

FREE

with this Edition

Largest circulated Travel & Lifestyle magazine

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India, Uzbekistan aim for \$5B trade by 2030

Two countries agreed to establish framework for long-term supply of uranium from Uzbekistan

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

India and Uzbekistan on Sunday agreed to elevate their bilateral relationship to a comprehensive strategic partnership and set a target of increasing annual bilateral trade to \$5 billion by 2030 following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

The two countries also agreed to establish a framework for the long-term supply of uranium from Uzbekistan to India as part of their cooperation in the civil nuclear energy sector.

The discussions between the two leaders covered a broad range of areas, including trade, investment, infrastructure, critical minerals, mining, defence and security, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, information technology, digital public infrastructure including UPI, and education.

Several agreements were exchanged during the visit in areas such as mining, culture, education, tourism and Ayurveda.

Modi said bilateral trade currently stands at more than \$1 billion and stressed the need to address issues concerning market access, banking, payment systems and connectivity in a structured manner.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being conferred with Uzbekistan's prestigious 'Oliy Darajali Do'stlik' by Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the Kuksaroy Presidential Palace in Tashkent, Uzbekistan

PM CONFERRED WITH HIGHEST HONOUR

Tashkent: Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on Sunday conferred with Uzbekistan's highest honour for foreign leaders, the 'Oliy Darajali Do'stlik' Order, which he dedicated to the "enduring" bond between New Delhi and Tashkent.

The Uzbek honour adds to a list of top State and civilian awards conferred on Modi by close to three dozen countries in recognition of his leadership and contribution to bilateral ties.

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

The Prime Minister was conferred with the honour by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

"Honoured to receive the Oliy Darajali Do'stlik Order. I dedicate this to the enduring bond between India and Uzbekistan," Modi said in a social media post.

The Ministry of External Affairs said on X that the prime minister was conferred the honour for his "contribution in strengthening the friendship between the two countries".

"PM dedicated the accolade to the 1.4 billion people of India and highlighted that it is a symbol of the enduring friendship between the two civilisations," it said.



Aspirants leave from an examination centre after appearing in the NEET-PG 2026 examination in New Delhi

NEET-PG 2026 goes smoothly nationwide

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The NEET-PG 2026 was successfully conducted for more than 2.63 lakh candidates across the country on Sunday, but the examination could not be completed at two centres in Jaipur, Rajasthan, due to an internal power failure, officials said.

The National Board of Examinations (NBEMS) has scheduled a re-examination for the affected candidates in Jaipur at 3 pm on September 5, according to a notice issued by it.

The NBEMS has also called an immediate meeting to decide the course of action against the technological partner and agency responsible for ensuring adequate infrastructure at the examination centres, officials said.

At the two iON Digital Zone centres in Sitapura, Jaipur, the examination could not be completed for 2,445 candidates due to internal power-supply issues attributable to TCS Ltd, the

technological partner and the examination-conducting agency, the health ministry said.

The affected centres are iON Digital Zone iDZ Sitapura (TC Nos. 41682 and 41683).

Further details, including the venue for the re-examination and revised admit cards, will be shared separately, the board said.

The NEET-PG was scheduled for 2,73,096 candidates at 1,111 examination centres across 339 cities, covering all 36 States and Union territories, the ministry said.

A total of 2,65,980 candidates appeared in the NEET-PG, with the examination successfully completed for approximately 2,63,535 candidates, the ministry said.

The nationwide examination was supported by extensive real-time monitoring and stringent security measures, it added.

A total of 2,527 faculty members were appointed as independent appraisers to oversee the conduct of the examination.

The ByStander



CBN seizes 66.80 lakh psychotropic tablets on Punjab-Himachal route

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ New Delhi/Chandigarh

In one of the largest recent seizures of diverted pharmaceutical drugs in North India, the Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN) Madhya Pradesh Unit intercepted a truck on the Chandigarh-Baddi interstate route and recovered 66,79,980 psychotropic tablets being moved without invoices, bills or e-way documents.

The haul, made under

'Operation Vajra 2.0', comprised 59,08,100 Alprazolam tablets, 7,47,780 Tramadol tablets, 23,700 Nitrazepam tablets, and 400 Clonazepam tablets, packed in 120 master cartons. Officers also seized the SML Isuzu Sartaj truck, registered in Uttar Pradesh, and arrested one person.

The consignment and the vehicle were seized under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. The operation was initiated based on intelligence



obtained by the CBN unit in Neemuch. A specialised preventive team carried out overnight surveillance along the Punjab-Himachal Pradesh route and set up positions on the Chandigarh-Baddi highway. Following several

hours of monitoring, the truck was stopped on 27 August and then taken to a safe place where a carton-by-carton search was conducted. What was discovered was not a normal commercial shipment.

The batch numbers, manufacturing dates, and expiry dates had been deleted from a large number of blister strips and boxes, a measure that investigators state was intended to break the paper trail and evade regulatory tracking.

PIONEER IN SHORT

FRESH FLOOD SWEEPS AWAY BRIDGE IN NEPAL

A suspension bridge in central Nepal was swept away on Sunday morning due to a fresh flood in the Trishuli River, officials said.

The bridge connected Ghyalchowk of Gandaki Rural Municipality-8 in Gorkha district of Gandaki province with Charaudi along the Prithvi Highway. The flood, which lasted for around three hours, swept away the bridge at around 11.30 am, said security officials.

With the flood washing away the bridge, residents of Gandaki Rural Municipalities 7 and 8 have lost their access to the Prithvi Highway. The 130-metre Ghyalchowk-Charaudi Bridge served as a major accessible route for around 400 households of Ghyalchowk to transport their dairy goods and vegetables to the agricultural cooperative in Charaudi.

Fresh flood fears in Nepal as toll hits 788

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

The death toll from devastating flash floods that swept through Nepal's Bhotekoshi and Trishuli River systems has crossed 788, while nearly 2,500 people remain missing, leaving thousands of families facing a difficult search for loved ones and an uncertain road to recovery.

Meanwhile, authorities warned of increased water levels in the Bhotekoshi River and urged residents and rescue personnel in flood-hit districts to remain alert.

The floods struck parts of northern and central Nepal on August 26, sending powerful torrents of water, mud and debris through towns and villages. Rescue operations are continuing in affected areas, even as survivors return to their homes to assess the damage and salvage whatever remains.

In Galchhi, one of the worst-hit areas, residents have been digging through layers of mud, sand and wreckage in search of belongings. Many homes have been severely damaged or completely



swept away, while displaced families are relying on relief camps for food and shelter.

Among those trying to rebuild are Class 11 student Nayan Tiwari and his cousin Nivi Tiwari, whose family home in Galchhi suffered extensive damage.

Nayan said he was in Kathmandu when he received news of the flooding. He immediately contacted his family and urged them to leave the house and move to higher ground. Shortly after they escaped, the floodwaters intensified and swept away everything in their path.

The Tiwari family's house, which had been home to nearly a decade of memories, was left badly damaged. Sand accumulated in the basement, while mud and debris entered the first floor, covering the kitchen and bedrooms.

"Everything was here before, but now there is nothing left. Everything has been destroyed. It feels really bad. But we will rebuild it. We will work hard and make the house like it was before," Nayan said.

India provides 68.5 tonnes of relief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kathmandu

India has provided 68.5 tonnes of relief materials to flood-hit Nepal and sent technical teams, forensic experts and equipment to assist in search and rescue operations, the Indian embassy said.

India has sent a specialised technical contingent, including tunnel experts, along with equipment for search and rescue operations in hydropower tunnels where workers are believed to be trapped following Wednesday's devastating flash floods, the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu said in a statement on Saturday.

A fourth flight carrying 11 tonnes of relief assistance landed in Nepal on Sunday,



the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a post on X.

"It consists of a tunnel technical contingent along with equipment for search & rescue operations; a team of forensics experts for DNA analysis and relief supplies, including blankets, sleeping bags, tarpaulin, plastic sheets & hygiene kits," the MEA said.

An 11-member Indian technical team comprising doctors, paramedics and tunnel engineers had arrived in Kathmandu on Friday and carried out an on-site reconnaissance of hydropower tunnels in the flood-affected Trishuli area of Nuwakot district on Saturday, the embassy said.

537 workers missing at nine Nepal hydropower projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kathmandu

As many as 537 workers and employees remained unaccounted for at nine hydropower projects in Nepal's flood-hit Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts, with rescue teams intensifying efforts to reach people believed trapped inside tunnels blocked by mud and debris.

Rescue operations have been hampered by mud and debris blocking tunnel entrances, damaged infrastructure, difficult terrain and adverse weather, prompting Nepal to seek specialised assistance from India, China and



other countries. According to the Independent Power Producers' Association in Nepal (IPPAN), 898 workers and employees at nine hydropower projects in the two districts were initially reported out of contact following the August 26 floods.

TONIGHT @ 10:30 PM

CRIME PATROL

CRIME PATROL 2026

SONY ENTERTAINMENT TELEVISION

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Punjab DA Face-Off: Mann Govt Heads to SC; Employees Set Sept 7 Deadline for Withdrawal of Notices

FROM 'SECRETARIAT TO SATOJ VAPSI' CAMPAIGN TO MINISTERIAL GHERAOS; EMPLOYEES ANNOUNCE MONTHS-LONG AGITATION AFTER AUG 27 MASS LEAVE; UNIONS SAY NO TALKS WITH CM UNTIL NOTICES ARE WITHDRAWN

MONIKA MALIK ■ Chandigarh

Punjab Government's decision to move the Supreme Court against Punjab and Haryana High Court's order on pending Dearness Allowance (DA) has come amid a sharp escalation by employees, who have launched a politically-pointed 'Secretariat se Satoj Vapsi' campaign against Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. The unions have given the government September 7 to withdraw show-cause notices issued to nearly three lakh employees over the August 27 mass leave, failing which they will go on mass leave again on September 8, gherao Ministers and AAP MLAs, hold an 'Employees' Assembly' in Chandigarh, and organise a Maha Rally in Sangrur on October 10.

The two-pronged confrontation — the government taking the DA battle to the Apex Court and employees preparing a prolonged street campaign — comes as the state is due to file its compliance report before the High Court on the DA order on Monday. The employees, who have won the matter before both the single and division benches, have already filed a caveat in the Supreme Court, seeking a hearing before any order is passed.

NOTICES BECOME NEW FLASHPOINT

The latest escalation follows the August 27 state-wide 'Maha Hartal', in which

more than three lakh government employees took mass casual leave, while over 3.5 lakh pensioners supported the agitation. The protest disrupted functioning in several government departments and affected services, including OPDs at hospitals.

The government subsequently directed administrative secretaries and heads of departments to identify employees who remained absent without authorisation and issue show-cause notices, besides initiating disciplinary action under the rules.

