

The charge-taking ceremony will be attended by BJP general secretary and BJYM national in-charge Sunil Bansal, outgoing president of the organisation and Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya, national office-bearers and national executive members of the BJYM, besides state presidents and general secretaries of the outfit from across the country.



Two arrested in Manipur over suitcase murder

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ New Delhi

A couple, who are believed to be the principal suspects in the murder of Hayathun Nisha, a 38-year-old woman from Odisha, were arrested by a joint team of Tamil Nadu and Manipur Police. The woman’s body was discovered in a suitcase on a long-distance train earlier this month. The arrests occurred on August 29 in Kashimpur, in the Jiribam district of Manipur, following a joint search launched after the luggage was abandoned at Agra station.

On August 5, 2026, passengers on Train number 12621 (Tamil Nadu Express) reported a strong odour from an unattended red suitcase in an unreserved coach at Agra Cantt. Government Railway Police recovered the headless, dismembered remains of an unidentified adult female. Liaison with Tamil Nadu railway police established that the suitcase had been placed on the train at Chennai Central on August 3.

The forensic examination and DNA analysis proved that the deceased was Hayathun Nisha, 38, who had originally come from Odisha; she had been residing in Guduvanchery and employed at a private company. A report for a missing person had already been submitted to the police station in Guduvanchery. When additional remains were discovered at a local



address, the case was changed to one of murder. Scene examination.

The officers reviewed more than 350 hours of CCTV footage from Chennai Central and suburban locations.

The footage revealed a man and a woman who were carrying identical red suitcases; the pair’s movements led them to a rented house on Mosque Street in Guduvanchery. When the house was searched, further dismembered remains were found in a large cooking vessel. Neighbours stated that a man and two women from outside the state had lived there and left shortly after August 3.

The two people shown on camera were identified as Manik Uddin Laskar, 22, from Dakshin Krishnapur, Sonabarighat, Cachar district,

Assam, and Bhagabati Majhi, 21, from Kendujhar district, Odisha. They had both been at the rented house with the victim and left the Chennai area after the suitcase had been loaded onto the train. A multistate search was conducted to nab them. The special teams from the Guduvanchery/Tambaram City Police first used mobile signal traces to trace the suspects to Odisha, where they were not found. Further tracking brought them to Kashimpur in the Jiribam district of Manipur, close to the border with Assam.

On August 29, both suspects were arrested by a joint Manipur-Tamil Nadu task force. Assistance from the Cachar police was obtained for the investigation on the Assam side. The search continued for 24 days

after the items were recovered.

The investigation covered five States: Uttar Pradesh (where the first recovery took place), Tamil Nadu (where the alleged offence occurred), Odisha (the victim’s home state and where the initial search took place), Assam (the origin of one of the accused), and Manipur (the place of arrest).

The Agra GRP contacted the Chennai railway police. The video footage from the station and the search of the house established that the investigating authority should be Guduvanchery. Details regarding the suspect were shared among the various forces via shared CCTV, inter-state co-operation, and a national criminal records search.

The two named suspects are currently in custody and will be taken to Tamil Nadu for questioning. The motive has not been established, and unofficial claims of a personal quarrel have not been confirmed. The case went from involving the recovery of an unidentified body on a train to including arrests of named individuals in a different State.

The continuity was based on the handover from the railway to the city, video analysis, a house search, and a joint arrest carried out under the inter-state pursuit and transit-remand procedure. Further facts will be recorded once the evidence has been produced in Tamil Nadu.

Nepal’s hero principal appeals to India to rebuild flood-ravaged school

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Rajendra Dawadi, principal of Tribhuvan Trishuli Secondary School in Nepal’s Nuwakot district, is being hailed as a hero after helping save all 1,643 students when a devastating flash flood swept through the Trishuli Valley on August 26.

With the school building now destroyed, Dawadi has appealed to the Government of India for assistance to rebuild the institution and provide the children with a safe place to resume their education.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Dawadi recalled how an ordinary school morning turned into a desperate race against time. At around 9:20 am, the 47-year-old principal received an urgent call from a friend warning that a nearby village had been overwhelmed by the river.

Soon afterwards, a parent arrived at the school and warned that the river was rising rapidly.

Hundreds of students were inside or around the school’s three-storey building, which stood roughly 60 metres above the river. Realising that the situation was deteriorating quickly, Dawadi ordered the school bell to be sounded and instructed teachers to evacuate the classrooms and



move the children towards higher ground.

He also contacted school bus drivers and asked them to turn back. One bus, however, could not be reached and was already crossing a bridge connecting the village with the opposite bank.

As the danger intensified, students began moving uphill. One girl reportedly suffered a panic attack and had to be taken to safety on a motorcycle, while other children escaped on foot. Dawadi remained with the students as they moved away from the river.

The floodwaters later surged through the area, destroying the school and sweeping away structures

near the riverbank. The students took refuge beneath a bodhi tree as the torrent passed through the valley.

The successful evacuation saved all 1,643 students, but the disaster claimed the lives of members of the school community.

Social history teacher Santos Pariyar, 32, was swept away after returning to his rented accommodation near the river to prepare breakfast. School janitor Sultan Lama also died after reportedly returning to the school to secure it.

For Dawadi, the rescue was only the beginning of another challenge. With the school building destroyed, he is now seeking Indian assistance to



reconstruct the institution so that hundreds of children can return to their studies.

The school disaster unfolded amid a wider catastrophe that has devastated parts of Nepal and neighbouring Tibet. Nepalese authorities said Sunday that 734 people had died and 2,498 remained out of contact. The figure includes hundreds of foreign nationals.

The disaster has also triggered a major emergency at hydropower projects along the affected rivers. More than 100 workers are believed to remain trapped inside several hydropower tunnels.

At the Trishuli 3A hydroelectric project, the Nepal Army inserted a pipe into

one tunnel late Saturday and began supplying air to workers who may still be trapped underground.

Authorities estimate that 933 people associated with hydropower projects are missing after torrents of water, ice and debris swept through the river valleys. Rescue operations have been complicated by additional rainfall and rising river levels.

India has deployed an 11-member specialist rescue team, while China has sent a nine-member team with expertise in tunnel operations. The flash flood has been linked to a massive collapse high in the mountains near the Nepal-Tibet frontier. A large mass of ice

and rock reportedly broke away from Langtang Lirung and plunged about 1,200 metres into the steep upper reaches of the Lhende Khola river, sending a destructive surge of water and debris downstream.

For the students of Tribhuvan Trishuli Secondary School, the disaster could have ended in tragedy.

Instead, an urgent warning, a ringing school bell and the quick decisions of their principal and teachers gave 1,643 children enough time to reach higher ground. Now Dawadi, celebrated for saving his students, is seeking help to ensure they have a school to return to.

Mann ki Baat: PM Modi calls for united front against drug abuse

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Cautioning against the perils associated with drug abuse, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday appealed to citizens to unite against this scourge and build a stronger future for the youth, noting that addiction engulfs not just an individual but impacts the entire society.

In his monthly radio address 'Mann Ki Baat', he noted that the 'Drug-Free Youth for a Developed India' campaign is rapidly gaining momentum across the country and stressed that its objective is clear: 'Drug-free youth, drug-free India'.

The prime minister said he was happy that this campaign has not remained merely a formality, as many people, especially the youth, are becoming a part of it in large numbers.

"After all, this is our collective resolve for the health, happiness, and bright future of India's youth. Let us all play our part in this noble mission



to keep India's youth away from drugs and free from addiction," he said.

Modi said drug addiction does not just engulf a single individual, as the entire family and society have to bear the consequences.

"I would like to commend those who raise awareness against drugs and step forward to help individuals struggling with addiction," he said.

The Drug-Free India through the 'Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan' (NMBA) is a flagship initiative of the Government. The campaign seeks to prevent substance

abuse through awareness generation, community participation, treatment, rehabilitation, aftercare and social reintegration.

The prime minister also highlighted the PM SVANidhi Yojana welfare scheme for street vendors, noting that lakhs of women are gaining strength from it.

Lakhs of women across the streets of cities and towns are engaged in selling vegetables or fruits, running tea stalls, while some are selling flowers, earthen lamps, and 'pooja' material, he noted.

"Often, a mere lack of capital prevents their busi-

nesses from growing further. But now, lakhs of such mothers and sisters are gaining new strength through the 'PM SVANidhi Yojana'," he said.

Modi said this aspect of 'women empowerment' is not discussed as much as it should be since women account for approximately 46 per cent of the beneficiaries of the 'PM SVANidhi Yojana'.

"This means that around 35 lakh women across the country are expanding their businesses by connecting with this scheme," he asserted.

Referring to two women — one from Ghaziabad and the other from Bengaluru — who have benefitted from the 'PM SVANidhi Yojana', the prime minister said when a woman's business grows, the future of her entire family advances along with it. "Children receive better education, household needs are met, and the woman's self-confidence is strengthened. This is, indeed, a living example of 'women's empowerment'," he said.

BJP, RSS conspiring to reduce tribal quota through delimitation, alleges Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ranchi

The Congress on Sunday alleged that the BJP and RSS were conspiring to weaken tribal representation by seeking to reduce seats reserved for them in legislatures through delimitation, and vowed to oppose any such exercise based on the 2007-08 delimitation report.

Addressing the 'Adivasi Ekta Mahajutan Rally' at Ranchi's Morabadi Ground, Jharkhand Congress in-charge K Raju said the party would stand with tribals in their fight to protect their political representation and rights over land, water and forests.

"The BJP tells 'adivasis' (tribals) they are forest dwellers, but our leader Rahul Gandhi clearly said you are 'moolvasi' and you have full rights over water, forest and land," he said.

Raju claimed that Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, had told him to convey to the gathering that the proposed delimitation was a "BJP conspiracy" aimed at reducing tribal



People take cover under umbrellas as they take part in the Adivasi Ekta Mahajutan Rally organised by Congress in Ranchi on Sunday

PTI

seats in the Lok Sabha and State assemblies.

All India Adivasi Congress chairman Vikrant Bhuria said the party was protesting against any move to reduce tribal representation through delimitation.

"The BJP is trying to reduce our seats of representation during delimitation. We have come to protest against that through this rally," Bhuria said.

He said Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had demanded that delimitation be postponed for another 25 years so that tribal representation reflected their future

population and reservation.

"All of you should always remember, as many seats as we have, that much will be our strength. They are going to reduce our power to contest elections," he claimed.

Congress MP Sukhdeo Bhagat alleged that tribals had borne the brunt of displacement caused by mining, industries, large projects and dams.

"Tribal land is being snatched. Now, the BJP and RSS are conspiring to silence the tribals by reducing their seats in the name of delimitation. But they will never

Jarange sets September 12 deadline for Mumbai march

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jalna/Nagpur

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday reached out to fasting Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange, who has warned of marching to Mumbai if the Government fails to act on his demand for Kunbi (OBC) caste certificates for all eligible Marathas by September 12.

Fadnavis said the Government is open to discuss legally viable demands that are constitutionally valid, and not violative of the Supreme Court's orders.

On the second day of the indefinite hunger strike in Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna district, Jarange targeted Deputy CM Eknath Shinde, who belongs to the Maratha community, rebel Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Jadhav, and state minister Sanjay Shirsat over a farmer event being held in Parbhani city in the Marathwada region.

Speaking to reporters in Nagpur, Fadnavis said representatives of the Government are attending the Parbhani event to discuss the demands of demonstrators.



"Earlier also we found a way to address their issues, and we are going forward to resolve their demands. Similarly, Eknath Shinde is also very sensitive to these issues from the very beginning," he said.

The chief minister underlined the Government's commitment to discuss and resolve legally viable demands that are constitutionally valid, and not violative of the Supreme Court's orders.

Earlier in the day, reacting to the Parbhani event, Jarange questioned the need to hold the programme, which he said was arranged to mock the Maratha community.

Opposing the event, Jarange claimed he had

sought an explanation from MP Jadhav, hinting at a strong reaction.

Targeting Shirsat, Jarange alleged that genuine caste certificates had been cancelled, causing hardship to members of the Maratha community.

"Why are you bringing Shinde here to dance on our chests? Why hold this programme now in the name of farmers? It could have been organised later," he asked.

Jarange, who had held multiple fasts in the past, has been demanding that eligible Marathas be recognised as Kunbis, an agrarian community that enjoys reservation benefits in education and Government jobs under the

Other Backward Class (OBC) category.

SARMAN NAGELE
■ Bhopal

Efforts have already begun to enable foreign pilgrims to attend Simhasth Mahakumbh 2028 in a 'cashless' manner. Foreign pilgrims can go cashless at the Simhasth Mahakumbh only if the 'UPI KYC' and visitor wallet facility are made available to them. Towards this end, FoMP submitted a memorandum through Kartik Pande, Deputy High Commissioner of India in London, United Kingdom, and the High Commission of India has now taken up this memorandum for processing. It is now for the Government of India to act on it.

Speaking to MPPOST, Rohit Dixit, Founder of FoMP, said that through the efforts of MP Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and the State Government, Simhasth will bring a large number of NRI, OCI, and foreign passport-holding pilgrims to Ujjain, including senior citizens, multi-generational families, and first-time visitors to India.

The memorandum requests a proposed two-stage onboarding process.

UK, before departure. The participating RBI-authorized

issuer, either directly or through an appropriately regulated service provider, completes passport and visa checks, OCI verification, applicant verification and liveness checks, customer due diligence, sanctions/AML and fraud screening, and mobile and email verification. The issuer records its decision and places the wallet in a "verified pending" status. App setup, payment education, and any permitted funding preparation can also be completed before travel.

India, after arrival. Following electronic or other reliable confirmation of the pilgrim's entry status, the issuer immediately activates the wallet. There should be no repeat physical KYC, agent appointments, or separate verification queues at the airport.

Pilot operational features. Eligibility is focused on a representative group of UK-resident pilgrims arriving without access to Indian banking, including foreign-passport family members and OCI cardholders without NRE or NRO accounts. Wallet funding would be via eligible international debit or credit cards, with all exchange rates, loading fees, refunds,



MP CM Mohan Yadav, Founder of FoMP Rohit Dixit

and other charges clearly disclosed before confirmation. Usage would be limited to person-to-merchant (P2M) payments at UPI QR-enabled merchants, subject to issuer controls, transaction monitoring, and applicable RBI and NPCI requirements. The memorandum also proposes evaluating an enhanced "Fully Verified Simhastha Pilgrim" limit of up to Rs 1 lac compared with the current pilot limit of ₹50,000 - entirely subject to RBI risk assessment and prescribed safeguards. Governance and safeguards. FoMP UK will act only as a coordinator and facilitator alongside the High Commission. It will not carry out any regulated KYC, onboard customers, issue wallets, hold or move customer funds, or take on



issuer liability. Customer due diligence, screening, risk decisions, records, wallet issuance, security, disputes, and compliance will remain entirely with the RBI-authorized issuer and its approved partners. At no cost and without performing any regulated function, FoMP UK stands ready to contribute as a representative pilot group of UK-based pilgrims - community venues in the United Kingdom for verification camps organized or supported by the High Commission, a register of interested pilgrims to assist capacity planning, outreach, mobilization, scheduling, and translation across the UK diaspora community, trained volunteers to assist elderly and less digitally confident applicants, and a structured

response to any consumer difficulties encountered during the pilot's operation. The next step is a request to the High Commission for support for (i) a time-bound feasibility pilot, and (ii) an inter-agency roundtable involving the High Commission, Madhya Pradesh and Simhasth authorities, the Reserve Bank of India, NPCI, NPCI International, relevant ministries, and authorised issuers. The roundtable could settle the verification pathway, entry-confirmation mechanism, limits, consumer protection, data handling, and success metrics.