At a three-hour meeting in Ludhiana on Sunday, the Punjab Sanjha Mulazam Manch and Sanjha Mulazam and Pensioners Front, with representatives of more than 50 departments and employee and pensioner organisations, demanded withdrawal of the notices by September 7. They also opposed deduction of a day's salary from employees who participated in the August 27 protest.

The unions said they would not meet Mann unless the notices were withdrawn. They maintained that the agitation would continue until each of their demands was accepted, while leaving the door open to talks if the government withdrew the notices and came forward with conditions for negotiations.

'SECRETARIAT SE SATOJ VAPSI'

The employees' new campaign takes direct aim at the Chief Minister's political journey. 'Secretariat se Satoj Vapsi', referring to Mann's native village Satoj in Sangrur district, is being projected as a sustained campaign to press the government to resolve employees' grievances.

The announcement coincided with the launch of the Discovery Channel documentary 'Satoj to

Employee Protest Calendar	
Date	Programme
Sept 1-7	Join SKM protest in Chd against foreign trade deals
Sept 6	District-level meetings across Punjab
Sept 8	Statewide mass leave if notices are not withdrawn
Sept 12	Gherao of residences of Harbhajan Singh ETO, Jai Krishan Singh Rodi, Dr Balwant Singh
Sept 13	Protests at homes of Lal Chand Kataruchakk, Harjot Bains, Aman Arora
Sept 19-20	Gheraos of other Ministers and AAP MLAs
Sept 30	'Employees' Assembly' in Chd; All 117 MLAs and 13 MPs invited
Oct 10	Maha Rally in Sangrur

Sansad', which traces Mann's journey from his village to Parliament and the Punjab Chief Minister's office. Employee leaders announced a boycott of the documentary, saying they would instead use the campaign to highlight employee and pensioner issues.

The unions will hold a symbolic 'Employees' Assembly' in Chandigarh on September 30, inviting all 117 MLAs and 13 Lok Sabha MPs. Seats will be arranged for the elected representatives, who will be questioned on the employees' and pensioners' demands.

They are also planning a one-hour silent human chain covering around 250-300 km across highways and cities, with employees and civil society members carrying banners against the government. The date is yet to be announced.

DA DISPUTE AT THE CENTRE

At the heart of the confrontation is the employees' demand for release of six pending DA instalments, which they claim amount to 18 percent and have remained unpaid since January 2023.

On August 3, the High Court directed the government to release all up-to-date pending DA/DR instalments to employees and pensioners within 15 days. With the payment still pending, the employees

foreign trade agreements. Leaders described the employee agitation as part of a wider "policy battle", alleging that education, healthcare, and other government services were suffering and that unemployment was pushing youth towards drugs.

OPPOSITION LEADER BACK EMPLOYEES

Opposition parties have backed the employees. Punjab BJP president Kewal Singh Dhillon and Rajya Sabha MP Tarun Chugh accused the Mann Government of withholding employees' rightful DA and using show-cause notices to deter collective protest. They called for immediate talks and a time-bound mechanism to settle the pending demands. SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal also extended support, claiming that his government had released DA instalments and implemented the Pay Commission.

Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring also backing the employees' agitation, saying their demands for pending DA and restoration of OPS were "fully justified" and warning Chief Minister Mann against confrontation. He said the same employees had helped bring AAP to power and cautioned that punitive action could carry political consequences.

Farmers' Sept 1-7 Chd-Mohali Showdown: SKM Mobilises Villages, Lays Out Routes

PNS ■ Chandigarh

Punjab is bracing for another week of protests as the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella of 32 farmer organisations, gears up for a week-long dharna in Chandigarh-Mohali from September 1 to 7. With tractor-trolleys and trucks being readied in villages to carry farmers, ration, and essential supplies, the SKM has finalised detailed routes and parking plans, while farmer leaders apprehend attempts to create hurdles in their movement.

The protest, coming amid the Punjab Government's ongoing confrontation with employee unions, is set to put further pressure on the administration. Following meetings with the Chandigarh and Mohali administrations, the SKM said that it has secured Sector 48-C as the protest site. The venue will be on one side of the road from the IISER T-point towards

Tribune Chowk, with the main stage scheduled to be installed on Monday evening.

The designated stretch begins beyond the Bestech Square Mall intersection, with the main protest venue located about 2.5-2.75 km ahead, beyond the Sector 48-C Motor Market and Jagatpura turn. Farmers have been directed to park tractor-trolleys along the left side of the three-lane road. Nearby parks and the Mohali Golf Club — used for arrangements during the farmers' three-day protest in 2023 — have also been earmarked.

Once the main stretch fills up, tractor-trolleys will be parked along one side of the road towards Mohali railway station. The Bawa Light House Road, also known as New Airport Road, extends nearly 4-5 km towards the airport.

The SKM has issued separate entry routes for farmers from different

regions. Those coming from the Jalandhar-Ludhiana side will take Airport Road from Gopal Sweets Chowk after Kharar towards IISER T-point. Farmers from Sirhind will proceed through Landran Chowk and Gurdwara Sohana Sahib, while those from Rajpura will cross Chhatbir before joining Airport Road. Participants are also expected to arrive by trains and buses.

At the heart of the agitation is the demand for a special Assembly session to scrap all previous agreements concerning Punjab's river waters. The SKM has also sought restoration of Punjab's representation in the Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB), repeal of the Dam Safety Act and withdrawal of the Disaster Management Act 2024.

Among its major economic demands is a legally guaranteed MSP for all crops in accordance with the Dr Swaminathan

C o m m i s s i o n recommendations. The SKM has sought complete waiver of farmers' and labourers' loans, Rs 500 per quintal sugarcane price and a single-counter payment mechanism by private sugar mills on the lines of cooperative mills.

It has further demanded a Rs 10,000 monthly old-age pension for farmers, labourers and rural artisans, withdrawal of the Electricity Bill 2025 and Seed Bill 2025, and opposition to proposed free-trade agreements with the US and European countries.

UGRAHAN TAKES SEPARATE ROUTE

BKU Ugrahan, an associate member of the SKM but not part of the Chandigarh-Mohali protest, has launched indefinite dharnas outside Deputy Commissioners' offices in Punjab's 17 districts. It has also extended support to the ongoing government employees' agitation.

Devendra Sharma superannuating on Aug 31



PNS ■ Shimla

Lieutenant General Devendra Sharma, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Army Training Command (ARTRAC) is superannuating from the Indian Army on 31 Aug, drawing curtains on 39 years of distinguished service to the Nation.

He was commissioned into 'THE SCINDE HORSE', an old Armoured Regiment of the Indian Army on 19 December 1987. Early in his career, while serving with 11 RAJPUTANA RIFLES in counter-insurgency operations in Jammu & Kashmir under Operation RAKSHAK, he was decorated with the Sena Medal for Gallantry. He went on to command The SCINDE HORSE, an Armoured Brigade, an Infantry Division and a Pivot Corps — all along the Western Front. In addition, Lt Gen Devendra Sharma held key staff appointments.

His tenure also left a visible imprint on Himachal Pradesh and Shimla. HQ ARTRAC dedicated 'Shraddhanjali Sthal' at Annandale on 23 March 2026 - the State capital's first and only memorial for its war heroes, crowned by a 52-foot National Flag. The Army Heritage Museum was reoriented (emerging as the highest-rated museum in Himachal), with a new Annandale Gallery and AR-VR Experience Centre.

BJP's Akali Dilemma Deepens: Punar Surjit Sets Conditions, Sept 15 May Mark Punjab's Alliance Reset

WITH BJP WEIGHING A RETURN TO BADAL'S SAD OR A NEW EQUATION WITH SAD (PUNAR SURJIT), SATISH POONIA'S PUNJAB VISIT COULD SHAPE THE NEXT MOVE

MONIKA MALIK ■ Chandigarh

Punjab's pre-election politics is moving towards a crucial alliance test, with the Shiromani Akali Dal (Punar Surjit) making it clear that there will be no political understanding with the BJP without clarity on Punjab's core rights and panthic issues. At the same time, the BJP is exploring its options, including a possible renewed tie-up with Sukhbir Singh Badal-led SAD or a new equation with the Punar Surjit faction.

Senior Punar Surjit leader Karnail Singh Peer Mohammad said that the party, currently, has no immediate need for an alliance with the BJP, but any proposal from the BJP or Centre would have to begin with a clear position on issues central to Punjab's interests.

The party has put Punjab's right over Chandigarh, release of Sikh prisoners (Bandi Singhs) who have completed their sentences, protection of Punjab's river-water rights under riparian principles, and inclusion of Punjabi-speaking areas in Punjab at the heart of any alliance discussion. Peer Mohammad said these were not issues on which the party was prepared to compromise and that a concrete policy would have to precede any political understanding.

The party is simultaneously projecting itself as a platform for wider political and panthic consolidation. It claims leaders, workers, panches and sarpanches associated with different parties, including SAD (Badal) and AAP, are joining the organisation under president Giani Harpreet Singh. It has also called for political and social unity cutting across caste and social divisions, including bringing Dalits and other sections onto a common platform.

Peer Mohammad further invoked the December 2 Hukamnama of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, saying the doors for panthic unity, excluding the Badal family, remain open.

BJP'S NEXT MOVES UNDER WATCH

The BJP, meanwhile, faces a politically consequential choice. Its decision on which Akali faction, if any, to align with could alter vote calculations across several constituencies, with the BSP's role potentially adding another layer to the arithmetic.

The BJP is also launching anti-drug rallies from September 15, making the response to the campaign an important indicator of its political traction.

With AAP and Congress potentially fighting separately, and different Akali factions possibly contesting independently, Punjab could see fragmented, multi-cornered contests. Thus, September 15 onwards may become the real testing ground — not merely for BJP's campaign, but for its alliance strategy, Akali equations and the broader pre-2027 political realignment.

BJP to Take Anti-Drug Yatra Across All 117 Seats; Amit Shah Likely to Join

The saffron brigade will launch four anti-drug yatras across Punjab from September 15, covering all 117 Assembly constituencies as it steps up its campaign ahead of the 2027 elections. The party plans a grand rally after the yatras, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah likely to join, giving the campaign a major political push.

BJP leader Anil Sareen said the anti-drug campaign should transcend politics and involve all parties and people. The initiative follows Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent emphasis on the need to intensify the fight against drugs.

With the BJP seeking to expand its grassroots presence and corner the Punjab Government over the drug menace, the yatras are expected to become a key part of its pre-poll outreach.

Meanwhile, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is also preparing a proposed September yatra covering around 135 km and over 15 districts, setting the stage for competing political mobilisations in Punjab.

85% of Haryana Jail Court Appearances Now Held Through Video Conferencing

26,860 INMATES LODGED AGAINST AUTHORISED CAPACITY OF 24,280; NEW HIGH-SECURITY AND DISTRICT JAILS PLANNED

PNS ■ Chandigarh

Around 85 percent of court appearances by jail inmates in Haryana are now being conducted through video conferencing, significantly reducing the need to transport prisoners physically to courts and helping minimise security risks, save time, and resources. With 26,860 inmates lodged against an authorised capacity of 24,280, the State Government is simultaneously expanding jail infrastructure while pushing a broader shift from punishment-centric administration to reform, skill development and rehabilitation.

Sharing information, the state's Jails Minister Arvind Sharma on Sunday said 453 video-conferencing systems had been installed across the state to make judicial proceedings more secure and efficient. He said that

the government was working to ensure that inmates received training, became self-reliant and could return to mainstream society with dignity after release.

Haryana currently has three Central Jails, 17 District Jails, and two Open Air Jails. As of August 1, 26,860 inmates were lodged in these facilities against a sanctioned capacity of 24,280, prompting construction of new prisons and modernisation of existing ones.

A 312-inmate High-Security Jail is being built in Rohtak at a cost of about Rs 90 crore. A 1,200-inmate District Jail is under construction in Fatehabad, while new district jails with capacities of 1,200 and 954 inmates are proposed at Charkhi Dadri and Panchkula, respectively.

A state-of-the-art call-blocking system has been installed at Central Jail, Ambala. Modern surveillance systems are also being installed at Central Jail, Hisar and jails in Faridabad, Kurukshetra, Kaithal and Sirsa, for which Rs 9.16 crore has been sanctioned.

Measurement collection units are being used to create scientific records of inmates and offenders,

including fingerprints, facial recognition data, DNA samples and retinal scans, strengthening both prison security and criminal investigation.

Semi-Open Air Jail facilities have been established in all state jails except Palwal, providing 487 places, of which 178 inmates have been permitted to stay. The initiative is aimed at encouraging responsibility and self-reliance.

Jail radio stations are already operational in 14 prisons, while facilities are being established in Kaithal, Bhiwani, Sirsa, Jhajjar, Narnaul and Rewari to engage inmates in constructive and creative activities.

ITI centres in five jails are providing training in 12 trades to 255 inmates. A technical diploma training centre is also being developed at District Jail, Gurugram.

The Jails Department has tied up with Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigam Limited (HKRNL) to facilitate employment after release. So far, 117 trained inmates have been registered on the HKRNL portal, marking an important step towards helping former prisoners secure livelihoods and reintegrate into society.

BRIEFS

CONG MLAS TO MEET HARYANA GOVERNOR OVER 'MISBEHAVIOUR'
Chandigarh: Haryana Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Congress MLAs will meet Governor at Lok Bhawan on Monday to submit a memorandum over alleged misbehaviour by security personnel at the Assembly gate. The issue triggered uproar during the Monsoon Session's opening day after Congress legislators, dressed in black and carrying placards, were stopped from demonstrating. MLA Kuldeep Vats alleged assault, while Hooda claimed he was pushed and said videos of the incident had surfaced.

SACRED HEART STUDENTS MARK RAKSHA BANDHAN WITH BLIND CHILDREN
Chandigarh: Members of the Early Act Club of Sacred Heart School celebrated Raksha Bandhan with children at the Institute for the Blind, Chandigarh, turning the festival into a message of inclusion and empathy. Students tied handmade rakhis, shared chocolates, and donated tactile steel rulers, Braille paper, tactile chess boards, and Braille Uno cards. The initiative underscored the bond of care and humanity beyond traditional family ties.

Classifieds

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Mandeep Kaur W/o Baljinder Singh S/o Kaur Singh R/o Village Bhojomajri, Tehsil Nabha, Distt. Patiala, Punjab, India have added the surname (Khaira) to my name. I shall be known as Mandeep Kaur Khaira for all purposes. Any person having any objection may submit the notice 15 days from the date of publication of this matter.

I, Kushami Devi Mother of Jc 424300N Sub Ajit Kumar residing at Vill. Hardiya Beadouli, Teh Paliganj, Distt. Patna (Bihar) 804426 have changed my name from Kushami Devi to Kusami Devi and date of birth 05.09.1961 to 01.01.1957 vide Affidavit date 31.08.2026 before notary public Distt. Court Bathinda (PB).

I, Shiv Pujan Singh Father of Jc 424300N Sub Ajit Kumar residing at Vill. Hardiya Beadouli, Teh Paliganj, Distt. Patna (Bihar) 804426 have changed my name from Shiv Pujan Singh to Shiv Poojan Singh and date of birth 05.09.1959 to 01.01.1955 vide Affidavit date 31.08.2026 before notary public Distt. Court Bathinda (PB).

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Army No. 2707338M, Rank L/HAV Suresh Kumar, Unit GRENADIERS, resident of Village Theh Naval, Post Office Peedal, Tehsil Guhla, District Kathiwal, Haryana, PIN Code 136034, hereby inform that my mother's name has been wrongly recorded as Patasho Devi in my Army records. Whereas, her correct and proper name is Pataso, which is duly recorded in her other documents.

I, Sunil Kumar S/o Sunder Lal Aggarwal R/O 516A/24, First Floor, DLF Colony, Rohtak ,Haryana 124001 have changed my name Sunil kumar to Sunil Kumar Aggarwal for all future purposes

I, Sarjit Singh S/o Shri Gopal Singh R/O Kutia Kheri, Teh. Balsamand, Distt. Hisar, Haryana, Pin code 125052 declare that I have changed the name of my minor son from Lakshya Chahar to Lakshay Chahar for future purpose.

I, Kusham (Old Name, which is to be changed) D/o Sajjan R/o VPO Litani, Hisar Teh. Uklana, Distt. Hisar, Haryana, 125113 declare that I have changed my name from Kusham (Old Name) to Kusum Rani (New Name) for future purpose.

I, Palak Arora (Old Name, which is to be changed) D/o Mukesh Kumar R/o D-10 GJU Campus, Guru Jambheshwar University, Hisar Teh. ∓ Distt. Hisar, Haryana, 125001 declare that I have changed my name from Palak Arora (Old Name) to Palak Arora Urf Guddu (New Name) for future purpose.

I, Balvir Kaur W/o Malkit Singh, R/o House No. 5 N D Nangal, Tehsil Nangal, District Rupnagar, have changed my name from Kuldeep Kaur to Balvir Kaur after marriage.

I, Sandhya W/o Pankaj Pandit R/o # 34 Vikas Nagar Mauli Jagran Chandigarh have changed my name to Sandhya Devi.

I, Pankaj s/o Suresh Pandit R/o # 34 Vikas Nagar Mauli Jagran Chandigarh have changed my name to Pankaj Pandit.

I, Ranjodh Singh S/o Lakhwinder Singh R/o Vpo. Jallapur Khera Teh-Baba Bakala Distt. Amritsar have changed my name Ranjodh Singh to Ranjodh is my given name and Singh is my surname.

I Mamta Devi W/O Chhatarpal R/O Pinjora Sub Tehsil Saraswati Nagar, Tehsil Jagadhri District Yamunanagar Have Changed My Name From Mamta Rani To Mamta Devi.

I Paramjit Kaur W/O Mandhir Singh R/O Vpo Dosanjhan Kalan, Teh Phillaur, Distt Jalandhar Have Changed My Name Paramjit And Now Kaur Is My Surname. All Concerned Note.

I, Charan Singh Badwal S/o Kishan Singh R/o V.P.O Baghpur Distt. Hoshiarpur have changed my name to Charan Singh.

I, Jaspal S/o Mukand Lal R/o H.No. 1, Near CIA Staff, Model Town, Samrala Road, Khanna (Ludhiana) have changed my name to Jaspal Chopra.

I, Avtar Sngh S/o Sarwan Singh R/o Village Malawal, Tehsil Amloh (Fatehgarh Sahib) have changed my name from Avtar Sngh to Avtar Singh.

I, Sukhmander Singh S/o Pritam Singh R/o Vill: Mallu Wala Teh-Zira Distt. Ferozepur (142050) Pb, India, have changed my name from Sukhmandar Singh to Sukhmander Singh.

I, Jagsir Khan Alias Bashir Khan Alias Mohammed Bashir S/o Nazam Khan R/o Village Saho ke Tehsil. Baghapurana (Moga) known by all the above three Names.

I, Service No 14929728H Hav Abhirjan Kumar residing at Vill. Dariyapur, Teh- Ghosi, Distt- Jehanabad (Bihar) 804406, have been changed my daughter name Akansha to Akansha Sharma vide Affidavit date 31.08.2026 before notary public Distt. court Bathinda (PB)

I, Jonthi Mother of 14853918Y Nk Baban Singh residing at Vill. Nashirer Para ,Teh Tehatta , Distt. Nadia (West Bengal) 741122 have changed my name from Jonthi to Jayanti Shil vide Affidavit date 31.08.2026 before notary public Distt. Court Bathinda (PB).

I, Daramjit Singh S/o Mohinder Singh, # 953 kishangarh, manimajra chandigarh have changed my name to Paramjeet Singh.

I kuldeep kumar s/o mohan lal r/o house 237 urban estate part 2 sector 12 karnal, have changed my name to Kuldeep satija

I, Hardev Singh S/o Ramji Dass, House NO 2596/2, Block No 6, Sector 49-C, Chandigarh have changed my name from Hardev Singh to Hardeep Singh

I, Ajit S/o Dalip Singh R/o Ward No. 1 Loco Colony Tehsil and District Jind, Haryana have Changed my name from Ajit to Ajit Singh.

I Chand Singh Son Of Sh. Suraj Bhan, Resident Of House No.504, Sector 27, Panchkula, Haryana, Have Changed My Name From Chand Singh To Chand Singh Dahiya.

I Nasreen Begam, Wife Of Shri Jc 482599w Subedar Jagir Khan, Have Been Mistakenly Written As Nasreen Begum In My Husband Documents However, My Real Name Is Nasreen Begam. I Should Be Known As Nasreen Begam From Now On

I, Shabana Khan, Daughter Of Shri Jc 482599w Subedar Jagir Khan, Have Been Mistakenly Written As Sabana In My Father's Documents However, My Real Name Is Shabana Khan I Should Be Known As Shehbaz Khan From Now On

I, Shehbaz Khan, Son Of Shri Jc 482599w Subedar Jagir Khan, Have Been Mistakenly Written As Shahbaaz Khan In My Father's Documents. However, My Real Name Is Shehbaz Khan. I Should Be Known As Shehbaz Khan From Now On

I Simran W/o Sh. Manroop Singh R/O H. No. 195-R, Model Town, Karnal, That in my aadhar card document my name is written as Simran and in my school certificate document my name is written as Simran Lamba. That Simran Lamba names belongs to the one and same person i.e. me.