This is not a request to create a new payment system, nor to relax KYC. It is a request to move actual verification to the first stage, preserve regulated accountability, and operationalise an existing visitor-payment model at the scale and speed that Simhasth will require. A successful UK pilot would allow pilgrims to arrive payment-ready, ease pressure on airports and helpdesks, and give India, through its missions, a responsible, repeatable model for extending UPI One World ahead of Simhasth and future major events.

Karantaka Governor accepts Nagendra's resignation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot has accepted B Nagendra's resignation as minister, according to an official notification.

The governor accepted the resignation on the recommendation of Chief Minister DK Shivakumar.

The official notification issued in this connection on August 29 was released to the media on Sunday.

"I have accepted the recommendation of the Chief Minister and in exercise of the powers vested in me under Article 164 (1) of the Constitution of India, I, Thaawarchand Gehlot, Governor of Karnataka, hereby accept the resignation



Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot

of B Nagendra, Minister for Planning and Statistics from the Council of Ministers with immediate effect," he said.

Nagendra, slammed by the opposition for his alleged role in the Rs 89 crore Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki ST Development Corporation 'scam', had announced his resignation on Friday, just

25 days after his re-induction in the Shivakumar-led Cabinet in an expansion.

Asserting that he had no role in the scam, Nagendra said he resigned voluntarily to avoid embarrassment to the party and the Government.

The opposition BJP-JD(S) combine had kept up the

heat against the Ballary legislator with relentless criticism and protests, even disrupting the monsoon session of the state legislature and forcing its curtailment by three days ahead of the schedule recently.

He later submitted the resignation formally to Shivakumar, who said he would take a call on it on Saturday in consultation with the party high command.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) plea to the governor seeking sanction for prosecution against Nagendra is also believed to have influenced the decision regarding his resignation. Gehlot is said to have written to the state Government on the central agency's plea.

Jitendra Singh promises action on armed forces HQ demands



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology, and MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Jitendra Singh, on Sunday interacted in New Delhi with a delegation of the Armed Forces HQ

Association, during which various demands and service-related concerns of employees were discussed. The delegation submitted a memorandum to the Minister and held detailed discussions on issues concerning career progression, promotions and pending service-related matters, an official statement said.

Mumbai library restores rare Persian, Urdu translations of Hindu scriptures

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Inside a century-old building overlooking the bustling streets of south Mumbai, a quiet effort is underway to save rare Persian and Urdu translations of Indian scriptures - the last remnants of the country's multi-cultural and inclusive past.

The Karimi Library, housed within the 152-year-old Anjuman-I-Islam institute, has embarked on a restoration drive to rescue more than 32 sacred Hindu texts, including Mahabharat, Ramayan, Bhagavad Gita, and Shiv Puran, printed

between 1867 and 1896.

The structure, which stands near the iconic Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus, is home to books, newspapers, manuscripts in Sanskrit, English, Urdu, Persian, Marathi, Pashto, Arabic, books on history, philosophy, theology, literature, geography and varied subjects, some of which were printed more than 150 years ago.

Padma Shri Dr Zahir Kazi, president of Anjuman-I-Islam founded by Badruddin Tyabji in 1874, said that the library was established in 1898 after merchant Kazi Abdul Karimi Porbandari donated 4,500 valuable texts, and it was



named after him. Besides religious scriptures and royal decrees from Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, the archive features rare newspapers dating back to 1875, including the Jaipur Gazette,

Ambala Gazette, and Cairo's Al Kaira, offering glimpses into India's early freedom movement.

"The books have become old and pages brittle. They need to be treated with

special chemicals to weed out fungus and pests. Books that are not in good shape are pasted with special paper for preservation," Kazi said. A team of experts has been roped in for the ongoing digitisation process, and pages are being uploaded to Anjuman-I-Islam's cloud account, he explained.

"These books reflect so much of tolerance. It is an eye-opener for Indians that the country's heritage is very much there in this library," he said.

Library in-charge Mohammad Ghalib Mulla confirmed more than 100,000 book pages, along-

side 70,000 pages from newspapers and periodicals, have been digitised, leaving just 2,250 pages to complete the archiving project.

"The newspapers give details about the initial days of the freedom struggle, the social and political situation of those times, how journalism was - pro and anti-British," Mulla said.

The source of newspapers is mostly unknown. The newspapers and periodicals must be from Anjuman-I-Islam, as the institute has been a learning hub since its commencement and it would have subscribed to those publications, Mulla said.

Anti-conversion Bill to be tabled in Goa Assembly

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Panaji

The three-day monsoon session of the Goa Assembly will begin on Monday, with a discussion likely on the proposed anti-conversion legislation, which has drawn criticism from Opposition parties.

The House will take up 883 questions during the session, submitted by members of both the ruling and Opposition parties, Joint Secretary (Legislature Department) Mohan Gaonkar told PTI on Sunday.

The Goa Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill, 2026, will be tabled during the session. The BJP-led State Cabinet on Wednesday approved the bill, proposing life imprisonment among other stringent penalties.

The bill proposes strict punishment for religious conversion allegedly carried

out through force, coercion, undue influence, allurements, fraudulent means or marriage.

Under the bill, offenders may face life imprisonment, and it proposes fines of at least ₹50,000 and compensation of up to ₹5 lakh to victims.

The Congress has alleged that the bill is aimed at flaring communal tension in the otherwise peaceful State.

Independent MLA Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco, who supports the Government, also claimed that such a law would create communal disharmony in the coastal state and appealed to Chief Minister Pramod Sawant to reconsider tabling the bill in the assembly.

The strength of the 40-member Goa Assembly has been reduced to 38 following the deaths of two MLAs — then Agriculture Minister Ravi Naik and Taleigao MLA Jennifer Monserrate.



Goa Assembly

FILE PHOTO



Editor's
TAKE

H-1B shock: India must look beyond America

Washington may keep changing the rules; India must make sure its economic prospects are not held hostage to them

The US Department of Homeland Security has proposed a fresh \$103,265 fee – nearly ₹99 lakh, rounded off to "a crore" – on every H-1B petition subject to the annual cap. This is formal rulemaking, not an overnight proclamation: it follows the collapse of the \$100,000 entry fee Donald Trump imposed last September, which a federal court declared an unlawful tax in June and which the First Circuit Court of Appeals refused to revive on July 24 – precisely why Washington is now trying the sturdier route of regulation. Unlike the original order, it would also strike petitions from workers already inside the US – students on F-1 OPT converting to H-1B, among others – a group the first round had spared.

Nothing is final yet: DHS has opened a 30-day comment window. But the direction is unmistakable, and it points at India. Indian nationals take home roughly seven in ten H-1B approvals every year, so the arithmetic lands hardest here. If the older fee is eventually revived on appeal, alongside this new one, an employer could face upwards of \$200,000 per hire before legal and relocation costs. For India's \$315-billion IT services industry, the direct exposure is narrower than the headlines suggest – Nasscom notes large Indian firms have spent five years cutting H-1B dependence through local US hiring – but onsite deployments, deputation-heavy delivery models and thousands of individual careers still sit in the fee's path.

The right response isn't outrage, which changes nothing in Washington, but accelerating a shift already under way. India's Global Capability Centres – over 2,100 of them, employing more than two million people – are proof that high-value technology work no longer needs an American zip code to serve American companies. Every fee hike that raises the cost of onsite deployment is, perversely, an incentive to shift that work to Bengaluru, Pune and Hyderabad instead. New Delhi has shown this can work: trade diplomacy already talked US tariffs on Indian goods down from 50 per cent to 18 per cent in February. The broader Bilateral Trade Agreement talks that followed remain open – the right table for a rules-based mobility chapter, rather than leaving skilled migration hostage to proclamations that courts can strike down and Washington can reissue within the same year. India is also not fighting alone: twenty US states, the Chamber of Commerce and healthcare-sector plaintiffs are already contesting the fee in court, their interests aligned with India's for now.

The larger lesson concerns Trump's method, not only this measure. A one-year proclamation, struck down in court, resurrected as regulation – a recognisable pattern now, one India cannot build its economic strategy around. The answer is redundancy: deeper trade and talent corridors with the Gulf, Europe, the UK and Japan, so no mood swings in Washington can unilaterally reprice Indian talent. Diplomacy should stay steady and unshowy behind closed doors. But the real response has to be structural, not seasonal – built once, not rebuilt after every proclamation.

Cash in hand, capacity in retreat?

As states commit ever larger sums to recurring transfers, a more difficult question is emerging: what happens to the long-term investments that build human capability and public capacity? The debate must move beyond the simplistic contest between welfare and “freebies” to examine whether today's cash transfers are coming at the cost of tomorrow's schools, hospitals and infrastructure.



DEBDULAL THAKUR

The argument over welfare in India is still framed as a morality play: cash transfers are either social justice or “freebies”. That binary misses the harder public-policy question. The issue is not whether states should put money directly into citizens' hands. It is whether recurring transfers are beginning to compete with the schools, health systems, nutrition networks and infrastructure that make welfare durable.

The numbers now make that question unavoidable. The Economic Survey 2025-26 estimates that states will spend about ₹1.7 lakh crore on largely unconditional cash transfers, particularly to women, in FY26. PRS puts the corresponding estimate at ₹1.68 lakh crore across 12 states, up from only two states in 2022-23; six of the 12 budgeted for revenue deficits. In individual states, these schemes are no longer marginal: PRS estimates they absorb 12.1 per cent of revenue expenditure in Jharkhand, 9.2 per cent in Karnataka and 8.9% in West Bengal in 2025-26. The trend has not disappeared in the newest budgets. West Bengal has budgeted ₹36,000 crore for Annapurna Bhandar in 2026-27-about 11 per cent of projected revenue receipts. Madhya Pradesh has allocated ₹23,883 crore to Ladli Behna, while Maharashtra has set aside ₹26,500 crore for Ladki Bahin. Karnataka's five guarantee schemes are budgeted at ₹51,286 crore in 2026-27, roughly 12 per cent of expenditure excluding debt repayment. These are large, politically salient and often socially valuable commitments. But they operate inside budgets that are already tight. That fiscal context matters. PRS notes that states collectively devoted 53 per cent of revenue receipts in 2023-24 to salaries, pensions and interest payments, while outstanding state debt remained about 27.5 per cent of GDP in 2024-25. At the same time, the average allocation across states in 2025-26 was about 14.5 per cent of expenditure for education and 6.2 per cent for health. A rupee committed recurrently to one purpose is therefore a rupee whose alternative use deserves scrutiny. This is not evidence that cash transfers are inherently wasteful. The Economic Survey cites estimates that such transfers equal 11-24 per cent of monthly income for female casual labourers and 11-87 per cent for self-employed women across seven studied states. Cash can smooth consumption, reduce



THE POLITICAL ECONOMY IS STRAIGHTFORWARD. A MONTHLY TRANSFER HAS AN IDENTIFIABLE BENEFICIARY, A PREDICTABLE PAYMENT DATE AND IMMEDIATE VISIBILITY. A BETTER ANGANWADI NETWORK, A FUNCTIONING PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRE, MORE HOSTELS OR SAFER HOSTELS PRODUCES BENEFITS THAT ARE SLOWER, DISPERSED AND LESS ELECTORALLY LEGIBLE

The writer is Professor at Department of Economics, Director, Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Public Policy, Sustainability, and ESG advances research, Alliance University, Bengaluru

distress and give recipients agency in ways that in-kind programmes sometimes do not. The policy error begins only when cash is treated as a substitute for public capacity rather than a complement to it.

There is some evidence that the trade-off can become real. In Karnataka, PRS cites the CAG's observation that expansion of the guarantee schemes increased revenue expenditure and the revenue deficit, while infrastructure spending in 2023-24 was 75,229 crore lower than in the previous year. That does not prove that every transfer crowds out every public investment. It does show why the opportunity cost can no longer be dismissed as theoretical.

The political economy is straightforward. A monthly transfer has an identifiable beneficiary, a predictable payment date and immediate visibility.

A better Anganwadi network, a functioning primary health centre, more teachers or safer hostels produces benefits that are slower, dispersed and less electorally legible. Governments therefore face a structural incentive to prefer welfare that can be credited to a scheme over welfare embedded in institutions.

The answer is not to prohibit transfers. It is to make their opportunity cost visible. Every state introducing or substantially expanding a large recurring cash programme should publish a Social Investment Displacement Statement with its budget. It should show the scheme's five-year liability, financing source, beneficiary incidence and measurable outcomes, while disclosing whether real per-capita spending on

education, health, nutrition, maintenance or capital formation is being compressed. It should also specify when the scheme will be independently reviewed.

This would improve the debate because “freebie” is an economic label pretending to be an analytical category. Some transfers may be powerful redistributive instruments; others may become fiscally difficult to sustain.

The distinction cannot be made from the mode of payment alone. It requires evidence on outcomes, fiscal durability and what the expenditure displaces.

India does not have to choose between cash and public services. Poor households often need both. A welfare state should ultimately be judged not by how efficiently it transfers money, but by whether it builds the capabilities citizens cannot purchase individually.

A bank transfer can reach a household. It cannot by itself staff a school, prevent malnutrition, run a hospital or build a functioning State.

Conclusion

The debate, therefore, is not about abandoning cash transfers but about restoring discipline to welfare policy. Direct payments can provide dignity, security and economic agency, especially to those living with persistent vulnerability. Yet no transfer can replace the public institutions on which lasting social mobility depends. States must make transparent what large recurring schemes cost over time and what other investments they may constrain.

PIC TALK



People carry an idol of Lord Ganesha to a 'Pandal' ahead of the 'Ganesh Chaturthi' festival, in Mumbai, Maharashtra

PHOTO: PTI

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE



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LUCKY KULKARNI

2ND OPINION

There is an old proverb that says, “You can take a horse to the water, but you cannot make it drink.”

Over the years, I have often wondered if there is another perspective to this proverb. Why do we need to take the horse to the water in the first place? Perhaps we only need to tell the horse where the water is.

Then another question comes to mind. Why do we even need to tell the horse? Why can't the horse recognize its own thirst, understand where the water is, and walk towards it on its own?

This simple thought can separate employees who wait to be led from those who learn to lead themselves.

Today's organizations are no longer looking for employees who constantly need to be reminded, pushed, supervised or motivated. They are looking for people with an

The horse that walks to the water

internal drive-individuals who naturally move towards learning, solving problems, creating value and taking ownership without waiting for instructions.

Every organization hires people to perform a job. But those who build exceptional careers go beyond merely performing their roles. They embrace responsibility and take ownership of outcomes.

People may join an organization at the same time, yet their careers can take very different paths. Some become managers, some emerge as leaders, while others remain in roles similar to the ones they started with. What creates this difference? It is rarely intelligence or experience alone, and certainly not only luck. One of the biggest differentiators is attitude.