I, Kamal Son Of Shri Ved Parkash Giri, Resident Of H. No. 2247 Nhbc, Sector-11-12, Near Chandni Bag, Panipat-132103, District Panipat, State Haryana, India, State That I Have Changed My Name From 'Kamal' To 'Kamal Giri Goswami'.

I, No.15714777a Nk Mavi Kismatdev Khumanbhai Unit 2 Ew Bn C/O 56 Apo Resident Of Vpo- Sutharvasa, Teh- Jhalod, Distt- Dahod, State- Gujarat- 389180 Declare That I Have Changed My Daughter's Name From Mavi Pratiksha Ben Kismat Dev To Mavi Pratikshaben Kismatdev Vide Affidavit No.In-Pb85483979706433y Dated 29.08.2026 Before The Court Of Bathinda.

I, No.15714777a Nk Mavi Kismatdev Khumanbhai Unit 2 Ew Bn C/O 56 Apo Resident Of Vpo- Sutharvasa, Teh- Jhalod, Distt- Dahod, State- Gujarat- 389180 Declare That I Have Changed My Son's Name From Mavi Dharam Raj Kismat Dev To Mavi Dharamraj Kismatdev Vide Affidavit No.In-Pb85496629699404y Dated 29.08.2026 Before The Court Of Bathinda.

I, No.15714777a Nk Mavi Kismatdev Khumanbhai Unit 2 Ew Bn C/O 56 Apo Resident Of Vpo- Sutharvasa, Teh- Jhalod, Distt- Dahod, State- Gujarat- 389180 Declare That I Have Changed My Son's Name From Mavi Hardik Raj K To Mavi Hardikraj Kismatdev Vide Affidavit No.In-Pb854966193285624y Dated 29.08.2026 Before The Court Of Bathinda.

I, Mavi Lila Ben Kismat Dev Legally Wedded Spouse Of No.15714777a Nk Mavi Kismatdev Khumanbhai Unit 2 Ew Bn C/O 56 Apo Resident Of Vpo- Sutharvasa, Teh- Jhalod, Distt- Dahod, State- Gujarat- 389180 Declare That I Have Changed My Name From Mavi Lila Ben Kismat Dev To Mavi Lilaben Kismatdev Vide Affidavit No.In-Pb85484675684487y Dated 29.08.2026 Before The Court Of Bathinda.

I, Ajaib Singh S/O. Dalbir Singh R/O. # Village Gaganpur,Po Holı,Near Govt School,Tehsil-Barara, Distt Ambala Have Changed My Minor Son Name From Rakshit Deswal To Aarav Deswal.

I Jasvir Singh S/O Sewa Singh R/O Alam Wala Kalan District Moga Have Changed My Name To Jasvir Singh Brar

I Parmeet Kaur Wife Of Gurmit Singh Resident Of H.No 146 Ward No 12 Sanaur Distt Patiala Punjab L Have Changed My Name From Parmeet Kaur Alias Beant Kaur To Parmeet Kaur Please Concerned Note

I, Bhanu Partap Singh S/o Rana Partap Singh R/o H.No. 17 B/338, Jaimal Nagar, Jalandhar have changed my name from Bhanu Partap Singh to Singh Bhanu Partap (Surname as Singh)

I, Sonia Rana D/o Samual Bhatti R/o H.No. 54, K.P Nagar, Jallowal Abadi, Po. Model Town, Jalandhar have changed my name from Sonia Rana to Sonia Bhatti.

I, Tanu W/o Amandeep Singh R/o H.No. B-VIII 261, Khudi Gate Barnala, Punjab have changed my name from Tanu to Tanu Kaur. (Kaur as surname)

I, Rakesh Singh S/o Avtar Singh R/O Village Dittu Nangal, Po. Pattar Kalan, District Jalandhar, Punjab have changed my from Rakesh Singh to Singh Rakesh (Singh as Surname)

I, Ram Lakhan Yadav S/o Raj Nath Village, Thiriewal p.o Marrari Kalan, Distt. Amritsar, have change my name from Ram Lakhan Yadav to Ram Lakhan. Concerned note.

I, Rahul S/o Ramchandrer R/o Village Kulan, Tehsil Tohana, District Fatehabad, Haryana, hereby inform the general public that I have changed my name from Rahul to Rahul Bajia. In the future, I should be known and recognized by the name Rahul Bajia. Furthermore, my name is currently recorded as 'Rahul' in my wife Muskan's passport; I request that it be updated to 'Rahul Bajia' therein.

ANMOL INDIA LIMITED

CIN: L51909PB1998PLC050300
Regd. Office: 2nd Floor, 2/43, Block B, Aggar Nagar, Ludhiana, Punjab- 141001. Website: www.anmolindia.com
Email: anmol.india.limited@gmail.com

INTIMATION ABOUT 28TH ANNUAL MEETING AND BOOK CLOSURE

Notice is hereby given that the 28th Annual General Meeting ('AGM') of the Company will be held on Saturday, 26th September, 2026 at 10.00 A.M. (IST) at the Registered Office of the Company at 2/43, 2nd Floor, Block B, Aggar Nagar, Ludhiana, Punjab- 141001, in compliance with General Circular Numbers 17/2020 dated 13th April, 2020, 14/2020 dtd 8th April, 2020, 20/2020 dtd 05th May, 2020, 22/2020 dtd 15th June, 2020, 33/2020 dtd 28th September, 2020, 39/2020 dtd 31st December, 2020, 10/2021 dtd 21st June, 2021, 20/2021 dtd 08th December, 2021, 02/2022 dtd 03rd May, 2022, 11/2022 dtd 28th December, 2022, 09/2023 dtd 25th September, 2023, 09/2024 dtd 19th September, 2024 (the MCA Circulars) and Circular No. SEBI/HO/CFD/CMD1/CIR/P/2020/79 dtd 12th May, 2020, Circular No. SEBI/HO/CFD/CMD2/CIR/P/2021/11 dtd 15th January, 2021, Circular No. SEBI/HO/CFD/CMD2/CIR/P/2022/62 dtd 13th May, 2022, Circular No. SEBI/HO/CFD/PoD-2/P/CIR/2023/4 dtd 05th January, 2023, Circular No. SEBI/HO/CFD/CFD-PoD-2/P/CIR/2023/167 dtd 07th October, 2023, and Circular No. SEBI/HO/CFD/CFD-PoD-2/P/CIR/2024/133 dtd 03rd October, 2024 issued by the Securities and Exchange Board of India.

Kindly note that the electronic copies of the notice and annual report for the FY 2025-26 will be sent to all the members whose email addresses are registered with the company/Depository participant(s) within the prescribed timeline and also available on the website of company www.anmolindia.com, CDSL at www.evotingindia.com and stock exchanges i.e. BSE Limited at www.bseindia.com and NSE Limited at www.nseindia.com. Members who have still not registered their email addresses can get their email addresses registered by contacting their respective Depository Participant. In terms of Regulation 36(1)(b) of the SEBI (Listing) Obligations and Disclosures Requirements, Regulations, 2015 (as amended vide circular dated December, 12/2024), the shareholders whose email id is not registered with the RTA/Depository Participant, a letter including the web-link along with the path to access the Annual Report of Company will be sent to the shareholders.

The remote e-voting window will open at 10.00 A.M. on 23rd September, 2026 and closed at 05.00 P.M. on 25th September, 2026. Members holding shares in dematerialized form as on the cut off date i.e. 19th September, 2026, may cast their vote electronically through electronic voting system of the Central Depository Services (India) Ltd. (CDSL) as well as voting through ballot paper at the AGM on the business as set out in the Notice of AGM. The remote e-voting module will be disabled after the above time line by CDSL and E-voting shall not be allowed thereafter.

The members attending the meeting who have not already cast their vote by remote e-voting shall be able to exercise the right at the meeting. The members who have cast their vote by remote e-voting prior to the meeting may also attend the meeting but shall not be entitled to cast the vote again.

Any person who acquires shares of the Company and becomes a shareholder of the Company after email of the Notice of AGM and holds shares as on the cut-off date i.e. 19th September, 2026, may obtain the login ID and password for remote e- voting by sending a request at info@bgishareonline.com.

Further, pursuant to the provisions of section 91 of the Companies Act, 2013, the Register of Members and the Share Transfer Books of the Company will remain closed from Saturday, 19th September, 2026 to Saturday, 26th September, 2026 (both days inclusive) for the purpose of 28th AGM.

Any query/grievance connecting with voting by electronic means, should be addressed to the Company Secretary at the above mentioned email id and /or address.

By order of the board of Directors
For Anmol India Limited
Sd/-
(Parabhjot Kaur)

Date : 31st August, 2026 **Place : Ludhiana** Company Secretary & Compliance Officer

The Nawanshahr Cooperative Sugar Mills Ltd; Nawanshahr,
(Distt. Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar)
E-mail: dcsms_nsr@yahoo.com/dcsmsnr@gmail.com
Website: www.nawanshahrsugar.in, GSTIN No. 03AAAF52602K2ZV

TENDER NOTICE 2026-27
A) ON LINE e-TENDER NOTICE
On Line E-tender are invited for purchase of (1) Dismantling, Fabrication and Erection Jobs (2) Repair of Soot Blower (3) Supply of Slot Chain (4) R.O. Plant Spare (5) Supply of Man Power (Co- Generation Plant) (6) Supply of VCB & ACB (7) Supply of other mill material. Last date for submission of e-Tender is 15.09.2026 upto 04:00 PM & the same will be opened on 16.09.2026 at 02:00 PM. For e-tender detail are available on the Punjab Govt. website https://eproc.punjab.gov.in any change /corrigendum/addendum will be uploaded on above website. The undersigned reserves the right to reject/Postpone any or all of the tender without assigning any reason.
B) OFF LINE TENDER NOTICE
Off line tenders are invited for purchase of Mill material and contract jobs. The last date for submission of off line tender is 16.09.2026 upto 05:00 PM. Purchase material and Contract jobs tender will be opened on 17.09.2026 at 10:00 AM onwards and if required negotiation will be held on same day at 11:00 AM. Off line tenders are available on our website www.nawanshahrsugar.in any change /corrigendum/ addendum will be uploaded on above website. The undersigned reserves the right to reject/Postpone any or all of the tender without assigning any reason.