Organizations quietly observe behaviours that may never appear on an appraisal form. Who takes initiative without being asked? Who identifies a problem before it becomes a crisis? Who remains accountable when things go wrong instead of looking for someone to blame?

These are the people who tend to grow faster.

A self-motivated employee does not wait for appreciation before giving their best, a promotion before demonstrating leadership, or instructions before solving a problem. Their motivation comes from within.

They constantly ask themselves: “How can I improve this process?” “How can I make my customer's experience better?” “How can I support my team?” “How can I reduce the organization's risk?” “How can I create more value than what is expected from my role?”

These questions gradually shape exceptional careers. Organizations certainly appreciate hard work, but they ultimately value outcomes and the impact created.

The responsibility for career growth ultimately lies with the employee. Managers can coach. Organizations can provide opportunities. HR can design learning programmes. Leaders can create the right culture. But none of these can replace an individual's personal desire to grow.

As an HR professional, I have observed that promotions are not always earned by the most knowledgeable employees. More often, they are earned by those who consistently demonstrate ownership, accountability, dependability, initiative and a willingness to solve problems beyond their job descriptions.

The horse that recognizes its thirst and walks to the water on its own is unlikely to remain thirsty. Similarly, employees who continuously seek knowledge, responsibility and opportunities without waiting to be pushed are less likely to remain stagnant.

In today's corporate world, organizations are not merely looking for people who can do a job. They are looking for people who take responsibility, create value, inspire trust and move forward on their own.

They don't just succeed. They become trusted with greater responsibility.

The author is a senior corporate HR leader, writer and people strategist

TIME TO PUT WARNING LABELS WHERE CONSUMERS CAN SEE THEM

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's proposal for prominent front-of-pack warning labels on foods high in saturated fat, sugar and salt is a welcome step towards giving consumers clearer information. For too long, nutritional details on packaged foods have remained buried in small print that many consumers neither notice nor fully understand. A prominent warning, particularly one using a clear red symbol, could help people make quicker and more informed choices. The proposed labels—such as “High Fat”, “High Sugar” and “High Salt”—would bring much-needed simplicity to an increasingly complex food marketplace dominated by packaged and ultra-processed products. The move is particularly significant at a time when concerns are growing over diet-related

health problems. However, the effectiveness of the proposal will depend on its final design and implementation. The warnings must be clearly visible, based on sound scientific thresholds and understandable across different social and educational backgrounds. Public awareness campaigns will also be necessary to explain what these warnings mean. The proposed exemptions for inherently high-fat or high-sugar products will likewise require careful scrutiny to avoid confusing consumers. The Supreme Court's intervention has rightly brought renewed attention to the nutritional quality of packaged foods. Consumers have a right to know, at a glance, what they are buying. Clear warning labels can be an important step towards making that right meaningful.

BHAGWAN THADANI, MUMBAI

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Work permits and family stability

This refers to the news report, “US revives plan to end work permits for some H-4 spouses” (August 30). The proposed restriction on employment for H-4 spouses could create considerable uncertainty for thousands of families who have built their lives around the H-1B system. Many H-4 spouses are qualified professionals whose earnings contribute to household stability and whose skills benefit the American economy. Denying them the right to work may force families to depend on a single income.

A balanced immigration policy must recognise these practical realities. Rather than imposing a blanket withdrawal, US authorities could retain work eligibility subject to clear conditions, including recognised qualifications, lawful employment and appropriate background checks. A transparent renewal mechanism would also prevent sudden disruptions to careers. The wider impact on sectors such as technology, healthcare and education must also be considered. For Indian families, predictable rules are especially important, as many H-1B workers spend years contributing to the US economy while awaiting long-term immigration decisions. Regulation is necessary, but it must be consistent, proportionate and humane.

M JEEVA | CHENNAI

Compassion need not mean endorsement

Apropos the report, “BJP summons, reprimands MPs over Sajjan Kumar house visit” (August 30), the reported reprimand of three BJP MPs raises an important question about the space available for personal judgment within political parties. Sajjan Kumar was convicted in connection with the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, and the BJP has consistently demanded justice for the victims. The party is therefore understandably sensitive about any gesture that could be interpreted as sympathy for his political record or the crimes associated with that tragic period.

However, offering condolences to a bereaved family need not amount to endorsing the actions of the deceased. Death is also a deeply personal and human moment, and elected representatives may sometimes choose to express sympathy without compromising their political convictions.

Yet discipline should not extend so far that lawmakers feel compelled to seek permission before visiting a grieving family. If the reported action is intended to enforce such rigid conformity, it may create an unhealthy impression of unquestioning obedience. Strong political parties should be capable of accommodating individual compassion while firmly maintaining their principles and commitment to justice.

SANJAY CHOPRA | MOHALI

A red-letter day for Indian chess

R. Praggnanandhaa, the golden boy of Indian chess, has given the nation another reason to celebrate. His triumph at the Grand Chess Tour (GCT) is undoubtedly a red-letter moment in the history of Indian chess. By wresting the prestigious title from a formidable field and emerging victorious at St Louis in the United States, Praggnanandhaa has added yet another remarkable chapter to his already extraordinary career. Becoming the first Indian to achieve this distinction is a matter of immense national pride.

For chess enthusiasts, the tense finale was a test of nerves. The anxious moments and nail-biting finish made the eventual triumph even more memorable. When Praggnanandhaa finally sealed the crown, the sense of jubilation among Indian chess followers was immense. Having already achieved major success at Norway Chess earlier this year, he has now added another prestigious title to his growing list of accomplishments. More importantly, his success reflects the remarkable rise of Indian chess. This is a proud moment for every Indian and especially for the country's vibrant chess community. May Praggnanandhaa continue his brilliant journey and bring many more laurels to India.

THARCUS S. FERNANDO | CHENNAI

From survey to consolidation: Bihar's next land reform

Bihar has already invested in aerial photography, digital cadastral mapping and a comprehensive Special Survey. The next step should be to use that foundation to reorganise fragmented agricultural holdings



VIVEK KUMAR SINGH

Bihar is undertaking one of India's most ambitious exercises in land administration. Building on comprehensive aerial photography, its Special Survey and Settlement is preparing digital cadastral maps, reconstructing land records and attempting to bring the record, the map and possession closer together. That exercise is valuable in itself. But it also raises a larger question - what should Bihar do once the survey is complete? For consolidation, Bihar need no longer begin with the expensive task of mapping the countryside afresh. Much of that cadastral groundwork has already been done through aerial photography and is now being converted into settled digital records through the Special Survey. Bihar would know much more precisely where every fragment lies, while the fragmentation itself would remain. The logical next reform, therefore, is consolidation of holdings.

Why consolidation stalled

Bihar enacted its consolidation law in 1956 with a simple objective. Scattered parcels belonging to a cultivator were to be reorganised into fewer, more compact holdings of broadly equivalent value. Punjab and Haryana demonstrated decades ago how consolidation could support more efficient cultivation, irrigation, access and mechanisation. Bihar, however, struggled to complete the process. The first weakness was the absence of a reliable cadastral starting point. Consolidation cannot work unless the State knows with reasonable certainty what land exists, who holds it, where the boundaries lie and what rights attach to each parcel. Where old maps, revenue records and possession diverge, re-allotment begins on disputed foundations. The second was excessive administrative discretion. Valuation, comparison of parcels, adjustment of holdings and delivery of possession all depended heavily on individual judgment. The third was an open-ended procedure. Objections led to appeals, appeals to revisions and administrative decisions to writ proceedings. The lesson is not that consolidation was misconceived; it is that its institutional design was inadequate.

The Special Survey changes the equation

The earlier model effectively required the government to discover the parcel and reorganise it almost simultaneously. Bihar need not do that again. The Special Survey is creating the spatial and legal foundation for consolidation by converting aerial photography, digitised cadastral mapping and ground verification into updated records. Targeted verification will still be necessary. Irrigation, access, public infrastructure, orchards, structures, land use and other features affecting equivalence between holdings may need field confirmation. But that is very different from surveying the State afresh. This is Bihar's great opportunity. The State has already borne much of the cost and administrative effort of building the spatial infrastructure. Consolidation can become the productive second use of that investment. The sequence should now be clear: Special Survey and Settlement, final digital map and record, consolidation and re-allotment, and statutory closure. Bihar should not spend years perfecting the map of fragmentation and stop there. The map should become the starting point for undoing fragmentation.

Consolidation for the Digital Age

The old machinery should not simply be restarted. Bihar needs a new consolidation law and procedure designed around today's technological and administrative capacities. Its first principle should be survey before consolidation. No area should enter consolidation until its Special Survey records have reached a sufficiently settled state. The second principle should be rules before discretion. Land parcels are not interchangeable merely because they have the same area. Land quality, irrigation, road access, proximity to markets and other value-enhancing infrastructure, and permanent improvements all matter. These factors should, as far as practicable, be translated into published valuation parameters. Digital systems can then assist in generating compact allotments, but the criteria must be prescribed by law or rules rather than left to a vendor or an individual officer. AgriStack can add a complementary agricultural-data layer. Its Farmers Registry, geo-referenced village maps



BIHAR ENACTED ITS CONSOLIDATION LAW IN 1956 WITH A SIMPLE OBJECTIVE. SCATTERED PARCELS BELONGING TO A CULTIVATOR WERE TO BE REORGANISED INTO FEWER, MORE COMPACT HOLDINGS OF BROADLY EQUIVALENT VALUE. PUNJAB AND HARYANA DEMONSTRATED DECADES AGO HOW CONSOLIDATION COULD SUPPORT MORE EFFICIENT CULTIVATION, IRRIGATION, ACCESS AND MECHANISATION. BIHAR, HOWEVER, STRUGGLED TO COMPLETE THE PROCESS

The writer is an ex-IAS officer and is presently Chairman, RERA Bihar. He served as Principal Secretary, Department of Revenue and Land Reforms, Bihar

and Crop Sown Registry can supplement the Special Survey with farmer-parcel linkages and cropping patterns. This can improve parcel comparison and reduce dependence on one-time administrative assessment. But the hierarchy must remain clear. The settled record of rights should govern legal entitlement. AgriStack should inform valuation, verification and allotment, not title. Put simply, the Special Survey establishes the parcel and the record of rights; AgriStack can enrich its agricultural profile. Human judgment will still be needed, but it should be transparent and reviewable. Any departure from prescribed criteria must require recorded reasons. Every landholder needs to be able to see the original parcels, their valuation, the proposed new holding and the basis of equivalence. Technology helpful because it can narrow discretion and leave an audit trail. The most important reform, however, is finality. No consolidation programme should begin unless the law also specifies the maximum time within which it must end. At the same time, deadlines cannot simply be imposed on landholders. Migrants may be away, women entitled to inheritance may be missing from records, and elderly citizens may not receive digital notices. Silence cannot automatically be treated as consent. The answer is to put the State on the clock as well. Time limits for objections should begin only after demonstrable, multi-channel notice. Draft maps and proposed allotments should be displayed publicly, made available digitally and explained through village-level camps. Once adequate notice is established, proceedings should move firmly towards closure. Each objection should have a statutory disposal period. Appeals should carry strict outer limits. There should ordinarily be only one revision. Adjournments should require recorded reasons. A public dashboard could show, village by village, the stage reached, objections filed, cases pending and time consumed. Consolidation should be measured in months, or at most a few years - never across generations.

From better records to deeper reform

For two decades, land-record reform in India has understandably focused on digitization by scanning records, computerising mutation, digitising maps and moving revenue services online. These are necessary reforms. But digitisation is not structural reform. A fragmented holding does not become economically efficient merely because each fragment has acquired a precise digital coordinate. Bihar is now unusually well placed to move further. Its Special Survey is creating the foundational certainty over parcels that earlier consolidation lacked. Transparent, rules-based allocation can reduce administrative discretion. A rewritten Consolidation Act can impose the finality the earlier system lacked. The gains would extend beyond agriculture. Fewer and clearer parcels can reduce boundary disputes, simplify inheritance and partition, improve access to institutional credit, and make infrastructure planning and land acquisition easier. Consolidation is therefore as much a governance reform as an agricultural one. The Special Survey should not be treated as the end of Bihar's land-reform journey. It could be the platform for the reform that follows. The governing principles are straightforward. Put survey before consolidation. Use the aerial and cadastral data already created, supplementing it where useful with AgriStack. Undertake field verification only where necessary. Replace discretion with published rules wherever possible. Protect genuine rights through adequate notice. Impose statutory finality on the process. As the Special Survey moves towards settled records, the State should now ask the more consequential question, i.e., must those accurately mapped parcels remain fragmented forever? The Special Survey will tell Bihar where every fragment lies. The real reform would begin only when the state uses that knowledge to put the fragments back together. If Bihar can do that, it will not merely complete a survey. It could provide India with a new model of land reform.

Viksit Bharat demands annihilation of sick racket



AMITABH RANJAN

A patient cured is a customer lost also. Insurance advertisements never admit this, hospital brochures never print it. Illness, in India, is not merely a misfortune, but a perennial resource to be harnessed, monetised and prolonged. A conspiracy everyone denies, and no one disrupts: the symbiotic alliance amongst insurers, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies and practitioners. Insurers profit from premia collected today and claims delayed or denied tomorrow. Hospitals, particularly the large corporate chains which dominate metro healthcare, are answerable to their shareholders and quarterly targets, and that is why unnecessary diagnostics, extended ICU stays and needless surgeries performed to be safe have become quite routine. Pharma companies sponsor conferences, fund 'continuing medical education' and reward number of prescriptions with bounties ranging from gift vouchers to foreign tours; a sales promotion framed as scientific exchange. And practitioners, sworn on the Hippocratic Oath, find themselves sandwiched between their conscience and revenue targets, in a system which punishes the doctor who orders fewer tests and rewards the one who orders more. And this system has emerged the way most rackets do, from each participant rationally pursuing self-interest inside an opaque system with almost no accountability. Consequence: a healthcare economy in which the patient's well-being and the provider's profitability are poles apart. This is the context in which the Ayushman Bharat Health Account or ABHA, deserves a much more serious look. On paper, the idea is elegant: a portable, fourteen-digit digital health identity which allows a patient's records like prescriptions, test results, diagnoses, discharge summaries, to travel with them across hospitals, cities and insurers, with the patient's consent, of course. India has already enrolled over 940 million people into the system and the pitch is simple; end the duplication of tests, end the loss of medical history between providers, and provide the patient, rather than the hospital, ownership of their own data. If it works as designed, ABHA is a genuine, if partial at the moment, answer to the customer lost syndrome.

A longitudinal, portable health record makes it harder for one hospital to repeat a scan earlier conducted, tougher for a doctor to prescribe indefinitely without a second opinion crossing their desk, and easier for regulators and insurers to spot patterns of over- or mistreatment across a patient's history rather than one hospital's silo. Transparency, at scale, is the enemy of a nexus constructed on information asymmetry. Yet, a digital ID may not fix a structural incentive. ABHA can make overtreatment more visible but not unprofitable. Without genuine enforcement-audits of billing patters, penalties for unwarranted procedures and insurers willing to actually use the data to push back on claims rather than simply process them faster, a health ID risks becoming an efficient record-keeping layer sitting quietly on top of the same broken incentives. Containment is not correction.

If the practice of medicine has become commercialised, so has the path to becoming a doctor, but more brutally. NEET, even though a noble, innovative concept, has unintentionally fueled an entire shadow economy that extracts money from families, years before their children touch a patient. Coaching institutes in cities built almost entirely around this one exam ecosystem charge fees which may exceed a family's annual income, promising a seat that statistically, for most aspirants, would never come. Around these coaching hubs has grown an ancillary economy of paying-guest accommodations and private hostels, mostly unregulated, overcrowded and expensive, housing teenagers separated from their families for years at a stretch under enormous psychological pressure, a pressure whose human cost surfaces frequently in tragic headlines. Then there is the exam itself, which is rocked by paper-leak scandals serious enough to reach the Supreme Court, with allegations of question papers being sold for sums only the wealthiest can afford, turning what is meant to be a merit-based gateway into, for some, a cash cow. And, for those who clear the exam but not with marks high enough for a government seat, private medical colleges wait with exorbitant fee structures running into crores, for a single MBBS degree; fee which virtually guarantees the graduates will spend their early career recouping the investment before they can practice medicine as a public service.

By the time, a NEET aspirant becomes a fully qualified doctor, an extraordinary amount of family gold, years of adolescence and psychological capital have already been spent. It should surprise no one that many enter the profession already thinking in terms of ROE - returns on investment. None of this is unfixable and the fixes are neither exotic nor untested; India already runs a comparable model for engineering admissions. First, cap the number of NEET attempts, the way JEE-Main or Advanced limits them, starting with 12th pass-year. Unlimited attempts do not reward merit but reward the ability to fund this dark economy of repeated years of coaching, PG; quietly converting the 'National Eligibility Test' into a 'Wealth Eligibility Test'. Second, move NEET decisively to a secure, multi-shift computer-based test format, as JEE Main already does. A single-day, pen-and-paper exam undertaken by over two million candidates and transported physically across the country is a leak waiting to happen; and the events of the past three months have proven this beyond argument. Experts' recommendations have repeatedly suggested a shift towards online or hybrid formats, staggered over multiple days, precisely because a single point of physical failure is not a security architecture; it is the invitation. Third, regulate the coaching-hostel nexus with the same seriousness applied to the exam itself; safety standards, fee transparency and mental health support for adolescents living away from home under exam pressure. Fourth and the toughest; cap or index private medical college fees to sanity, something a middle-class family can conceivably repay through an ethical medical career, rather than taking recourse to unethical practice. None of these reforms, alone, would dismantle this sick racket of insurers, hospitals and pharmaceutical companies which profit from keeping patients in illness. However, together, they attack the pipeline that feed it, which presently looks not for the most compassionate future doctors but for the families with the deepest pockets and the students with the highest tolerance for extraction. Fix what feeds this racket and the system itself becomes easier to fix. India does not lack medical talent or infrastructure. What it lacks is an economy which rewards a doctor for making a patient well rather than for keeping them, quietly and profitably, unwell. And this economy, which promotes the sound body, in turn, housing a sound mind, is key to the dream of Viksit Bharat becoming a reality.



Dr. Amitabh Ranjan, Vice Chairman of PanIIT Alumni India and NESa, Washington DC Alumnus, is associated with IIPA, New Delhi as Registrar.

Revisiting the Tenth Schedule : Merger qua defection



DEVENDER SINGH ASWAL

Aggrieved over purported "deliberate in action" on his petition dated 18 June, 2026, seeking disqualification of twenty TMC MPs of Lok Sabha, Abhisek Bannerjee, Trianamool General Secretary, filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court, praying to call for records of all pending disqualification petitions filed against the 20 MPs elected on the symbol of TMC for voluntarily giving up the membership by conduct under 2(1)(a) of Xth Schedule, or, in the alternative, issue a writ of mandamus to the Speaker, Lok Sabha to adjudicate his application within set time-frame as per law laid down in Kesham Meghachandra Singh v. The Hon'ble Speaker, Manipur Legislative Assembly. The ratio decidendi of the judgement supra is that the Speaker cannot infinitely delay the adjudication. In the said judgment, the Three-Judge Bench of the Supreme Court, comprising of Hon'ble Justices R.F. Nariman, Aniruddha Bose and V. Ramasubramanian, held that "The only relief that can be given in these appeals is that the Speaker of the Manipur Legislative Assembly be directed to decide the disqualification petitions pending before him within a period of four weeks from the date on which this judgment is intimated to him.

In case, no decision is forthcoming even after a period of four weeks, it will be open to any party to the proceedings to apply to this Court for further directions/reliefs in the matter." Notably, the Court also observed- "It is time that Parliament have a rethink on whether disqualification petitions ought to be entrusted to a Speaker as a quasi-judicial authority when such Speaker continues to belong to a particular political party either de jure or de facto. Parliament may seriously consider amending the Constitution to substitute the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies as arbiter of disputes concerning disqualification which arise under the Tenth Schedule with a permanent Tribunal headed by a retired Supreme Court Judge or a retired Chief Justice of a High Court, or some other outside independent mechanism to ensure that such disputes are decided both swiftly and impartially,...". However, no legislative initiative has been taken in this regard so far. The Speaker, Lok Sabha has since caused the notices to be issued to the said MPs directing them to respond within seven days. Under paragraph 6 of the Tenth Schedule, the question whether the said MPs have become subject to disqualification have to be decided by the Speaker. There are significant allied questions which have far reaching implications. The allegation of the Abhisekh Bannerjee is that the respondent 20 MPs have voluntarily given up their membership and therefore they must be disqualified under paragraph 2(1)(a) of Xth Schedule. The respondent MPs may take refuse under paragraph 4 of the Xth Schedule and



claim immunity from disqualification on the ground of merger of two-thirds of the members in a new party. Unless, the Speaker decides, no Court can entertain a petition for disqualification under the Tenth Schedule, except on grounds of inaction or unusual delay in deciding the matter. The decision of the Speaker can only be subject to judicial review in view of the judgment of the Supreme Court in Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachilhu and Others. Now, the ball is in the Court of the Hon'ble Speaker. It is a question of defection by two-thirds members of the TMC Legislature Party in the Lok Sabha. Paragraph 4 of the Tenth Schedule says that disqualification on ground of defection not to apply to those members who merge with another political party or who have not accepted the said merger and opted to function as a separate group. The TMC led by Abhisekh Bannerjee have not accepted the merger and though the legislature party group led by him is nearly one-thirds of the original legislature party, his group will continue to

function validly as such. The two-thirds group consisting of 20 members would have had a stronger case, had they merged with any political party in the legislature, that is, a legislature party in the Lok Sabha. Paragraph 1 of the Tenth Schedule enshrines the rule of interpretation of the Tenth Schedule. It says "House" means, the House of the legislature and political party means "all the members of that House for the time being belonging to that political party". So, while determining whether a group of members, though constituting two-thirds of the original legislature party, in order to escape disqualification on ground of defection, must join any legislature party of that House, though the question of giving up membership voluntarily, remains a matter of fierce legal contest. For instance, the defecting group consisting two-thirds of the members of the Aam Aadmi Legislature Party in the Rajya Sabha, who joined the BJP Legislature Party in the Rajya Sabha were not disqualified by the Chairman Rajya Sabha. Of course, the final verdict will be known only when the review petition is decided by the Supreme Court being the final arbiter as the larger question is that a political party is a much bigger entity than a legislature party in a House and the term two-thirds of the legislature party in a House runs counter to the spirit of anti defection law as instead of curbing defections, it facilitates wholesale defections. Notably, the National Citizens Party of India (NCPI) is not a legislature party in the Lok Sabha. It even does not have a single member in the Lok Sabha, or for that matter, in any of the Legislatures.

The NCPI is a registered, unrecognised party from Tripura but came into limelight only after the self acclaimed merger of the defecting group of TMC in it. If the explanation of the said MPs is accepted, the NCPI will emerge first time a Legislature Party in the Lok Sabha, which virtually amounts to formation of a new legislature party in the Lok Sabha. Their own declaration of affiliation with NCPI cannot, ipso facto, erase their original party status as they were elected on the symbol of TMC, keeping in view the judgement of the Supreme Court in G. Viswanathan v. The Hon'ble Speaker Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. Moreover, the defence of split is no longer available to members facing disqualification proceedings after deletion of para 3 from the Tenth Schedule by the 91st Constitution Amendment, a position reiterated by the Apex Court in Subhash Desai case. However, its truism that no two cases are exactly alike and the adjudicating authority is duty bound to consider the peculiar facts and circumstances of the case having regard to the objective of the anti defection law and the imperative need to curb rampant defections. What interpretation is given to the Tenth Schedule by the Speaker, Lok Sabha in exercise of quasi-judicial power vested in him and in his sagacity and wisdom, is a matter of great and wider public interest. After all, the Speaker is venerated for his sense of impartiality, independence and fairness and is rightly considered to be the symbol of our parliamentary democracy.

The author is a member of the Supreme Court Bar Association



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Punishing students for questions unconstitutional, says SC Judge



Supreme Court judge Ujjal Bhuyan on Sunday said that students expressing a different point of view or asking questions cannot be threatened with punitive action, as such an approach is unconstitutional and a misuse of power.

Justice Bhuyan said a university should be a place where “established positions” can be “examined and questioned” and disagreements are not met with hostility.

A university should be where the habit of thinking freely begins, and a student does not hesitate to ask difficult questions, the top court judge asserted, while underscoring that the right to question was not an act of defiance, and that “an intolerant mind” is at odds with the spirit of the Indian Constitution.

The top court judge was speaking at the 13th convocation ceremony for the postgraduate students of National Law University, Delhi.

“When students express a different point of view, when students ask questions, they cannot be threatened with punitive action. That is unconstitutional. That is a misuse of power and office,” said Justice Bhuyan.

“It’s (university) a place where individuals encounter ideas that may be different from their own, where established positions can be examined and questioned, and where disagreements can take place through reason rather than hostility. If we want a democratic society that respects liberty and difference, that culture has to begin from the universities,” he added.

In his convocation address, Justice Bhuyan said the Indian Constitution recognises that a free society will witness different opinions and beliefs, and that participation in public life will be meaningful only when there is space for dissent. (PTI)

Delhi court convicts ex-DTC bus driver for 2021 hit-and-run case



A Delhi court has convicted a former DTC bus driver for rash and negligent driving that led to the death of a man in 2021, observing that his actions were “manifestly and indubitably fraught with rashness.” Judicial Magistrate Twinkle Chawla was hearing the case registered by the Inderpuri police station against the accused Karan Singh under Indian Penal Code (IPC) Sections 279 (rash driving) and 304A (causing death by negligence).

According to the prosecution, Singh was driving a DTC bus on DPS Marg near the NASC Complex in Inderpuri when he rammed into a two-wheeler from behind. Amit Singh, who was riding the motorcycle with his brother riding as pillion, fell and was crushed under the rear tyre of the bus.

The court underlined that the impact was so immense that the victim suffered a skull fracture and had tyre marks on his chest and neck. Noting the victim’s brother’s testimony, the court in its order dated August 17 rejected the driver’s defence that his vehicle was not involved in the accident.

It cited technical evidence, including the mechanical inspection of the bus, which had revealed “dried blood marks on outer surface of tyre, dried flesh, brain (matter) on inside arch surface of rear outer tyre.”

The court also pointed out that the accident occurred during peak morning hours and that the bus was not being driven in its designated lane. “At any rate, there is no calibrated instrument of definite precision, which could give a clear arithmetical result so as to establish rashness or negligence. Every prudent driver understands that in case the vehicle is not slowed down, even after spotting a smaller vehicle ahead, while driving the vehicle at a high speed, the act is fraught with predictable dangers and the consequences may be disastrous.” (PTI)

Justice Bhuyan flags 76-year absence of distinguished jurists on SC bench

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Supreme Court judge Ujjal Bhuyan on Sunday battled in favour of appointing ‘distinguished jurists’ as judges of the top court, stating that such an inclusion would diversify the bench with talent and let scholars of repute contribute to the decision-making process.

Justice Bhuyan said it was regrettable that despite Article 124 (3)(c) of the Constitution enabling such an appointment, no person other than high court judges or practising lawyers has reached the Supreme Court in the last 76 years.

He remarked that either the Centre and Collegium found that there was “not enough depth” in the Indian academia to be “seriously considered” for judgeship, or both authorities have not “seriously explored this provision thus far”.

Justice Bhuyan called the assertion that legal scholars lack practical experience a

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SC to hear plea concerning cash donations received by political parties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea which challenged the validity of a provision of the Income Tax Act that allows political parties to receive “anonymous” cash donations below ₹2,000.

The plea said this lack of transparency undermines the purity of the election process as it deprives voters of the crucial knowledge about the source of political funding, including the donors and their motives, preventing them from making a rational, intelligent and fully informed decision while casting their vote.

According to the top court cause list, a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta is likely to hear the matter. The top court had earlier issued notices to the Centre, Election Commission and others seeking their responses on the petition.

The plea filed by petitioner Khem Singh Bhati has also sought a direction to the poll panel to prescribe as a condition for registration of a political party and allotment of the election symbol that no amount can be received in cash by any political party.

The plea sought the striking



ing down of Clause (d) of section 13A of the Income Tax Act, 1961, as unconstitutional, and also referred to the apex court’s 2024 judgement which scrapped the electoral bonds scheme.

“The petitioner is seeking direction that the political parties must disclose the name and all other particulars of the person paying any amount of money to it, and no amount can be received in cash so as to maintain transparency in the political funding,” the plea, filed said.

Section 13A of the Act deals with the special provision relating to the incomes of political parties.

The plea said section 13A was introduced in the Act and income of a political party received by way of interest on securities, income from house property or

should be directed that accounts of all political parties shall be maintained in such form as may be prescribed and audited by independent auditors appointed by it.

It has also sought a direction to the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to scrutinise the income tax returns and audit reports filed by political parties under sections 142 and 143 of the Income Tax Act for the last five years.

The plea said the CBDT should be directed to initiate appropriate proceedings for the levy of tax, penalty and prosecution for failure to comply with the requirements of Section 13A of the Income Tax Act read with Section 29C of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Section 29C of the Representation of the People Act deals with the declaration of donations received by political parties.

The plea also referred to the apex court’s 2024 judgement, which struck down the electoral bonds scheme.

The scheme, which was notified by the Government on January 2, 2018, was pitched as an alternative to cash donations made to political parties as part of efforts to bring in transparency in political funding.

Thane court acquits six in 2011 extortion case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thane

A court in Maharashtra’s Thane district has acquitted six men, including a social worker, in a 14-year-old case of extortion and wrongful restraint, citing absence of evidence.

Chief Judicial Magistrate Vikram M Karhadkar cleared all six accused of charges under sections 384 (extortion) and 341 (wrongful restraint) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) after the sole prosecution witness failed to support the case, which stemmed from a 2011 incident.

A copy of the order passed on August 27 was made available on Sunday.

The court acquitted Santosh Shivram Sonawane,



Kailash Narsing Bakule, Sushant Sayaji Jadhav, Sachin Vijay Chavan, Pradeep Shantaram Gole, and Sunil Deepak Khambhe. Another accused in the case passed away during the pendency of the trial.