General Manager

CHANGE OF DOB
I, MAYA TAMANG Is Mother of BUDHA TAMANG Presently Resident At Vill-U/ Dalapchand , Po-U/ Dalapchand , Dist- Darjeeling , State-West Bengal, Pin - 734316. Declare that Service No- 9426346H Rank- LNK Name –BUDHA TAMANG of unit 7/11 Gorkha Rifles is my son. In my Son service records my Date of birth has been records as 06-06-1950 (One June Nineteen Fifty) which is incorrect. My correct date of birth is 01-01-1950 (One January Nineteen Fifty) as Recorded In my Aadhaar Card No 6778 8317 9871 . This is Swear And Affirm Vide Affidavit No IN-PB85654747255058Y Dated 29-08- 2026. Before Notary Public District Court Gurdaspur Punjab.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Smt. Monu W/o Sh. Kuldeep wants to avail a loan from Tata Capital Housing Finance Limited having its branch at Dites Road, Sonipat (Hr) against property i.e. Plot measuring 2022 Square Yards i.e. 1 Kanal 34 Marla which is 73/47 share out of property 34 Kanal 34 Marla comprised in Khewat No. 605, Rectangle No. 54, Kharsa No. 121/75, 137/71, 148/73, 149/73, 200/73 & 201/73 situated in the revenue estate of Village Madina, Tehsil Gohana, Distt. Sonipat which is outside the limit of M.C. Gohana (Hr). The current owner of the above said property is Smt. Monu W/o Sh. Kuldeep and it is informed that original documents i.e. Original Sale Deed Vaila No. 7368 dated 28/05/2002 with regard to the above said property which was in the custody of current owner is missing somewhere. If any person (Entity)/DASA/Financial Institution/Bank/Govt. Department may have obtained or have issued any loan/Stay Order/Court Case against this property as well as these documents or have any objection of any kind regarding the above said property or documents in that case they/they can file an objection within 7 days (Seven Days) from the date of the present Publication to below mentioned person and after 7 days no claim shall be entertained and it would be assumed that the property is free from encumbrances:-
Rajesh Kumar Sharma, Advocate
Off:-Chamber Ks. 22, Lawyer's Chamber Building Judicial Complex, Samalkha, Distt. Panipat -132001
Cont. No. 9896888337/9332996427

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Deepen Keralam rivers to stop floods: VP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Alappuzha (Keralam)

Vice President of India CP Radhakrishnan on Sunday urged authorities to increase the depth of rivers in Keralam to prevent flooding and said people should not become 'fanatical' about environmental issues.

He was speaking at the 115th anniversary celebration of Malayalam daily Kerala Kaumudi.

Radhakrishnan reached Keralam on Sunday and will attend events for two days.

"One big problem is coming for Keralam: the depth of the river is getting reduced because the sand is not being removed at frequent intervals. I am not saying the sand should be removed all of a sudden, but it should be removed at frequent intervals so the depth of the river can be maintained. Otherwise, where will the water go?" he said.

He said deepening the rivers was necessary.

"We should not become fanatical about anything, including the environment. We should not politicise



Vice President CP Radhakrishnan and Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan during the flagging off of the closing day pageantry of the Onam Tourism Week Celebrations in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday

everything; that will always go against the interest of development," Radhakrishnan said.

He said Keralam should progress along with other states in industrial, educational and healthcare sectors while also protecting the environment.

Radhakrishnan said he had asked MPs from Keralam to consider deepening rivers following the recent floods in the State.

"I told our MPs when they met me, 'You should deepen your rivers'. If it is in court, we should go to court and explain to them what the depth of the river was 10 years ago and

what the depth of the river is today," he said.

He said unpredictable rainfall had become another major problem, with long periods without rain followed by heavy rainfall overnight.

Radhakrishnan urged journalists to create awareness about such issues and write about the need to address them.

"Some people say in the name of the environment that rivers should not be deepened, but then where will the water go?" he asked.

Radhakrishnan congratulated the people of Keralam on the change of the name of their State.

"I was chairing the Rajya Sabha when the bill was passed on August 12, 2026. I congratulate every Keralite for achieving this new name, because it represents the culture of Keralam. I could see the happiness on the faces of all the members that a historical error was now being corrected," he said.

Radhakrishnan also highlighted what he described as three major contributions from Keralam to the country, referring to Adi Shankaracharya, Sree Narayana Guru and Mannathu Padmanabhan.

"If Adi Sankaracharya is not there, I don't think there is a United India today. And if Narayana Guru is not there, there is no equality among ourselves. And the third is Mannathu Padmanabhan, who is also a great reformist, who has given a lot of importance to education, who wanted everyone to get educated," he said.

He said Keralam became the first state in the country to become 100 per cent literate due to the efforts of such reformers and described Narayana Guru as "one of the

greatest sages and social reformers of modern history."

Praising Kerala Kaumudi for maintaining journalism and its ethics over the past 115 years, the Vice President said journalism had played a vital role in creating political awareness, encouraging social reform, questioning established practices and giving ordinary people a voice for their rights.

He said the media must understand society and noted that Keralam was a progressive society with high levels of literacy and social development, political awareness, a vibrant cultural tradition and a strong global presence through its diaspora.

Radhakrishnan said the media landscape had changed dramatically over the last two decades, with news travelling instantly and smartphones turning every citizen into a publisher.

He said artificial intelligence could generate text, images and video within seconds, while social media could make a story reach millions before a traditional newsroom completed its verification.

Purification row: Police complaint against Rahul Gandhi in Haldwani

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Haldwani

A member of the Valmiki community has lodged a police complaint against Lok Sabha Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, alleging he gave a casteist spin to a religious ritual held at the venue of the Congress chief's programme in Haldwani, police said on Sunday.

Amit Kumar, a resident of Jawahar Nagar, claimed in the complaint filed at the Haldwani Police Station that he was present during the "ritual and cleanliness drive" and that Gandhi's remarks made in Delhi at a press conference on August 29 hurt the sentiments of the community.

Vijay Mehta, the local station house officer, said no FIR has been filed yet.

The Shri Ram Sena Dharmarth Seva Nyas member said people from various sections of society, including Scheduled Castes, participated in the event, and it was not linked to



any specific caste.

Kumar requested the police to take cognisance of the video of the press conference, social media posts, and photos and videos of the events held on August 8 and 11, as he sought a case under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act in the matter.

The police said copies of the complaint have been sent to the Nainital Senior Superintendent of Police and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes.

A political row erupted after some individuals allegedly performed a 'purification yajna' at the Ramilla Ground in Haldwani on August 11, following a public meeting held there by Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on August 8.

While the Congress has termed the incident a reflection of the BJP's anti-Dalit mindset, the BJP defended the action, claiming that the venue was left littered after Kharge's rally and that slogans were raised which were inappropriate for a religious site.

Vijayan hits out at Bhagwat over unity remarks, flags caste, communal divisions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

CPI(M) veteran Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday hit out at RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat over his remarks on unity and diversity, alleging that caste discrimination and communal divisions persisted in India.

In a post on X, the former Keralam chief minister said Bhagwat spoke in New York about "one humanity", equal dignity and an inclusive Hindutva, while Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge was allegedly subjected to a "purification" ritual in Haldwani because of his Dalit identity.

"At home, Mallikarjun Kharge is allegedly subjected to a 'purification' ritual in Haldwani because of his Dalit



identity, while Dalits and minorities face atrocities every day," he claimed.

Vijayan also referred to the alleged death of a Dalit man in police custody in Uttar Pradesh and said

India did not need "sermons on unity abroad" while caste and communal divisions persisted at home.

He alleged that the RSS' "communal, casteist and divisive ideology" perpetuated social divisions and pitted communities against one another.

"This must be confronted in defence of our Constitution and equal rights," Vijayan said.

His remarks came a day after Bhagwat addressed more than 6,000 members of the Indian-American community and interfaith leaders at a rally at the Infosys Theatre in New York's Madison Square Garden.

Addressing the gathering, Bhagwat said "unity in diversity" was in "Bharat's DNA" and called for diversity to be celebrated, respected and accepted.

DGP stresses stakeholder coordination for peace, security in border areas of Ladakh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Leh

Ladakh Director General of Police (DGP) Anand Jain has emphasised the need for close cooperation, coordination and synergy among all stakeholders to ensure peace, security and stability in the sensitive border areas of the Union Territory.

The Ladakh Police chief made the remarks during his visit to the vibrant



Ladakh DGP Anand Jain

village of Chumur, where he paid homage at a local monastery and interacted with security personnel deployed in the border area, before concluding his three-day tour of Changthang district, a police spokesman said on Sunday.

The DGP's tour was aimed at reviewing policing infrastructure, strengthening public-police relations, and assessing developmental and security-related aspects in the region.

FIR against Mamata: TMC cries vendetta

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Kolkata

The Trinamool Congress has strongly condemned the suo motu FIR filed by the Kolkata Police against former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as an "unadulterated act of vendetta", demanding immediate withdrawal of the same.

Launching a blistering attack on the BJP Government spokesperson of the pro-Mamata Banerjee camp of the TMC Kunal on Sunday said that Banerjee "continues to be the biggest crowd puller and the most charismatic leader of the State ... which is why thousands of people gather at places whenever she comes out of her house ... this very fact of her undiminished popularity... the BJP leadership is unable to digest... this is the reason why the present Chief Minister (Suvendu Adhikari) has to make extra efforts to keep her indoors... this is anything but politics... this is political vendetta."

Earlier, the Hastings Police Station in Kolkata had suo motu registered an FIR against the TMC chief for allegedly violating a Calcutta High Court order during the Trinamool Congress Chhatra Parishad foundation day rally on August 28. The Court had permitted Banerjee to hold the event occupying only one flank of the Cathedral Road, whereas both



sides of the road were blocked during the rally, leading the police to register FIRs under Sections 61(2), 223, 125(a), 132 and 285 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Senior party MLA and former minister Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay said that there were sometimes situations when it was not possible to control the crowd when a popular leader like Mamata Banerjee hit the street.

"We ensured that our men remained on one side of the road, but what will you tell those passersby who would stand on the other side to watch a leader speak... it is the job of the police to ensure that the other side is kept open... it was a lapse on the part of the police," Chattopadhyay said.

Referring to the FIR filed against Banerjee's senior

State minister Agnimitra Paul on Sunday said that the Government would tolerate no violation of the High Court order, alleging the previous TMC Government regularly did so and had developed a habit of doing so which was continuing even after their fall.

Paul said, "No violation of the High Court's order, whether by Mamata Banerjee or anyone else, will be tolerated. The previous government showed disrespect to the High Court when judges were repeatedly insulted... now, such things will not be tolerated... actions will be taken and taken promptly."

Rejecting the BJP Government's allegations, Banerjee herself said that the other side of the road was intentionally blocked by the saffron supporters so that she

could be implicated and stopped from holding future rallies with High Court permission. "But even if we do not get permission from the police, we will simply walk by the road... I also want to see how many attackers they have to attack me," she said.

Another leader questioned the timing of the FIR, wondering why FIRs were being lodged simultaneously against Mamata Banerjee for one reason and Abhishek Banerjee and Derek O'Brien for some other reason.

Incidentally, the police have issued summons to the two other leaders in connection with a different case where the twosome allegedly tried to stop on-duty police personnel from entering the Camac Street office of Abhishek Banerjee to remove some hoardings. A scuffle ensued and subsequently 13 TMC workers were arrested.

"Do you think that no democracy will prevail in Benga... they will bulldoze poor people's houses, they will selectively provide Annapurna Bhandar to women (₹3000 scheme for eligible women), then they will send their goons to Jadavpur University and the police will simply look the other way... a wrong cannot continue for too long," Mamata Banerjee had earlier said.

Kadu seeks resignation of MPSC chairman amid paper leak row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

Shiv Sena MLC Bacchu Kadu on Sunday demanded the resignation of the Maharashtra Public Service Commission chairman and secretary on "moral grounds" over the alleged leak of the FDA inspector exam paper and a series of controversies surrounding competitive examinations.

His demands come in the wake of the police on Wednesday arresting six individuals, including three MPSC officials, in connection with the alleged leak of the question paper of the Drug Inspector (Group-B) screening examination held earlier this year.

The officials had said the accused allegedly accessed the examination questions ahead of the test, compiled them into a separate set, and distributed it to unauthorised persons.



"The commission's top office-bearers should accept moral responsibility and quit. If they do not, I will demand their resignation from the chief minister and deputy chief minister (Eknath Shinde)," Kadu stated on a social media post.

He demanded that the MPSC chairman and members have no political affiliations or connections, while the secretary should be a senior IAS officer rather than an official from the state secretariat cadre.

Kadu further sought a detailed

inquiry into the appointment of the commission's present joint secretary and controller of examinations, alleging that officials from the Mantralaya cadre were deputed without the commission's approval.

The controller of examinations should also face a criminal case as the post carries primary responsibility for the examination process, particularly issues relating to the security and confidentiality of question papers, Kadu said, threatening to take to the streets for the cause of students.

In 2018, alleged irregularities during the Maharashtra Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) came to light during an investigation, including allegations of manipulation of marks. The 2020 Maharashtra TET was also embroiled in allegations of manipulation of OMR sheets and

software to increase marks, with several arrests reported in the case.

In 2021, the Health Department Group-C examination faced allegations that its question paper had been leaked before the examination. The Group-D examination of the department that year was cancelled following an alleged paper leak and subsequently conducted afresh.

The same year, the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) recruitment examination was cancelled following allegations of a paper leak, with the recruitment process restarted.

More recently, the 2026 Maharashtra TET examination was postponed after a question paper was seized on the eve of the test, with an SIT investigation initiated into the matter.



Punjab: AAP leader Gurpreet Gopi shot dead in Ferozepur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ferozepur

AAP leader Gurpreet Singh alias Gopi was shot dead by four armed assailants in this district, with police on Sunday saying the killing was linked to an election-related dispute.

The four car-borne assailants got down from their vehicle in the main bazaar of Mamdot here on Saturday evening and opened fire at 45-year-old Singh and Harpreet alias Happy (22), who were on a motorcycle.

Earlier reports had suggested that the victims were in a car. According to sources, the newly appointed president of Mamdot Nagar Panchayat, Vicky Maini from the AAP, was following Singh

in a separate car. He also came under attack but escaped unhurt, the sources said. The injured were rushed to the Civil Hospital, where the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader was declared brought dead, while Harpreet was referred to a private hospital in Ludhiana.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Bhupinder Singh said police have identified the accused and police teams have been dispatched to nab them.

The SSP said the killing was an outcome of personal enmity related to the recent municipal council elections.

Singh's father Balkar Singh was a former Congress leader, while his sister-in-law had also been elected as a member of the nagar panchayat recently.

SUMIR KAUL

■ Srinagar/New Delhi

After exposing the misuse of online gaming platforms by terror groups, security agencies have uncovered a new operational tactic adopted by terrorists and their handlers, who are now using pornography websites and niche encrypted applications to communicate secretly, officials said on Sunday.

The covert channels are being used by terror outfits and Pakistan's intelligence agency, ISI, to convey instructions to recruits in Jammu and Kashmir while evading

surveillance on conventional social media platforms.

Officials said these pornography platforms feature real-time chat tools, operating under the guise of helping users find dates nearby, which handlers exploit to broadcast messages and coordinate activities.

Security agencies have placed a wide array of specialised digital tools under scrutiny. Terror handlers are relying on Tor-based messaging applications like Coatex and Conion to route data through encrypted nodes and obscure user identities.

Access to the APK for



Conion reportedly faces restrictions within India. An APK file (Android Package Kit) is the file format used by

the Android operating system to distribute and install mobile apps.

Additionally, they are using

privacy-focused platforms such as a France-based app that allows end-to-end encrypted messaging without requiring a SIM card or phone number, making user attribution difficult.

Agencies are also monitoring Vietnam-based apps alongside anonymous platforms like Moonchat, which includes PGP-encrypted versions with suspected Chinese origins that bypass traditional registration. This app has many versions used for finding singles in your vicinity.

Though several of these porn applications are

banned in India, they are downloaded illegally using Virtual Private Network (VPN). A VPN creates a secure and encrypted connection over the internet by masking Internet Protocol addresses and encrypting online traffic, making it more difficult to track online activity and access data.

Security experts feel that many platforms using the Tor network present unique tracking challenges by bouncing encrypted traffic through multiple volunteer-run relay nodes globally to hide both the origin and destination of the data. (PTI)

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 were 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.

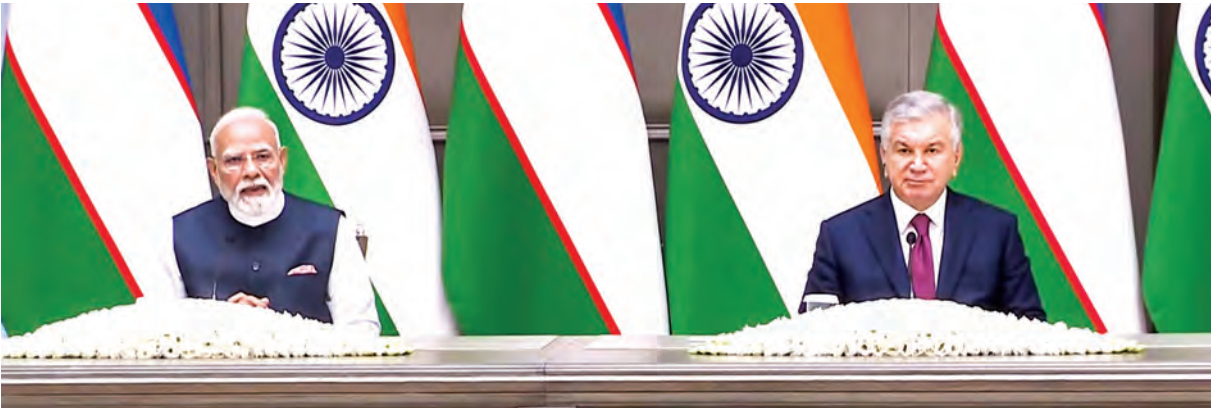
This case shows the NIA’s efforts to break up networks that tried to radicalise people, run paramilitary-style training, and use violence to cause unrest. Officials said the sentencing is part of ongoing legal action against those accused of supporting a banned group and planning terrorist acts. The 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’sstlik’ 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

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’sstlik’ 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.

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.

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.



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 Mukti 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.

Govt to decide on cashless UPI for foreign pilgrims at Simhasth

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 - entire 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



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 TEACHERS OR SAFER HOSTELS PRODUCES BENEFITS THAT ARE SLOWER, DISPERSED AND LESS ELECTORALLY LEGIBLE

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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



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

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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.

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 stage. 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

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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. Adjourments 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 recordkeeping 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.



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 Banerjee, Trianaamool 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 Banerjee 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 Indrapuri 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 Indrapuri 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 batted 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

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

income from other sources and any income by way of voluntary contributions are exempted from the computation of total income.

The plea has also sought a direction to the poll panel to scrutinise Form 24A contribution reports of all recognised political parties and to require them to deposit the amount received by way of contributions for which address and/or PAN have not been furnished.

It said the EC should be directed to issue notices to the defaulting political parties under the Election Symbol Order, 1968, as to why the reserved symbol shall not be suspended or withdrawn for failure to submit Form 24A contribution reports with full particulars within a prescribed period.

The plea said the poll panel

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

Anand Nagar Octroi Naka in Kopri, Thane.

A deputy octroi inspector alleged that individuals in parked vehicles were intercepting truck drivers, illegally collecting Rs 200 from them, and issuing membership receipts for the “Adhunik Bharat Driver and Cleaner Sangh”.

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.

(Abhijnanashakuntalam by Kalidasa)

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

gaze yet on the hidden parts of the universe from space, uncovering the unimaginable with unsurpassed speed. "It's going to find thousands

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.

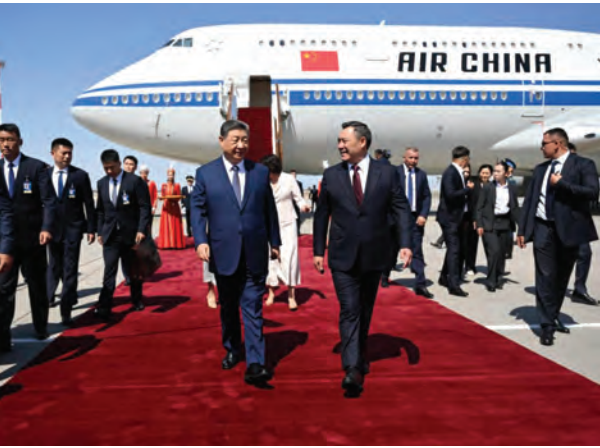
Inside the countless galaxies awaiting discovery are stars with planets. Once these new worlds are spotted by Roman, the more powerful and sensitive Webb will take aim to fill in the blanks. "Roman's vast reach will allow us to find the weird, the rare and the unusual," senior project scientist Julie 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)

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



Girne, 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.

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)

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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, with 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-

ally 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.

The Pioneer

CHANDIGARH | 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)

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-

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 payrolls 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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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 payrolls 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, 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.

"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.

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 in support of Mission Samudra Manthan. In view of the same, ONGC is exploring possibilities of ownership or JV model for Drillship



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.



Ankur Jain stepped down from the board and all executive positions at parent company B9 Beverages Ltd, along with members of his family, after settling with the company's lenders and investors, bringing to an end a prolonged financial crisis at the firm.

As per IBC provisions, B9 Beverages has ten days from receipt of the notice to pay the amount or to place on record any pre-existing dispute, failing which HNGIL may move the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for initiation of a corporate insolvency resolution process against the company, under Section 9 of the Code.