According to the prosecution, the incident occurred on February 5, 2011, at the

The prosecution examined only the complainant, who failed to support the state’s case. Consequently, the court dispensed with recording the statement of the accused under Section 313 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) as no incriminating material emerged against them.

The court held that despite granting ample opportunity to the prosecution, no other witness was examined, and there was no other documentary or circumstantial evidence available in the case.

“Overall, since there is no oral, documentary, or circumstantial evidence available against the accused in the present case, nothing is established against the accused,” it stated.

Judiciary proactively responded to emerging fraudulent schemes like digital arrest: CJI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant has said the Indian judiciary has proactively responded to emerging fraudulent schemes such as digital arrest scams rather than waiting for Parliament to address them.

In his closing address at the 43rd International Symposium on Economic Crime in London on Saturday, the CJI said the Supreme Court had recently taken suo motu cognisance of the “digital arrest” scam, in which fraudsters impersonate police officers, judicial officials, or bureaucrats over video calls to dupe citizens.

“In response, the court has directed the Union and the states to evaluate the extent of this problem and has called for the establishment of a distinct offence, with penalties proportionate to the harm inflicted,” he said.

“This exemplifies a broader pattern: an Indian Judiciary that proactively responds to emerging fraudulent schemes,

rather than waiting for Parliament to address them,” the CJI said. He said when one looks at India’s modern response to economic crime, it is best understood not as a single statute but as a layered architecture, built deliberately over successive decades, in which legislation, institutions and judicial doctrine are each made to do distinct work.

The CJI referred to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, and the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018.

“I must note that these are not infallible mechanisms. Numerous individuals have alleged misuse of the PMLA process by investigating authorities, including claims of arrests made without articulated reasons, and of custody extended beyond what the existing facts appear to justify. In each such instance, the judiciary has intervened to rectify the situation,” he said.

Justice Kant referred to the apex court’s verdict holding that grounds for arrest must



be provided to the accused in writing, rather than merely read aloud.

“Furthermore, in Arvind Kejriwal versus Central Bureau of Investigation, a decision I had the opportunity to author, the court upheld the legality of the arrest but nonetheless granted bail, based on the principle that prolonged pre-trial detention should not be transformed into punishment under a different guise,” he said.

The CJI said what had remained consistent through

the decades, despite legal and technological developments, was the apex court’s insistence that due process, proportionality and the presumption of innocence remain the guiding principles of its jurisprudence.

Referring to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, the CJI said it runs alongside criminal proceedings and the Indian justice delivery system has grown increasingly comfortable authorising parallel civil recovery even where a criminal trial remains pro-

HC quashes blanket ban on foreign travel by Govt employees in Haryana

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chandigarh

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has struck down the Haryana government’s June 10 ban on foreign travel by its employees till September this year, observing that a blanket prohibition on an entire class of citizens merely because they are in Government service is manifestly arbitrary.

“The factual matrix of the present case is illustrative of a sledgehammer being used to crack a nut, which is impermissible in our constitutional jurisprudence,” the High Court said, setting aside the restrictions imposed by the state Government that were “grossly disproportionate to its alleged objective”.

Justice Harpreet Singh Brar, in his order on August 27, directed Haryana authorities to grant permission to the petitioner, a nursing officer, to travel to Australia for a professional exam, stressing that the

Australian visa. She deposited the prescribed fee and was on May 29 granted a valid visa.

With the objective of gaining professional experience and obtaining higher qualification, she had applied for the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) conducted by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and National Boards, her counsel submitted before the court.

Later, when she submitted her application dated August 18 for earned leave, it was not entertained by authorities in view of the Government instructions/guidelines dated June 10, 2026, which prohibit Government servants and employees of Boards, Corporations and public authorities from travelling abroad, for official or personal reasons, up to September 2026, except if such travel is necessitated for medical reasons.

The petitioner’s counsel vehemently argued that the



Supreme Court has held that the right to travel abroad is an integral part of the right to life and personal liberty enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution.

She had been denied permission citing the June 10 directive, which the state counsel argued was temporary and issued in public interest as an austerity measure due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the West Asian crisis.

The counsel for the petitioner had contended that she joined as a nursing officer with PGIMS hospital in Rohtak on February 23, 2021, and obtained approval in January this year to apply for an

impugned Government instructions are unconstitutional, arbitrary and disproportionate. It was submitted that the right to travel abroad is a recognised facet of the fundamental right to life and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

It was further submitted that the impugned instructions fail the tests of fairness, reasonableness and non-arbitrariness, as they indiscriminately apply to all Government employees, irrespective of their individual circumstances, destination, purpose of travel, duration of absence or nature of duties.

Delhi court convicts man for wife’s dowry death in 2021

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A Delhi court has convicted a man in a 2021 dowry death case, saying an immediately proximate link is established between the demand for dowry and cruelty soon before his wife committed suicide.

Additional Sessions Judge Syed Zishan Ali Warsi convicted Surender Yadav under Sections 304B (dowry death) and 498A (cruelty by husband) of the Indian Penal Code.

According to the prosecution, the accused was a habitual gambler and drinker who frequently assaulted his wife Pooja.

Yadav had demanded money from Pooja on various pretexts, including repaying his gambling debts, after the couple tied the knot in 2017.

Pooja was found hanging in her matrimonial home in Palam Colony on January 5, 2021. In a 75-page verdict dated August 25, the court said, “Considering the testimonies of the witnesses, it is established by the prosecution that the demand of money or dowry was made soon before her death and for the purpose of fulfilment of demand of dowry deceased Pooja was subjected to cruelty by beating for three days as narrated on telephone by the



deceased to her father.”

“Thus, a live and immediately proximate link is established between the demand of dowry and cruelty soon before the death of deceased Pooja and the same remained

credible, consistent and trustworthy,” the court said.

It said the prosecution has proved beyond a reasonable doubt that soon before her death, Pooja was subjected to cruelty and harassment for demand of dowry.

The judge noted the victim had called her father just two days before her death, crying and stating that she had been beaten for three consecutive days over money demands.

The court dismissed the husband’s defence that Pooja had ended her life due to depression caused by financial hardships during the Covid pandemic.

The Upanishadic Path to Ecological Responsibility and Sustainable Future

The opening verse of the *Isha Upanishad* (one of the eight *Upanishads*, which comprise the earliest Indian philosophical literature) is a proposition so profound that later commentators, from Adi Shankaracharya to Sri Aurobindo, have construed it as the essence of the text's entire philosophy:

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

"All this, whatsoever moves in this moving world, is enveloped by the Lord. Enjoy through renunciation; do not covet anyone's wealth."

This middle path, formulated three millennia ago, is what a resource-depleted planet needs present and future generations to adopt and follow.

Decoding and Understanding this Verse in the Context of Environment

The first word, *Ishavasyam*, i.e., pervaded, indwelt, enveloped by the Lord, situated within the overarching Upanishadic framework of the self (*atman*) and the supreme (*brahman*), teaches that one should partake of what is available with restraint and non-possessiveness and should not covet what belongs to another. It states that enjoyment (*bhunjitha*) be mediated by renunciation (*tyaktena*) and disciplined by the refusal to covet (*ma gridhah*). In the precise interpretation of *tena tyaktena bhunjitha*, *tyaga* signifies renunciation or detachment while *bhunjitha* carries the sense of enjoying, using or possessing.

If forests, rivers, flora and fauna and the atmosphere are not simply resources awaiting human appropriation but are themselves suffused with the sacred or the divine, then their extraction becomes a matter of restraint and reverence.

This sentiment is not unique to the *Ishopanishad* within the Vedic corpus. Consider this phrase from Atharvaveda's *Bhumi Sukta* (12.12):

माता भूमिः पुत्रोऽहं पृथिव्याः

"Earth is my mother; I am the son of Earth."

Articulated in the first-person pronoun, it may be taken to imply that all inhabitants of the Earth are her sons, and they all have a right on her as well as a responsibility toward her. This reinforces the belief that she belongs to all rather than any single claimant.

Ancient Dictum, Contemporary Relevance

Perceived in the wake of the ecological crisis of the 21st century, the *Ishopanishadic* hymn acquires an



R K PACHNANDA

FORMER CHAIRMAN,
HARYANA PUBLIC SERVICE
COMMISSION; FORMER
CHAIRMAN, HARYANA
ELECTRICITY REGULATORY
COMMISSION; FORMER
DG-ITBP; FORMER
DG-NDRF; COMMISSIONER
OF POLICE, KOLKATA;
DIRECTOR, BHARAT
KI SOCH



Dr. ABHISHEK ANAND

SENIOR RESEARCH
FELLOW, BHARAT
KI SOCH

extraordinary contemporary resonance: use without abusing, harassing or exploiting; enjoy without exhausting and possess without becoming possessed by possession itself.

Sadly, this is the era of manufacture, extract, consume and discard. A light left burning in an empty room, water flowing unnecessarily from a tap, tissue paper pulled out in quantities greater than required, food discarded because more was served than could be eaten, a perfectly usable object replaced merely because a newer version has appeared - these may seem trivial in isolation. Collectively, however, such tendencies or habits express a deeper cultural disposition that nature's resources exist for immediate human consumption and abundance equals unlimited availability.

The *Ishopanishadic* ethic challenges this assumption. *Ma gridhah* (do not covet) is a caution against the psychology of endless acquisition. The environmental problem is not consumption as such. Human beings necessarily

consume food, water, energy, materials and space. The question is: how much, for what purpose, at what ecological cost and with what consequences for others and those who will be born after us?

Great Minds Drawing from *Tena Tyaktena Bhunjitha*

Mahatma Gandhi gave this ancient morale a distinctly modern economic vocabulary. His popular observation that the Earth provides enough for everyone's needs, but not for everyone's greed, has become a touchstone of environmental thought. In *Trusteeship* (compiled by Ravindra Kelekar and published in 1960), he argued that taking more than one needs amounts to depriving others. His notion of non-possession, therefore, had a social as well as an ecological dimension: restraint in consumption creates room for equity, justice and human dignity.

Gandhi's thinking is particularly relevant to environmental behaviour today because it makes the question of sustainability a question of responsibility. Turning off an appliance when it is unneces-

sary, closing a tap while brushing, carrying a reusable bottle, avoiding needless printing, using both sides of paper, taking only as much food as one can eat, repairing rather than immediately replacing usable goods, refusing unnecessary single-use articles, segregating waste, composting organic matter, planting and caring for native trees, protecting local water bodies and avoiding litter are not insignificant gestures. They cultivate *sanyam* (self-restraint) and can transform an abstract environmental ethic into daily conduct and practice.

The Gandhian economist J. C. Kumarappa developed this insight into an economic philosophy in *The Economy of Permanence* (1945). He distinguished between exhaustible resources, such as fossil fuels and minerals, and renewable flows, such as water and growing timber, whose continued availability depends upon responsible management. His central proposition was that an economy should not merely maximise present consumption but should harmonise human activity with nature's capacity for renewal.

Kumarappa's postulate offers a bridge between Indian civilisational thought and contemporary sustainability. Nature, in his conception, is not an inert warehouse of raw materials. It is an organic and symbiotic whole of relationships in which different elements sustain one another. He cautions that an economy that destroys its ecological foundations may generate wealth and steer towards advancement and development in the short term, but it jeopardises its own existence in the long term.

Conclusion

Moderation, restraint and a control over endless consumption can inform, guide and motivate present and future generations in environmental protection, preservation, conservation and restoration ethics.

Ecological responsibility cannot be left entirely to governments, courts or institutions like the NGT. We are all equal stakeholders in the country's growth. A river is also the responsibility of the community that lives beside it; a neighbourhood tree is also the responsibility of the citizens who benefit from its shade; a local pond, forest, grazing ground or wetland survives only when people recognise a stake in its continued existence. Let's move from "use-and-discard" to "use-and-care"; from extraction to regeneration; from ownership to stewardship; from entitlement to responsibility.

Bharat's growth story need not be imagined as a choice between progress and prosperity vis-à-vis ecology. Forests must remain forests even as economies grow; rivers must remain living rivers even as cities expand; soil must remain fertile even as agriculture becomes more productive; biodiversity must flourish even as infrastructure develops. This will be possible once we all think and act along *tena tyaktena bhunjitha*.

Fable with Moral

Shakuntala and Dushyant

(Abhijnanashakuntalam by Kalidasa)



Shakuntala lived in rishi Kanva's hermitage, living a simple, idyllic life. King Dushyanta of Hastinapur encountered her while hunting and was captivated by her beauty. He remained near the hermitage, and mutual affection grew. Though raised in modesty and restraint, Shakuntala felt deep emotion for him. They acknowledged their love and married informally, without traditional ceremonies.

Dushyanta was called away on royal duties. He gave Shakuntala his ring as a token of love and promised to send for her. While lost in thoughts of him, she inadvertently offended the short-tempered sage Durvasa, by failing to notice his arrival and neglecting to offer him traditional hospitality. He cursed her: the person she longs for will forget her. At her friends' pleading, he softened the curse so it would lift when Dushyanta sees the ring.

Pregnant with her child, Shakuntala left the hermitage amid deep sorrow

at parting from her childhood home. At Dushyanta's court the curse took effect: he failed to recognize her accusing her of deception. She reached for the ring only to realize she had lost it while worshipping in the Ganges. Heartbroken, she was taken by celestial nymphs to the ashram of her divine mother, Menaka.

The ring was later recovered from a fisherman who found it in a fish's belly. When it was shown to Dushyanta, the curse broke and his memory returned. Filled with remorse, he yearned to reunite with her. After fulfilling a mission for Indra against demons, he met Shakuntala on a heavenly mountain with their son Bharata, a remarkable child of courage and strength whose royal birthmarks confirmed his legitimacy. Dushyanta falls at her feet in apology. After initial hesitation, Shakuntala accepts his sincerity; destiny reunites them, restoring her honor.

Moral of the Fable - God does Justice

Did you know?

The Western Ghats across Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka hide a spectacular botanical wonder. The *Neelakurinji* (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*) shrub blooms just once every twelve years. When thousands of these shrubs blossom simultaneously, entire mountain slopes transform into a breathtaking, vibrant purplish-blue carpet. This extraordinary natural phenomenon gave the Nilgiri hills their very name, which translates directly to the Blue Mountains.

Botanists refer to this rare survival strategy as mass synchronized flowering. By blooming together after a long gap, the plants produce more seeds than local wildlife can possibly consume, ensuring the species survives. The unique lifecycle of this wildflower acts as a crucial



ecological calendar for indigenous communities like the Toda tribe, who historically tracked their age using these magnificent mass blooms.

During these rare peak bloom cycles, seeing the high-altitude shola-grassland hillsides of Munnar covered in vivid purple remains one of nature's most enchanting spectacles, drawing travelers worldwide to key eco-tourism spots like Eravikulam National Park, Meeshapulimala, Chokramudi, Sevenmalai and Gundumala.

UNJUMBLE

1. Unjumble these scrambled words to form the terms often used in Environment & Sustainability of Ancient India:

RIKTAPIR

TVRIPIH

UYVA

SIVRHK

2. Arrange the circled letters to answer the following:

Nature's bounty during spring: _____



Answer: 1. Prakhiti, 2. Pushp, 3. Prithvi, 4. Vayu, 5. Vriksh.

Marvels of India

DEVAVANAS



Ancient Roots, Sacred Origins
Devavanas (Bharat's community-managed forest patches) represent one of the world's oldest institutionalised conservation systems, rooted in Vedic-era reverence for nature and formalised further under Mauryan statecraft. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* categorised forests into various types, including these protected biosphere reserves, while prohibiting unauthorised felling of trees under penalty of fines or corporal punishment.

A Living Ecological Network
Bharat is estimated to have between 100,000 and 150,000 sacred groves, with 13,270 documented thus far. These preserve a rich heritage of biodiversity from the Vedic times, improving soil quality, replenishing water resources and conserving rare, endemic, threatened and ethnobotanical species.

Guardianship Through Belief
Most of them are dedicated and consecrated to local deities, where religious and traditional beliefs, cultural mores etc. play a crucial role in ensuring their maintenance and upkeep, thereby enabling clean air, soil and water, flora and fauna conservation and carbon sequestration.

A Living Legacy
Despite the growing pressures and threats of modernisation, urbanisation, industrialisation and encroachment, the *Devavanas*, as living, faith-governed conservation networks, remain a marvel of Bharat's civilisational approach to ecological sustainability.

Environment & Sustainability				
Questions	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
1. For over 200 years, tribal farmers in Meghalaya have used pipes to divert water from springs through steep hillsides without causing soil erosion or water wastage, ensuring agricultural resilience. What is this practice called?	Bamboo drip irrigation	Khadin system	Zabo system	Drip/Micro irrigation
2. The 'Bhunga' houses withstood one of the most devastating earthquakes of 21st century. Where are they found?	Kashmir	Gujarat	Andaman	Assam
3. Which animal's behaviour is often treated as an early warning sign for approaching cyclones for the indigenous communities of coastal Odisha?	Spotted Deer	Flying Fox	Red Crab	Sea Turtle
4. Which ecological feature acts as a 'bio-shield', often supported by coastal management to reduce tsunami impact?	Mangrove forests	Coral reefs	Sand dunes	Kelp belts
5. In the context of community resilience, what is the primary purpose of 'Village Grain Banks' found in many tribal regions of India?	Fair price shops	Export surplus storage	Grain quality testing	Post-disaster food security
Answers: 1 - A, 2 - B, 3 - C, 4 - A, 5 - D				

Varanadushaka Jataka

The Monkeys and the Gardener

1



A loyal gardener looked after a beautiful garden of a wealthy merchant in the town of Varanasi.

2



One day the gardener's friend dropped by to invite him to a festival in a nearby town.

3



The gardener was tempted to go but wondered who would water the garden in his absence. A monkey living on a tree saw the gardener looking sad and asked him the reason behind his sadness.

4



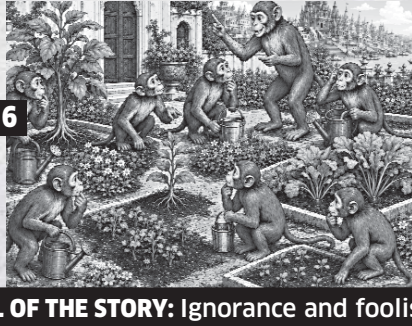
The monkey offered to help the gardener in watering the plants in his absence. The gardener was happy and proceeded to visit the nearby town and enjoy the festival.

5



The monkey rounded up his friends and instructed them to collect watering cans and buckets.

6



Soon the monkeys were faced with a problem. They found that some plants were big and others were small. They asked the monkey how much water should they give to each plant. The monkey instructed them to give water according to the size of the roots.

7



Following orders blindly without common sense, they pulled up each tree to check the size of its roots—giving lots of water to deep roots and little to shallow roots—thereby killing the entire garden.

8



Two days later when the gardener returned, he was agast at the site of his destroyed garden. He bowed his head down in despair and worried about what to say to his master, the wealthy merchant.

MORAL OF THE STORY: Ignorance and foolish actions do more harm than good, even when motivated by good intentions.

NASA telescope explores hidden universe

MARCIA DUNNAP
■ Cape Canaveral (US)

NASA's newest crown jewel blasted off Sunday to hunt for planets around other stars, explore secret dark energy and survey the cosmos like never before.

SpaceX launched the USD 4.3 billion Roman Space Telescope shortly after day-break aboard a triple-the-firepower Falcon Heavy rocket from Kennedy Space Centre. Roman blazed toward an observation point 1 million miles (1.6 million kilometres) away that's home to the Webb Space Telescope, one of NASA's other big-ticket eyes in the sky.

The bus-sized telescope -- named after the late Nancy



Grace Roman, NASA's first chief astronomer -- will take more than three months to reach its destination. Once there, it will cast the widest

of supernovae, tens of thousands of planets, billions of galaxies and tens of billions of stars," said NASA science mission director Nicky Fox. "It's going to be able to do things that we've never been able to do before with its massive field of view." Roman's field of view is more than 100 times wider than that of NASA's Hubble Space Telescope, still churning out celestial glamour shots after 36 years in orbit. Webb joined the effort several years ago with an even narrower yet spot-on vision capable of zooming in on objects almost as old as the universe-creating Big Bang. These three orbiting powerhouses will join forces -- along with the European Space Agency's

Euclid spacecraft and the National Science Foundation's Vera C. Rubin Observatory in Chile -- to reveal some of the universe's biggest secrets.

Inside the countless galaxies awaiting discovery are stars with planets. Once these new worlds are spotted by Roman, the more powerful and sensitive Webb will take aim to fill in the blanks. "Roman's vast reach will allow us to find the weird, the rare and the unusual," senior project scientist Julie McEnery said on the eve of launch. "We'll redefine what it means to find a needle in a haystack." Perhaps even more important, astronomers expect Roman to shed light on the dark matter and dark energy

that make up most of the universe yet remain concealed. Roman's catalogue of galaxies will help scientists ascertain how quickly the universe is expanding due to these puzzling, unseen forces.

Roman's superpower is speed. A month of Milky Way observations by Roman would take Hubble a century to complete, according to McEnery. Roman should make quick work of scanning the galactic bulge at dead centre, she added, providing the deepest look yet into the heart of our galaxy.

Besides a wide-field infrared camera that matches Hubble's sensitivity but is 1,000 times faster, Roman holds an instrument to block out starlight. (AP)

Dozens killed, arrested after mutiny in Niger Capital



KJM VARMA ■ Beijing

Dozens of soldiers were killed or arrested after a group of young troops attempted a mutiny in Niger's capital in what was seen as a major threat to the country's ruling junta, according to a state television broadcast and analysts. It was the culmination of nearly 24 hours of unrest that appeared to be staged by young soldiers aggrieved over the worsening militant violence under the country's military junta. Russia's Africa Corps provided aerial and ground support to local forces to resist the rebellion, according to analysts and diplomats.

State broadcaster RTN showed footage of dozens of mostly young soldiers being paraded in public after sustained gunfire and explosions were heard overnight into Saturday at a key military base located within Niamey's main airport and near the presidential palace.

"The fighting lasted a few hours in several places, which allowed (security forces) to gradually control the situation, arrest and incapacitate these moody soldiers," state TV reported. The whereabouts of military leader Abdourahamane Tchiani were unclear.

Senior Nigerian military officers visited the Africa Corps base at the airport "and expressed gratitude to its servicemen for their assistance in suppressing the rebellion," Russian media quoted Moscow's Ambassador to Niger Viktor Voropayev as saying.

The rebelling soldiers had camped at the military base until late Saturday while the presidential guard secured the presidential palace and was deployed to regain control of the base, analysts and diplomats said.

The loyalist forces have regained the "upper hand at least at the airport (and base)," according to Wassim Nasr, a senior research fellow

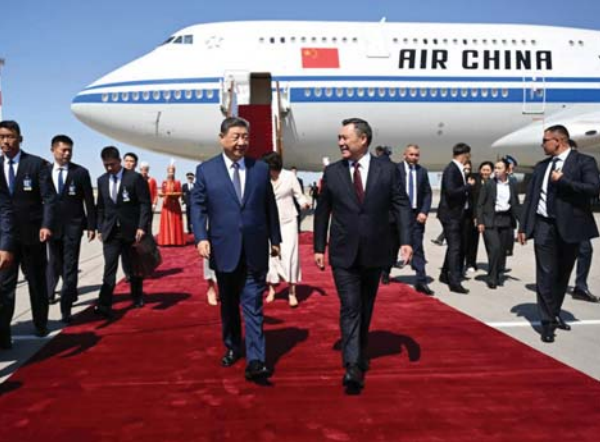
at the Soufan Centre. Some forces were, however, heading to the capital and it remained unclear if they were coming to support the mutiny or the junta, Nasr added. The Associated Press could not independently confirm whether the Nigerian security forces regained full control of the base.

Some of the mutinous soldiers came from the southwest of the country, among the regions worst-hit by insecurity, diplomats and analysts said. The state broadcaster stopped its live transmission for some time on Saturday morning before it resumed. It broadcast a statement from Niger's Defence Minister Gen. Salifou Mody saying a group of soldiers took some officers hostage at the base and shot at "sensitive sites" in a "break with the discipline and military regulations."

The airport is a strategic hub that hosts a Nigerian air force base as well as the headquarters of the joint Niger-Burkina Faso-Mali military force. All three neighbours are now under military rule, following a string of coups in Africa's Sahel region, but are struggling with insecurity. Niger's junta came to power after a 2023 coup which it said was prompted by the elected government's inability to stem armed violence. Since then, the impoverished West African country of more than 25 million people has severed ties with longtime Western security partners, turning instead to Russia. But the junta has been unable to stem militant violence and rampant killing of security forces, fuelling unrest within the military, observers say.

The ruling military council, known as the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland, called for unity. "Our Defence and Security Forces are mobilised for the Defence of the Fatherland. Let us remain united, vigilant and supportive," it said in a Facebook post. (PTI)

Xi Jinping arrives in Kyrgyzstan to attend SCO summit



KJM VARMA ■ Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Kyrgyzstan on Sunday to participate in the 26th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, which will also be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders from the member countries.

"I look forward to attending the SCO Bishkek Summit, working with all parties to revisit the 25-year development experience of the SCO, jointly discuss cooperation plans, create the future of the organisation," Xi said on his arrival, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Xi said he looked forward to working with all parties to "promote the continuous new development of the organisation". On the sidelines of the summit, to be held from August 31 to September 1, Xi is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with several other SCO leaders. The SCO member states include Russia, India,

Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Belarus and China. September is expected to be a busy month for Xi, who is widely expected to attend the BRICS summit in New Delhi on September 12-13 and later travel to the US for a summit meeting with President Donald Trump.

Ahead of the BRICS summit, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held the 25th Special Representatives (SRs) mechanism meeting on the boundary question in Beijing on Tuesday.

Both countries reached an eight-point consensus and agreed to advance discussions on an "Early and Substantial Harvest" of boundary delimitation and border management. The SRs mechanism is regarded as a key body aimed at comprehensively addressing the dispute over the India-China border spanning 3,488 km, besides recurring tensions over a host of bilateral issues. (PTI)

Shooting at rave in Switzerland kills 1, injures 5

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Geneva

A shooting at a rave in the northern Swiss canton of Aargau killed one person and left five injured early Sunday, local police and media reported. Police said they are still looking for a suspect. "The search for the unknown perpetrator is ongoing," police wrote on X. "Possible motives and the exact circumstances of the crime remain unclear."

Cantonal police wrote on X that a 22-year-old woman died of injuries at the scene. Four men and one woman, between 24 and 27 years old, were taken to the hospital with injuries ranging from minor to severe. All of



the victims are residents of Switzerland, police said. Their names were not released in line with Swiss privacy rules.

Police spokesperson Pascal Wenzel told Swiss public broadcaster SRF that police were alerted around 2:30 am to the shooting in the canton's capital Aarau,

46 kilometres (29 miles) west of Zurich. At the time of the incident, the "Aarau Rave VOL. 7" was taking place at the horse racing track in Aarau's Schachen district, SRF reported. The fire department cordoned off a large area around the site. A major police operation was underway, and

locals were asked to stay away from the area. Police, firefighters and ambulances were on the scene in large numbers. Police in Freiburg, in neighbouring Germany, also took part in search efforts for the suspect, the German news agency dpa reported. Swiss daily Blick reported that visitors of the rave initially mistook the shots for fireworks until somebody shouted "every-one down." The newspaper wrote that the shooting took place right after the rave ended. Police later took all remaining visitors to a nearby gym, Blick reported.

Police called on possible witnesses who have video or photos of the incident to share them with police.



Shivani Mehrotra, a native of Uttar Pradesh, summited Europe's highest peak Mount Elbrus on August 15. She is 43-year-old and mother of an 18-year-old girl

PTI

7 dead as ferry capsizes off Northern Cyprus

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Bodrum (Turkiye)

At least seven people have died after a ferry carrying nearly 270 passengers and crew capsized off the coast of northern Cyprus on Sunday, Turkish media reported.

Some 237 people have been rescued, Northern Cyprus Prime Minister Unal Ustel told the Turkish state-run TRT news channel. He said a search was underway for another 24 people.

Ustel said the ferry faced adverse weather conditions and began taking in water just 15 minutes after departure. A call for help was issued shortly after, he said.

The catamaran-style ferry was travelling from the port of Kyrenia, also known as



Girme, in the breakaway north of ethnically divided Cyprus, to the Turkish port of Tasucu in Mersin province.

Kyrenia Mayor Murat Senkul said the ship belonged to the Filo Denizcilik ferry company and sank off the coast of Diana

Beach on Cyprus' northern coast. The ferry started taking in water about 7.5 km (4 nautical miles) off the coast, TRT reported.

Video footage from the scene shows people with life vests floating in the waters around the capsized vessel.

US provides \$3.6 million aid to flood-hit Nepal

SHIRISH B PRADHAN
■ Kathmandu

The United States has provided humanitarian assistance worth more than USD 3.6 million to people affected by the devastating floods in Nepal, including emergency food support for up to 10,000 households, the US Embassy in Kathmandu said on Sunday.

The US Embassy said it was working with the Nepal government and humanitarian organisations to ensure that assistance reaches those affected by the devastating floods that struck the Himalayan nation on Wednesday, claiming hundreds of lives and leaving thousands missing. "There is no higher prior-



ity for us than the safety of American citizens. Our embassies in Nepal and China are working closely to assist Americans and support disaster relief efforts," the embassy said in a post on X.

"The United States is standing with the people of Nepal by providing more than USD 3.6 million worth of

life-saving humanitarian assistance, including up to three months of emergency food assistance to up to 10,000 flood-affected households," it said. The US Embassy on Thursday said it had begun delivering supplies requested by the Nepal government to flood-affected communities. US Charge

d'Affaires Scott Urbom had sent the first shipment of emergency supplies from the US to Nepal on August 28, according to the embassy.

Catholic Relief Services, working through its implementing partner Caritas Nepal, delivered more than 2.5 tonnes of food supplies, 500 blankets, 500 mosquito nets and 500 insulating foam sheets for temporary shelter flooring to two schools in Rasuwa, it said. The embassy said it was coordinating with the Nepal government, Catholic Relief Services and Caritas Nepal to prepare and deliver subsequent shipments based on the country's needs. The US State Department had on August 26 announced an initial USD 500,000 assistance through

its global award with Catholic Relief Services for emergency shelter, relief items and water, sanitation and hygiene assistance to flood-affected communities.