HNGIL Chief Strategy Officer Suraj Mehta said, "We acknowledge that a demand notice under the IBC has been issued to Bira 91, following the legal notice sent earlier this year in relation to certain

est on both heads at the contractual rate, after adjusting a credit of ₹13.72 lakh standing to the account of B9 Beverages, as mentioned in the notice.

The demand notice follows a legal notice issued to B9 Beverages on May 6, 2026, which asked the company to clear dues and to provide a firm schedule for lifting the entire stock within 15 days.

According to HNGIL, neither payment nor lifting of the stock has been scheduled. Both notices have been issued through the company's counsel, Nyaayam Associates LLP.

Section 8 of the IBC allows an operational creditor, being a party-owned money for goods supplied or services rendered, to formally demand payment of an unpaid debt from a company before approaching the tribunal.

DAILY SUDOKU

217658

5

93465

18374

4521

124638

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 drivell 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 (7)

32 Eat with Enid (4)

33 Took a seat for a conversation piece (3)

SOLUTION (29.8.26)

ACROSS

1, Ski-er

6, Pottery

9, M-art-lan

10, Steps

11, S-car-E

12, Purs-e

13, Pat-ri-ot

15, Met

17, Ore

18, Bolero

19, A-p-ron

20, Cher-ry

22, M-Op-e

24, Had

25, Su-rin-a-m

26, Ter-MS

27, Bar-on

28, Bully

29, Biscuit

30, Yan-ya

31, Tea-MS

DOWN

2, Kitbag

3, Empire

4, RAs

5, Stout

6, Pass-ion

7, On-ce

8, Turner

12, Poppy

13, Ro-o-Ch

14, T-ried

15, Melon

16, To-te-m

18, B-O-nus

19, Ar-men-ia

21, Havan-a

22, Minut(Waltz)

23, Pallor

25, S-m-ock

26, Toby

28, Bit

BRIEFLY

Scottish striker Lee Erwin boost for Mohun Bagan



Scottish striker Lee Harry Erwin has signed a one-year contract with Mohun Bagan, and the 32-year-old is expected to join the team's training sessions from Tuesday, the club stated. The 6-foot-2 forward is known for his physical presence, clinical finishing, and ability to make an impact inside the box.

Erwin, who can also pose a threat from set-pieces because of his height, joins the Mariners after spending last season with Jordanian club Al-Faisaly.

He has represented Scotland at youth level and brings experience from spells with clubs in Europe and Asia.

The striker has previously played for Motherwell, Leeds United, Bury FC, and Tractor FC among others, during a career that has taken him across different leagues and countries.

His arrival is expected to add further depth and firepower to head coach Panagiotis Dilmperis' attacking options.

"I will be playing in India for the first time. I had offers from quite a few ISL clubs, but Mohun Bagan is the biggest club in the country, so I accepted their offer and decided to come here," Erwin said.

(PTI)

Golfer Pranavi Urs slips to tied-15th in Irish Open



Indian golfer Pranavi Urs added 2-under 70 in the third round but slipped to Tied-15th in the Women's Irish Open here. The Mysuru golfer has now shot three sub-par rounds of 69-70-70 to be 7-under for 54 holes with one more round to go. Pranavi, the only Indian to make the cut out of the four who started the week, opened with birdies on the second and third, but gave both shots back in the next two holes. Then followed birdies on the seventh and the 10th to end the day with eight straight pars for 70 on a wet day.

Diksha Dagar, Tvesa Malik and Avani Prashanth missed the cut earlier.

South African Casandra Alexander will take a three shot lead into the final round as the South African looks to complete a wire-to-wire victory and earn her first Ladies European Tour (LET) win of the season.

(PTI)

Messi scores 4 goals, leads Inter Miami to 7-1 romp over Montreal

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Miami

Lionel Messi scored three times in the second half to finish off his first four-goal effort in MLS play while adding an assist, and Inter Miami scored six unanswered goals in a 7-1 romp over CF Montreal on Saturday night.

Messi snapped a 1-1 tie in the 40th minute when he found the net for the 15th time, scoring off a free kick.

The reigning Golden Boot Award winner and league MVP scored for a 3-1 lead in the 52nd minute. His 17th and 18th goals of the season came in the 83rd and sixth minute of stoppage time with the final one also coming off a free kick. Messi began the day two behind Petar Musa of FC Dallas in the goals race.

Carlos Casimiro scored



with a header off a corner kick by Telasco Segovia in the 20th minute to give Inter Miami a 1-0 lead. It was the first goal for the 34-

year-old midfielder in his sixth league appearance and a career-best ninth assist for Segovia in his second MLS season.

Montreal tied it in the 37th minute on a goal by Fabian Herbers — his first of the campaign.

Luis Suarez scored his 11th goal with an assist from Messi — his 10th — for a 4-1 lead in the 80th minute and 18-year-old rookie Alexander Shaw made it 6-1 in the 89th with his first goal in three appearances and 37 minutes of play.

Dayne St Clair finished with three saves for Inter Miami (12-4-6), which finished August with a 1-2-2 record after a fifth straight victory over Montreal.

Thomas Gillier saved five shots for Montreal (5-11-6).

It was Inter Miami's first victory since beating Montreal 1-0 on the road to close out July. Suarez won that one on a penalty kick in the 81st minute.

Dutch football federation is latest to withdraw support for FIFA President Gianni Infantino

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Amsterdam

The Dutch football federation became the latest nation to call for new leadership at FIFA on Sunday.

In a statement, the federation said it "no longer has confidence" in FIFA President Gianni Infantino. It offered to host an international summit to discuss the future of FIFA.

"We believe FIFA needs new leadership from 2027 onwards. But a new president alone is not enough. The way FIFA is governed must change as well," it said. "We see too much power concentrated around the FIFA president and insufficient separation between the president and the FIFA administration," the federation said.



"The process surrounding the now-withdrawn FIFA Forward Enterprise proposal was a turning point for us. Withdrawing the proposal was neces-

sary, but it does not restore the trust that has been lost." The federation said it shared "this position and our vision for the future of FIFA" in a letter to UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin.

UEFA, the European soccer confederation, is spearheading the backlash against Infantino over his failed World Cup sell-off plan that created a deep rift in the sport. Many of its other member federations have withdrawn their support for the FIFA leader, who is up for re-election in March 2027. Some have called for his resignation.

Infantino has not given any indication he plans to step down.

The Dutch federation said there is a need for a "new FIFA," not just a new president.

India set to begin AFC U-20 Asian Cup qualifying campaign against Syria

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Tashkent

India will look to secure their first win over Syria when they begin their AFC Under-20 Asian Cup China 2027 Qualifiers campaign at the Do'stlik Stadium on Monday.

India's first opponents, Syria, are a side the Blue Colts have encountered only twice before in competitive football at this level.

Both meetings came in the AFC Youth Championship (U19) -- a 0-1 defeat in 1996 and a 1-2 loss in 2004.

Now coached by Netherlands' Arno Buitenweg, Syria's presence also makes for a demanding

opening assignment, with India aware that there will be little margin for error in a group that also contains Uzbekistan and Bangladesh.

"Syria are a good team with experience at this level, and we respect them. We have studied them and have an idea of what to expect, but our main focus will be on our own game," head coach Mahesh Gawali said.

"We need to be organised, especially without the ball, and make the most of our opportunities when they come. It will be a competitive match, and we have to stay focused for the full 90 minutes," added Gawali.

Syria come into the quali-



fiers with a strong pedigree at this level, having won the AFC U19 Championship in 1994. They have also been regular participants in recent

editions, qualifying for the last two AFC U20 Asian Cups, making them a challenging opponent for India in the opening fixture.

Drawn in Group B alongside hosts Uzbekistan and Bangladesh, India enter the qualifiers with the objective of returning to the AFC U20 Asian Cup for the first time since 2006. The Blue Colts have a proud history in the competition, having shared the title with Iran in 1974, but have not qualified for tournament in past two decades.

With only the group winners and the seven best runners-up across all eight groups making it through to the Asian Cup, the opening fixture against Syria therefore presents an important first step for Gawali and his side.

"The first match is always important, especially in a

qualifying competition. We have prepared well, and the players are focused. Our approach is to take it one game at a time, stay disciplined and give our best on the pitch. We know what we want to do, and now it is about executing our plans well," said Gawali.

India came agonisingly close to qualification in the previous edition. In the 2025 qualifiers, the Blue Colts missed out on a spot as one of the best runners-up on goal difference.

The 2007-born defender Malemngamba Singh Thokchom is the only player from that batch in the current squad.

Chelsea signs Argentina's World Cup winner Martinez from Aston Villa

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Tashkent

Chelsea made official the signing of Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez.

The English club said the 33-year-old goalkeeper, who won the World Cup in 2022, has signed a three-year deal, joining from Aston Villa.

"Coming to Chelsea, for me and my family, was an easy decision to make and I'm just over the moon. I can't wait to get started," Martinez said. "I want to be successful here. I'm someone who wants to win at everything I do and I want to bring that here to this football club because it's a football club that wins titles,



so I think it's a good match." Martinez is set to take over the starting goalkeeping spot in Xabi Alonso's squad, which saw Robert Sanchez struggle again in the team's

Premier League opener against Fulham.

Villa earlier this month signed U.S.-born Japan goalkeeper Zion Suzuki from Parma, opening the doors for Martinez's departure.

Martinez has been Argentina's regular starter since 2021, earning 67 caps. He also helped his country win the Copa America in 2021 and 2024, and reach this year's World Cup final.

Martinez won the Yashin Trophy, awarded to the world's best-performing goalkeeper, at the 2023 and 2024 Ballon d'Or ceremonies.

He made 256 appearances for Villa across six seasons and won the Europa League in May.

Yin chips in for birdie on 18 to take the 3rd-round lead at TPC Boston

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Norton (USA)

Ruoning Yin chipped in for birdie from just off the 18th green to take the third-round lead Saturday at TPC Boston in the FM Championship. Yin also holed a 20-foot putt for birdie on the par-3 16th in a 4-under 68. At 12-under 204, the Chinese star had a one-stroke lead over South Korean players Sei Young Kim and Hyo Joo Kim.

"I think my swing is in a good spot, my putting and every part of my game I think are pretty good," Yin said. "I'm just going to play my game. I'm not going to



play safe when it's time to go aggressive."

Yin has five PGA Tour victories, winning twice in 2023 and three times in

2024. "I think just play my game," Yin said. "I knew today was going to be tough and tomorrow is going to be tougher, so just be patient

and play my game."

Sei Young Kim, the first-round leader after a 64, rebounded from a second-round 74 with a 67.

"A little more emotional today," she said. "It kind of helps today, like positive way." Hyo Joo Kim had a 70. She has two victories this season, the Founders Cup and Ford Championship.

"I just want to make sure I'm doing a good job tomorrow," she said through a translator. Somi Lee (70) and Jenny Bae (72) were tied for fourth at 8 under.