The department had also said it was deploying a disaster response adviser to the region to support response efforts.

Meanwhile, the death toll from flash floods in central Nepal crossed 700 on Sunday, with nearly 2,500 people still missing, as rescuers continued to recover bodies and search for those unaccounted for. Bodies have been recovered from all eight affected districts as rescue teams race against time to trace missing people and rescue those stranded, officials said. (PTI)

Iran's leader Khamenei calls for Muslim unity, other Mideast news

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dubai

Iran's supreme leader called on Muslim countries to stand together against Israel and the United States, imploring them to "know your real enemy." US broadcaster NBC said Israeli settlers attacked a team of its journalists in the occupied West Bank. A British activist faced deportation after Israeli settlers seized him and turned him over to police. And an Israeli airstrike in central Gaza killed at least two Palestinians, including a 3-year-old boy, hospital authorities said.

Here's a look at the latest developments Sunday in the Iran war and the wider Middle East. Full coverage can be

found here.

Iran's new supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, urged Muslim cooperation and unity in a letter to religious leaders from Islamic countries attending a conference in Tehran, Iran's official IRNA news agency reported.

Khamenei called the US and Israel enemies of all Islamic nations. "My enduring and repeating advice to rulers of Islamic nations is to know your real enemy, understand its plans and confront it," he wrote. Six months after the US and Israel attacked Iran, killing Khamenei's father and other senior leaders, Khamenei has not been seen publicly. The war has exposed deep divi-



Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei

sions in the Muslim world after Iran struck targets in neighbouring Gulf Arab countries and restricted movement through the Strait of Hormuz. Tehran has opposed the US military presence in

neighbouring nations.

Settlers attacked an NBC crew in the central West Bank on Saturday as they were interviewing a Palestinian woman who said she'd been driven out of her house, the

network said. Correspondent Matt Bradley, two other crew members and the woman were treated for injuries, NBC said, giving no details about them. NBC shared footage showing masked settlers approaching the crew with sticks and beating their vehicles. Israel's military said it was "aware of reports of Palestinian injuries, including a Palestinian woman who sustained non-life-threatening injuries and was evacuated by the Red Crescent for medical treatment."

It did not comment on the attack on the NBC crew. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued a rare condemnation of the violence on Saturday, after

a growing wave of violence by settlers in the West Bank. The Israeli leader has come under US criticism for the attacks. Israeli settlers seized a British activist from a Palestinian village in the West Bank on Saturday and locked him in a shed before turning him over to police, his lawyer said Sunday. Inbar Shaked Vardi said settlers held Finn Joughin for half an hour.

Video showed two settlers, one armed, restraining Joughin and marching him away. It was not clear what led to his capture. Settlers alleged he assaulted a child, which Vardi denied. Settlers pointed to a video where the activist uses his body in an apparent

attempt to block a settler boy from passing through a fence. Vardi said the video shows he was trying to protect the village. "Without any hearing, the police have decided to move him to deportation, which just shows that this entire case has been political in the first place," Vardi said later, adding that Joughin would likely be deported Sunday night.

A spokesperson with the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office said embassy officials have raised the case with Israeli authorities and were seeking information. An Israeli strike hit a group of people in the

western part of Deir al-Balah, killing a 3-year-old and a man whom Israel's military called a Hamas operative. The military, in a statement, identified the man as Hassam Osama Hussein Nasir. It said he had "posed an immediate threat," without providing evidence.

Another Palestinian was wounded, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the casualties. The deaths were the latest in Gaza since a fragile October ceasefire deal attempted to halt more than two years of war between Israel and Hamas. Gaza's Health Ministry says Israeli fire has killed at least 1,318 Palestinians since that truce.

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Gaurs Group buys 35-acre land for ₹700 crore

Realty firm Gaurs Group has acquired 35-acre land parcels along Yamuna Expressway from ICICI Bank for around ₹700 crore to develop residential projects as part of its expansion plan. The company bought three land parcels in Sector 18 along the Yamuna Expressway, which connects Noida and Greater Noida to Agra, at an auction from ICICI Bank. “We have acquired 35 acres of land parcels from ICICI Bank for around ₹700 crore,” Gaurs Group Chairman Manoj Gaur said. There are three land parcels, with a 24-acre plot being the largest.

“The land has been acquired in an open auction from ICICI Bank Ltd on an as-is, where-is basis. We are settling all the pending dues like EDC, farmer compensation etc,” the company said. Gaurs Group, which is one of the leading real estate developers in Delhi-NCR, plans to launch the project on the 24-acre land parcel. Gaur said the company plans to launch 3-4 housing projects by March next year at Noida and Yamuna Expressway. The Group clocked sales bookings of ₹5,500 crore during the last fiscal year. (PTI)

VP to launch ornamental fisheries plan in Lakshadweep

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan will release a strategic action plan for the ornamental fisheries sector on Monday, as the Government pushes to expand fish farming and exports from the Lakshadweep islands. The plan, called ‘Mission Ranganee Machhli 2031’, will set uniform rules for breeding, biosecurity, quality control and trade across India’s ornamental fish industry, the fisheries ministry said in a statement. The launch event in Agatti will be attended by Fisheries Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh, junior minister SP Singh Baghel, and Lakshadweep administrator Praful Khoda Patel, along with fish farmers, fishers and Government officials. India has a coastline of about 11,099 km, an exclusive economic zone of roughly 2.4 million sq km, with marine fisheries potential estimated at 5.86 million tonnes, the ministry said. The sector supports about 5 million fishers and generated seafood exports worth 738.9 billion rupees in the fiscal year that ended in March. (PTI)

Govt expands digital fertiliser tracking system to link farmers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Government on Sunday said it is broadening a nationwide digital platform that tracks fertiliser from production to retail sale, adding tools to link purchases with individual farmers’ land records and to monitor subsidy payments more closely.

The Integrated Fertilizer Management System (iFMS), run by the Department of Fertilizers with technical support from the National Informatics Centre, already tracks more than 14 crore Aadhaar-linked buyers and over 2,50,000 retailers, and processes about 70 million tonnes of fertiliser sales a

year. The system underpins roughly ₹2 lakh crore in annual fertiliser subsidies. The department has been developing new dashboards that give officials a consolidated view of production, imports, dispatches, stocks and retail sales at the nation-

mally receive their degrees and mark their transition from academic life into the professional world. The ceremony will honour outstanding students of each programme across campuses with the highest CGPA with a gold medal.

President to grace NIFT Convocation in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu will attend the Combined Convocation 2026 of the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) on Monday, where graduating students from 18 NIFT campuses will come together to celebrate the conferment of their degrees. The combined convocation will be followed by campus-wise degree distribution ceremonies, where graduating students will for-

The Pioneer

BHUBANESWAR | MONDAY | AUGUST 31, 2026

India shielded farmers, households from global shocks: Finance Minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Washington

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said India has remained resilient amid global uncertainties by continuously monitoring developments abroad while keeping the country’s own requirements in focus. “As a result, Indian farmers, Indian households and Indian logistics did not suffer,” Sitharaman said while addressing the Indian diaspora in Chicago. She said several countries had seen their economic calculations go haywire amid the uncertainties, but India, despite its limitations, had managed to protect its citizens in the challenging environment. “Thankfully, despite our limitations, we have kept our citizens protected in this challenging

environment.” She emphasised that India has sustained 7 per cent-plus growth since the COVID-19 pandemic, and this year too, the country’s growth will be in that range. The growth has come against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, tariff uncertainties, and the Iran-US conflict, she said. The

finance minister emphasised that India’s ability to track global developments while simultaneously understanding domestic requirements had helped the country navigate uncertain environment with resilience. Speaking about fiscal prudence, Sitharaman said, “We have set ourselves a certain target, which is to bring the borrowing down to the 50

per cent level of GDP by 2030. Therefore, I will be working on that path.” Observing that there are advanced economies whose debt is well over 200 per cent of their GDP even now, she said, “We have given ourselves a fiscal discipline path on the fiscal deficit as well. We have fulfilled the trajectory. The last mile that had to be reached by 2025-26, we have reached.” The world has witnessed the fiscal prudence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi both when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat and as the country’s Prime Minister, she said. On credit rating, she said, it is improving, and improvement is not by cutting corners or stopping the resources which have to go for social welfare, but it is through proper management of the economy.

Delhi luxury hotels sold out ahead of BRICS Summit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi’s luxury hotel market is witnessing a sharp squeeze in room availability and a steep surge in tariffs ahead of the BRICS Summit, with several marquee properties either showing no rooms for key dates or quoting rates running into six figures a night. A check of hotel booking platforms for September 11-13 showed no availability at Taj Mahal and Taj Palace in New Delhi, while The Oberoi, New Delhi, was sold out for portions of the period. The Leela Palace New Delhi was not accepting bookings for the specified dates. Rooms that were available at properties such as ITC Maurya, New Delhi and Shangri-La Eros New Delhi were commanding exceptionally high tariffs, underscoring the premium being placed on accommodation in the capital around the September 12-13 Summit. The two-day geopolitical event is effec-

tively compressing demand across several days, as delegates and other visitors arrive ahead of the Summit and extend their stays, putting additional pressure on room inventory in central Delhi. The development could leave tourists, business travellers and families with pre-planned trips to the national capital facing substantially higher accommodation costs, forcing them to either pay a premium for marquee

properties, look for hotels farther from central Delhi, alter their travel dates or opt for lower-priced accommodation. The BRICS Summit comes at a time when Indian hotels are looking to events-led travel and domestic demand to offset a challenging period for international travel amid geopolitical tensions, including the West Asia conflict. “September is showing stronger momentum, with average room rates across our portfolio pacing more than 25 per cent higher year-on-year. The upcoming BRICS Summit in New Delhi is contributing to heightened demand, particularly in the days around the event, with shorter booking windows further supporting rate growth,” Nikhil Sharma, Managing Director & COO, South Asia, Radisson Hotel Group, told PTI. We expect demand to remain strong as the summit approaches, with more travellers likely to make last-minute bookings closer to the event dates, he added.

Centre makes IST common time reference across India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Government has notified the Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2026, mandating Indian Standard Time (IST) as the single reference for legal, administrative, commercial and other official purposes across the country. The nodal consumer affairs ministry notified the rules on August 27, but they will come into force 180 days after their publication in the official gazette, giving government departments, businesses, and institutions time to align their systems. The move

comes amid growing reliance on digital and technology-based systems — from banking and payments to telecommunications, railways, power grids and computer networks — that depend on accurate and synchronised timestamps. The ministry said inconsistencies between different time sources currently in use could affect the coordination and recording of such activities, prompting the push for a uniform national time standard. The common time reference is expected to support accurate time-stamping of banking and digital payment transactions, coordination

among railways, airports and other transport systems, reliable functioning of telecommunication and internet networks, precise time-keeping in power systems, upkeep of government and legal records, and coordination of emergency and other time-

critical services, the ministry said in a statement. A key feature of the rules is the emphasis on reducing dependence on foreign satellite-based time sources, which several critical systems currently rely on. The Government is building infra-

structure to disseminate accurate IST through Indian institutions and legal metrology laboratories. The rules also enable the use of NavIC, India’s indigenous satellite navigation system, along with other approved Indian timing sources, for secure and reliable time dissemination. As part of the ‘One Nation, One Time’ initiative, the ministry in July 2026 commissioned a White Rabbit Technology-based IST Dissemination Demonstration Network at the Regional Reference Standard Laboratory (RRSL) in Bengaluru. The pilot has shown how IST can be

disseminated across sectors, such as banking, telecommunications, power, transportation, and digital governance. In a related demonstration, the ministry, in collaboration with CSIR-National Physical Laboratory, ISRO, SEBI, the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and BSNL, showed secure transmission of IST between RRSL, Bengaluru and NSE Chennai. The ministry said the 180-day transition period would allow stakeholders to review existing systems, carry out necessary technical upgrades, and prepare for full implementation before the Rules take effect.

Parliament Panel suggests dedicated NCLT benches for insolvency cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A Parliamentary panel has suggested establishing dedicated benches or verticals for insolvency cases at the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) to expedite disposal of such matters as well as ensure that the tribunal gives equal attention to cases under the Companies Act. Apart from the principal bench and the New Delhi bench, NCLT has benches in Allahabad, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Chennai, Cuttack, Hyderabad, Indore, Kolkata, Kochi, and Mumbai. The recommendations are part of a report prepared by the Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice. The report on ‘Review of Functioning of Tribunal System in the Country’ was tabled in Parliament earlier this month. The panel said steadily expanding insolvency jurisdiction of the tribunal should not dilute its equally important responsibilities under the Companies Act, 2013, including matters relating to mergers and amalgamations, corporate governance, and protection of stakeholder interests. Noting that insolvency matters require specialised and time-

bound adjudication and now account for more than half of the tribunal’s total caseload, the committee recommended that the corporate affairs ministry examine the feasibility of establishing dedicated IBC benches/verticals within the tribunal, with adequate judicial and technical members, registry support and infrastructure. “Such a specialised mechanism would facilitate expeditious disposal of insolvency matters while ensuring that the tribunal’s company law jurisdiction receives equal attention,” it said. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) provides for time-bound and market-linked resolution of stressed assets, and the final resolution is approved by the tribunal. As per the report, the tribunal informed the committee that while the sanctioned strength of 62 members has remained unchanged since its inception, its jurisdiction has expanded substantially following the enactment of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016. “According to the Tribunal, the existing judicial strength is no longer commensurate with the volume and complexity of matters being adjudicated and additional benches and members are required to effectively discharge its expanded mandate.

Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju during a meeting with Serbian Minister of Internal and Foreign Trade, Jagoda Lazarevic in Belgrade, Serbia (PTI)

GDP data, crude oil prices key factors to drive markets this week: Analysts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Trading sentiment in the stock market this week will be largely guided by the domestic GDP data announcement, crude oil prices, and the US non-farm payroll report, analysts said. Besides, macroeconomic data announcements, auto sales numbers and trading activity of foreign investors would also guide movement in the market going ahead, they added. “The coming week is expected to remain highly eventful, with domestic GDP data and global economic

releases likely to determine market direction. India’s Q1 FY27 GDP data will be released on August 31. Investors will also monitor India’s August manufacturing and services PMI readings, GST collections, foreign exchange reserves and movement in the rupee,” Ajit Mishra — SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. US employment data will remain the most important trigger, with the August non-farm payroll report scheduled for September 4, he said. “The outcome could significantly influence expectations regarding the Federal Reserve’s September policy

decision, the US dollar, Treasury yields and emerging-market fund flows,” Mishra added. Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) infused ₹30,919 crore in Indian equities in August, extending their buying streak

to a second straight month. “On the domestic front, first-quarter GDP data will be important factor for broader risk sentiment, offering greater clarity on the pace of domestic growth against the backdrop of elevated energy

prices and an unresolved Middle East conflict that has disrupted global supply lines and contributed to higher commodity prices,” Ponnudi R, CEO — Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said. US monetary policy is now the dominant global catalyst following Fed Chair Kevin Warsh’s hawkish remarks at Jackson Hole, he added. “Markets will look ahead to the August jobs report, due September 4, along with the next inflation reading, as key data points in determining whether the recently increased expectations of a September rate hike hold or ease,” Ponnudi said.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex declined 276.32 points, or 0.35 per cent, and the NSE Nifty dipped 76.35 points, or 0.31 per cent. “India’s first-quarter GDP data on Monday will offer insights into the domestic growth trajectory, while Friday’s US non-farm payrolls report is expected to influence global market sentiment as investors reassess expectations for the Federal Reserve’s September policy decision following Kevin Warsh’s hawkish Jackson Hole address,” Hariselman Radhakrishnan, Founder & CEO of HST Wealth, a Research Analyst firm, said.

SBI and SBI Capital to dilute up to 1% stake in NSE via public offer

KUMAR DIPANKAR ■ New Delhi

State Bank of India (SBI) and its subsidiary SBI Capital Markets Ltd together plan to dilute up to 1 per cent stake in the National Stock Exchange (NSE) through the exchange's proposed ₹30,000-crore initial public offering (IPO). The bank is participating in the NSE IPO and will dilute a 0.65 per cent stake in the exchange, SBI Chairman CS Setty said in an interview.

"We are participating in that divestment. We propose to divest 0.65 per cent and 0.35 per cent by SBI Capital Markets because both of us hold the stake. So together, about 1 percent as a SBI group... it could be less depending on any other shareholders joining," he said.

SBI currently holds a 3.23 percent stake in the NSE, while SBI Capital Markets owns 4.33 percent in the country's largest stock exchange. He clarified that there is no the monetisation plan for other subsidiaries in the immediate future.



Last month, SBI, along with its foreign partner Paris-headquartered Amundi, diluted around 10 per cent stake in SBI Mutual Fund. The ₹9,800-crore public offer by the country's biggest fund house was a huge success as the issue was subscribed 42 times.

Post-listing, SBI's holding declined to 55.46 percent from 61.76 per cent, while Amundi's stake reduced to 32.56 percent, down 3.7 per cent. Highlighting the leadership position of SBI in the housing finance segment, Setty said the mortgage portfolio is set to cross an important milestone of ₹10

lakh crore in the current quarter on the back of robust demand.

The country's largest lender had surpassed ₹9 lakh crore home loan portfolio during the last financial year. "We should be reaching the ₹10 trillion-mark, hopefully in this quarter itself," he said.

SBI has a market share of nearly 28 percent in the home loan segment, he said, adding that the bank has focused on making home loans accessible across the country.

The lender has more than 460 home loan processing centres across India, increasing accessibility of its

housing finance products. Setty said transparency in pricing and customer trust in the bank's processes, including documentation and due diligence of builders, are among the key factors driving customers to the lender for home loans.

"People trust SBI the most when it comes to taking a home loan... that paperwork is properly done, including the due diligence on the builder," he said.

He also emphasised that home loans should not be viewed merely as a stand-alone banking product, given their wider contribution to economic activity and multiplier effect on many allied industries.

"Home loan as a segment is very important for the economy," he said, noting that more than 200 industries depend on commercial and residential real estate.

"In a way, home loan should not be seen as a standalone product. It is to be seen as an integral part of India's economic growth," he said. (PTI)

Indian Bank to add 100 branches and increase headcount by 2,500 in FY27

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Chennai

Indian Bank plans to add about 100 branches this year, with a primary focus on increasing the bank's presence in the Central and Western parts of the country.

To manage growing business and replace retiring employees, the bank would increase its headcount by about 2,500 personnel, including specialist officers.

"Last year we opened 100 branches. This year too we have similar plans. Just on August 15, which was our foundation day, the bank inaugurated 15 branches across the country," Indian Bank MD and CEO Binod Kumar said in an interaction.

The bank had 6,003 domestic branches and three overseas — Singapore, Colombo and Jaffna and IFSC Banking Unit (IBU) at Gandhinagar as of June 30, 2026.

The seventh-biggest public sector bank enhanced its presence in the eastern region and Uttar Pradesh with the amalgamation of



Allahabad Bank in 2020.

"Now we are trying to increase our presence in the Central and Western parts of the country," he said.

On the recruitment side, Kumar said, the bank would increase its headcount by 2,500 during the current fiscal. Total employees of the bank stood at 41,875 at the end of June 30, 2026.

Asked about asset quality management, Kumar said the bank has been managing it quite well.

The bank aims to bring

down gross non-performing assets (NPAs) to 1.5-1.6 per cent of the total advances and Net NPAs to 0.15-0.2 per cent by the end of the current financial year.

Besides, he said, the bank would undertake the sale of ₹200 crore in bad loans to an asset reconstruction company (ARC) during the current financial year.

On the asset side, Kumar said the lender expects its gold loan book to cross ₹1.5 lakh crore in the current financial year, supported by robust demand.

"Gold loan is safe lending for banks...it is not a consumption loan, but mostly it is income-generating and also helps small businesses to grow.

"Last year, we saw very significant growth of 30 per cent in the segment due to a jump in gold prices. It will be slower this year as there is a 30 per cent decline in gold prices," Kumar said.

This growth would come from tonnage, he said, adding that the gold loan segment is likely to grow about 20 per cent.

Currently, the gold loan portfolio is around ₹1.25 lakh crore, and the book should exceed ₹1.5 lakh crore during this financial year at the anticipated growth rate, he said.

Kumar further said that RAM (Retail, Agriculture, and MSME) constitutes 65 per cent of the overall loan book while the remaining 35 per cent is from corporate.

The bank wants to maintain the ratio going forward, he said, adding that RAM has huge capacity for growth with a lot of opportunity in agriculture and MSMEs.

Commerce Ministry meeting industry and exporters on India-US trade on September 1

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Commerce Ministry will meet with industry associations and representatives of export promotion councils on September 1 on India-US trade performance, an official said. The meeting will be chaired by Additional Secretary in the ministry Darpan Jain. He is also the country's chief negotiator for the India-US bilateral trade agreement (BTA).

The deliberation is important as Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will visit the US in late September to attend the G-20 Trade Ministerial in Milwaukee and hold bilateral talks with USTR Jamieson Greer. The two-day ministerial will begin on September 30. The United States holds the 2026 G20 presidency.

The official said the meeting is intended to discuss recent trade trends,



the overall sector-wise performance of India-US trade, and the recent developments in bilateral trade.

Sectors expected to be represented at the meeting include pharmaceuticals, engineering, textiles, agriculture, chemicals, marine products, leather, automobiles, auto components, handicrafts, and plastics.

Industry chambers CII, FICCI, Assocham and FIEO are also likely to participate in the deliberations.

India and the US are negotiating a bilateral trade agree-

ment. In February, both sides announced the finalisation of the framework for the first phase of the pact, but changes in the US tariff landscape have led to further negotiations between the two countries on the agreement.

Recently, Goyal stated that the first tranche of the bilateral trade agreement between India and the US will come into operation as soon as the United States is able to ensure that India gets a comparative advantage over its competitors.

Parliamentary panel urges timely filling of ITAT vacancies, flags staff shortages

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A Parliamentary Committee has recommended timely and continuous filling of vacancies in the judicial, registry, and support cadres of the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT), stating that staff shortages adversely impact hearing schedules and overall case disposal.

The Standing Committee on Law and Personnel, in its report on the functioning of tribunals in the country, said the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT), which was set up in 1941 and often regarded as the 'mother tribunal', has a sanctioned strength of 126 members, including the president and 10 zonal vice-presidents.

However, as of May 1, 2026, 98 members were in position. Further, recruitment has been completed for 16 more candidates.

Vacancies in other key positions, including the



Registrar and supporting staff, are also affecting case management and administrative efficiency.

"The Committee is of the view that the efficiency of a judicial institution depends not only on the availability of Members but also on the adequacy of registry, administrative and support staff. "Vacancies at various levels adversely affect scheduling of hearings, preparation of records, court proceedings, administrative supervision and overall case disposal," it said in the report.

It recommended that all vacant posts of members in the tribunal be filled in a

"timely and continuous" manner so that the institution is able to function at its optimum capacity.

"Vacancies at various levels adversely affect scheduling of hearings, preparation of records, court proceedings, administrative supervision and overall case disposal," it said, while recommending the Legal Affairs department, the tribunal, Staff Selection Commission and other concerned agencies to fill vacancies in the Registry and supporting cadres — Registrar, Deputy Registrar, Assistant Registrar, Senior Private Secretary and Private Secretary.

HNGIL issues default notice to Bira 91, plans to move NCLT

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Hindustan National Glass and Industries Ltd (HNGIL) has served a default notice on B9 Beverages Ltd, the maker of the Bira 91 range of beer, as it plans to drag the debt-ridden brewer to the insolvency tribunal NCLT.

HNGIL, a container glass manufacturer, has issued the notice under Section 8 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), a mandatory step before filing an application for commencement of the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP).

In the notice, HNGIL — an operational creditor of B9 Beverages Ltd — claimed default in payments and sought recovery of ₹11.77 crore for glass bottles manufactured against confirmed purchase orders but allegedly not lifted by B9 Beverages.

Last month, Bira 91 Founder

commercial and contractual issues. Our position is set out in the notice and we remain open to a resolution. Since the matter is under legal consideration, it would not be appropriate for us to comment further at this stage."

The dispute concerns more than 51 lakh customised amber glass bottles of 650 ml, manufactured against three purchase orders placed by B9 Beverages in June and September 2024.

The stock is lying at HNGIL's plants at Bahadurgarh in Haryana, Puducherry, and Rishra in West Bengal. The bottles carry the brewer's own branding and were made to its technical specification, which means they cannot be sold to any other buyer.

The amount claimed comprises ₹7.03 crore towards the value of the manufactured goods, ₹1.12 crore towards storage charges accrued on the unlifted stock and inter-



Chit-fund scam accused held in West Bengal, to be brought to Odisha: CBI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kolkata

The CBI has arrested the proprietor of DNB Food Processing Private Limited, Debabrata Dutta, an accused in a chit-fund scam case who was on the run, officials said on Sunday.

The accused was held from West Bengal's Siliguri on August 28 and will be produced before a court in Odisha's Bhubaneswar, they added. It is alleged that Dutta had collected more than ₹17 crore from gullible investors, luring them with the promise of attractive returns on their investment.

"The accused, then proprietor of DNB Food Processing Pvt. Ltd, in a criminal conspiracy with others, had misappropriated funds to the tune of ₹17,22,39,453, illegally collected from gullible depositors. The accused was absconding and did not



cooperate with the investigation," a CBI spokesperson said in a statement. Dutta was declared an absconder in the chargesheet filed on December 26, 2022, after eight years of investigation into the alleged scam.

"Non Bailable Warrant (NBW) was issued against him on August 5, 2024. The accused was traced on the basis of source information and finally, arrested on August 28 from Siliguri, West Bengal. He is being brought on transit remand from Siliguri and will be produced before the competent court in Bhubaneswar," the spokesperson of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said.

ONGC explores drillship acquisition/JV for deepwater capacity under Samudra Manthan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) is exploring the acquisition of deepwater drillships or formation of a Joint Venture (JV) to secure dedicated drilling capacity as it steps up efforts to accelerate offshore exploration to find oil and gas reserves under its Mission Samudra Manthan programme. ONGC has issued an Expression of Interest

(EOI) to engage a specialist global offshore rig-broking consultant to identify potential drillship owners or counterparties, assess assets and valuations, and support the state explorer in negotiating a possible ownership or joint venture arrangement.

The initiative is aimed at creating dedicated, priority-access deepwater drillship capacity, according to the EOI issued by ONGC.

"ONGC is undertaking a structured capacity-creation



programme to secure dedicated, priority-access deepwater drillship capacity in support of Mission Samudra Manthan. In view of the same, ONGC is exploring possibilities of ownership or JV model for Drillship

acquisition," the EOI said.

The Union Cabinet had last month approved Samudra Manthan, the National Offshore Exploration Scheme, with an outlay of ₹84,084 crore through 2030-31.

The central-sector scheme is aimed at accelerating exploration of India's offshore oil and gas resources, particularly in deepwater and ultra-deepwater areas, as the Government seeks to boost domestic production and reduce import dependence.

DAILY SUDOKU

217658

5

93465

1837

4521

12463

8

985217

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

HOW TO SOLVE IT

Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction—no maths involved.

SOLUTION (29.8.26)

346298715

219753648

587164239

954682371

178349526

623571894

895437162

762915483

431826957

DOUBLE CROSSWORD

MONDAY | AUGUST 31, 2026

ACROSS

3 It's eaten at any time after one (5)

8 It's fun wrestling with one's peers (5)

10 One with degrees in geometry? (5)

11 Deserter from the artillery for a short time (3)

12 Sell for a bigheaded all-rounder (5)

13 Aid to viewing a singular spectacle? (7)

15 Achieve promotion in the outfit (5)

18 Turn about, as a cross-country runner (3)

19 Refer to everything due to change (6)

21 Hurry to sink the ship (7)

22 Has to be old-fashioned (4)

DOWN

1 Youngster providing the school head with grub (5)

2 Make small - albeit graphic - improvements (7)

4 Are about a hundred in the field (4)

5 Confused tale about a bit of danger (6)

6 In London, a nurse's station? (5)

7 It can put you in the shade (5)

9 Managed to be dashing? (3)

12 The drive! There may be at the Boar's Head, Leatherhead (7)

14 See unfit fruit in the vineyard (3)

16 Made the engine sound good (5)

17 Keeps changing pets (5)

19 Permitted everyone to be a creditor (7)

20 In a mine, the hush at the rear (5)

21 Put up with punishment (5)

23 Bravery that can lead to a hi-score (7)

24 The right medicine for a female about to go droopy (6)

25 A screwy faucet? (3)

27 He turned up with a letter for Nora (5)

28 Birds half the winter at the poles (5)

30 Youngster's bit of work for the ministry Head, Leatherhead (7)

32 Eat with Enid (4)

33 Took a seat for a conversation piece (3)

SOLUTION (29.8.26)

ACROSS

1. Ski-er

2. Kibitz

3. Empire

4. RA's

5. Stout

6. Passion

7. On-ice

8. Turner

9. Poppy

10. Tobey

11. 5-car-E

12. Purse

13. Pat-riot

15. Met

17. Ogre

18. Bolero

19. A-p-ron

20. Cher-ry

22. M-op-e

24. Had

25. Su-rina-m

26. Ter-MS

27. Bar-on

28. Bully

29. Bliscuit

30. Van-ya

31. Tea-RS

DOWN

1. Melon

16. To-te-m

18. B-o-mus

19. Ar-men-ia

21. Havana

22. Minut(Waltz)

23. Pallor

25. 5-m-ock

26. Tobey

28. Bit

14. T-r-led



The rivals traded blows in the eighth and ninth before the granite chin of Hrgovic won out. "I was losing every round. I was outboxed. And I don't know from where I got energy," Hrgovic said. "Look, chin is important."



In that final group were Penge and Hillier at 11 under and they both returned at 7.00am to face 30 holes of golf. When the hooter sounded, they were both looking at birdie putts on

When the duo got their third rounds under way, Penge's one-shot lead was soon extended to two as he holed an 18-footer on the first but just as soon as it had grown, it had gone.