Miyu Yamashita, the Japanese player tied for the second-round lead, dropped six strokes back with a 75.

Federer brought to tears during his induction into International Tennis Hall of Fame

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Newport (USA)

Roger Federer was brought to tears numerous times during his induction speech at the International Tennis Hall of Fame on Saturday.

As sunset crept in at Newport's grass horseshoe court at the entrance of the Hall, the 45-year-old Federer, dressed in a tan suit, strolled up to the stage for his speech, kissed and hugged his wife, Mirka, who had just introduced him, and realized what a challenge it was going to be.

"Oh man," were the first words from the first man ever to win 20 Grand Slam singles titles. "This is very

high level and a tough act to follow."

He joked: "I don't know if you have been practicing secretly" before praising his wife's presentation of the 272nd Hall of Famer.

Federer was inducted along with Mary Carillo, a broadcaster and former player, who was presented by Hall of Famer Billie Jean King.

Federer, called the "Swiss Maestro" during the Hall's first red-carpet show, which began on center court about 90 minutes before the start of the induction ceremony, told the crowd that he "was a little stressed to be honest."

During his nearly 30-minute speech, Federer, who



showed fluid movement and a quick approach to the net with a solid one-hand backhand that earned him a record 237 consecutive weeks as the world's No. 1 player in the ATP rankings, choked up a handful of times. It began to get tough for him about halfway through, when he talked about his childhood hero, Stefan Edberg, when he said these are "happy tears."

Then he was brought to tears again when he spoke about his longtime coach Severin Luthi, before he wanted to thank Mirka for helping him on his journey.

"Now the Mirka part," he said, pausing before breaking into tears. "Oh gosh, this

such a mess."

He tried to joke, but the tears took over like a quick return at the net. "I need tissues and sunglasses, everything to protect me right now," he told the crowd, fighting back more tears.

But, like rallying in winning one of his five consecutive U.S. Open titles from 2004-08 or reaching 10 straight Slam finals, which he won eight, Federer closed by thanking the ball boys and encouraged players to keep taking the game new levels.

Federer, who celebrated his 45th birthday three weeks ago, won eight Wimbledon titles and is only one of eight men with a career Grand Slam. He cap-

tured six Australian Opens and one French Open, in 2009.

"I'm thrilled to have made the journey here," he said. "It's amazing to see yourself in a place like this. To immerse yourself in the history of the sport means a lot to me." Carillo, inducted as a contributor, is a member of the Sports Broadcasting Hall of Fame.

King said: "She has earned her spot in sports journalism and she has earned her spot in Newport." Carillo, 69, was touched standing in front of a handful of Hall of Famers.

"To walk through these gates here in the company of you people, that was beyond my dreams," she said.



Shubhankar drops in third round at British Masters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Belfry (England)

Indian golfer Shubhankar Sharma was unable to build on his fine performance on the opening two days as he managed only an even par 72 in the third round of the Husqvarna British Masters.

With a total of 4-under for 54 holes, he was down to T-33 after being T-13 at the halfway stage.

The 29-year-old Sharma had four birdies, two on either side of the Belfry but also had a couple of bogeys and a double bogey.

Marco Penge and Daniel Hillier shared the lead heading into the final round. Events at The Belfry have been disrupted by weather all week but there were no delays on Saturday as the second round was completed and the final group reached the sixth in the third.

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

the sixth green, with Penge 23 feet from the hole and Hillier ten feet closer.

Northern Ireland's Tom McKibbin was a shot back having completed the sixth, with Paraguayan Fabrizio Zanotti and South African Shaun Norris at nine under playing the eighth and sixth respectively.

Home hero Penge and Kiwi Hillier had both completed their final four holes of round two early on Saturday morning, with Penge dropping a shot and Hillier getting home in level par.

That gave Penge a one-shot lead after 36 holes. Hillier, meanwhile, who is looking for a second win at this event after his triumph in 2023, showed no signs of rust as he played his first event since The Open after a month back home in New Zealand.

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.

Filip defeats Itauma, becomes 1st Croatian heavyweight boxing champion

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

Filip Hrgovic absorbed blow after blow before stopping Moses Itauma in the ninth round to hand the 21-year-old British boxer his first loss and take the vacant IBF heavyweight world title on Saturday.

Itauma's corner threw in the towel as he was being pummelled against the ropes, making the 34-year-old Hrgovic the first Croatian heavyweight champion.

Itauma had never needed to



go past the sixth round in his first 14 professional bouts and tired visibly after taking command of the early rounds, with Hrgovic absorbing a barrage of hits even after being knocked down in the second round.

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."

England eyes series win against Pakistan

FOSTER NIUMATA
■ London

England was eyeing a series win after reducing Pakistan to 53-3 in a chase of 389 on the fourth morning of the second test at Lord's on Sunday.

Ollie Robinson dismissed Azan Awais and Abdullah Shafique and Jofra Archer bounced out captain Babar Azam in the first eight overs.

Saud Shakeel, 23 off 36 balls, and opener Shan Masood, 15 off 42, hung on to lunch. Under partial sunshine, Pakistan finished England's second innings at 208 before noon but the host had a mountainous lead of 388 runs. That had to be daunting for a Pakistan side



that hasn't cracked 200 in three previous innings in the series. The first at Lord's was only 110 on Friday, and two days later England's all-seam attack was ruthlessly picking apart the top order again.

England hasn't won a series since December 2024 in New Zealand. Robinson pinned Awais on his back thigh in the crease. Awais, on 6, reviewed but it was plumb on middle stump. In same

fifth over, Shafique was bowled without scoring, and Robinson had 2-2.

Pakistan's in-form batter was followed to the exit by its best batter. Babar looked to pull Archer but, too late, tried to fend off a 91 mph (147 kph) delivery that ricocheted off his glove and helmet and ballooned to Jordan Cox at third slip. Pakistan was 14-3 but effectively four down as Imam-ul-Haq hasn't played since he tore his left calf in the field on the first day. Hobbling with the calf heavily strapped and a doctor nearby, Imam took throwdowns on the field on Sunday morning but no reappearance was suggested. Shakeel and Masood got relief when Robinson and Archer

finished their spells and took fighting runs from Josh Tongue and Gus Atkinson. Robinson had 2-13 from seven overs and Archer 1-13 from five. Robinson's brief but outstanding summer so far has netted 21 wickets in three tests at an average of 8.3. The first hour was much happier for Pakistan, particularly for 36-year-old Mohammad Abbas, who made the Lord's honors board for the first time with a five-for.

Abbas, resuming the day on 3-48, removed Dan Lawrence, England's innings high-scorer with 54, and Robinson to a sharp catch at the stumps by Mohammad Rizwan and punched the air and bowed on grass. (AP)

Muhammad Yousuf blames poison coaches for Pakistan batting decline

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Karachi

Former Test captain Muhammad Yousuf on Sunday launched a scathing attack on coaches associated with the national team, accusing them of failing to address technical flaws in the batting of Babar Azam and other Pakistan players.

In a strongly worded social media post, Yousuf said he had warned several years ago about weaknesses in the batting techniques of Pakistan's players but claimed that certain coaches surrounding Babar and other members of the squad prevented him from



working on those issues. Yousuf argued that the problems, which he believes could have been corrected at the time, have since developed into major weaknesses and contributed to Pakistan's current decline. "That failure has dragged Pakistan cricket into the

decline we see today," he added. "These coaches are poison for the game. They lack vision, they block progress, and they misguide even the most talented players. If our cricketers don't learn who to listen to, their careers will end far sooner than they should.

Hovland surges to 1-shot lead with cast of challengers lined up behind him

DOUG FERGUSON
■ Atlanta

Viktor Hovland finally got a little separation Saturday at the Tour Championship, and all he had to do was finish with six consecutive putts of 7 feet or longer for a 5-under 65. All that got him was a one-shot lead in a season finale very much up for grabs.

Four of those putts were for birdie, two of them for par, all of them important going into a final round at East Lake where every shot can seem so important.

Scoring has felt low. With some of the pins, it hasn't felt easy. Rory McIlroy and Ludvig Aberg each referenced similarities to Aronimink for the PGA Championship, where 28 players were separated by two shots midway through the third round.

Only 29 players are at East Lake and everyone is under par. Hovland rolled in a pair

of 8-foot birdie putts at the end to put him at 15-under 195, one shot ahead of Tour Championship newcomer Ryan Gerard, who played bogey-free for a 66.

Scottie Scheffler (66) and Chris Gotterup (67), who have combined for five PGA Tour titles this year, were three shots behind at 12-under 198. They were joined by sentimental favorite, 46-year-old Adam Scott, and Aberg. Both shot 65 in search of their first win this year.

Also in the mix was Rory McIlroy, who had two bogeys, settled for par on the par-5 closing hole and still shot 63 to get within five shots. He was joined by Cameron Young, whose double bogey on the 10th hole set him back in a round of 68. "It's pretty bunched up around 11- and 12-under par there," Hovland said. "I mean, you've seen some 62s out there. You can take it low.



So it was nice to get a little bit of distance, especially from the group of guys that are around that number. They're capable of shooting nothing tomorrow. So that gives me a little bit of a cushion for tomorrow. I'm still going to have to bring a nice, solid round." At stake Sunday is \$10 million to the winner, the largest official payoff in golf for a single tournament, and the FedEx

Cup title that comes with a five-year exemption on the PGA Tour.

Hovland won the FedEx Cup in 2023 when he steamrolled through a three-tournament postseason and won the last two. This might not feel the same if he were to win on Sunday, though the Norwegian would happily leave town with two trophies. Hovland was at his best on the greens coming

down the stretch - 11 feet for birdie on the 13th, 18 feet to save par on the 14th, 11 feet for birdie on the peninsula-green 15th, a 7-foot par putt on the 16th and his closing birdies. Gerard scrambled beautifully, especially on the back nine, birdied both par 5s and stayed in the game for a chance at his first win this year, and possibly an easy decision to be a pick for the Presidents Cup. But it was a big test of patience waiting to a chance to attack.

"Then when you do get that, try to take advantage and step on the gas there a little bit," he said.

That's what McIlroy did, starting out seven shots behind with little to lose. He figured he would need another round like 63 to even contemplate a fourth FedEx Cup title. He has been around for all the iterations of resetting points and starting strokes into the season

finale. What he can't recall is a traffic jam at the top, or last place being at 3-under par.

"It speaks to the standard of the golfers that are here," McIlroy said. "But it also speaks to the slightly different test that we are getting after the redesign, as well."

Scheffler also played bogey-free and rued not taking advantage of a few more birdie chances in the 8- to 12-foot range. But he's right in the mix as he closes out a season of astonishing consistency that leaves him on the cusp of replacing Tiger Woods on the career money list.

In the middle of the congestion was Scott, who has a chance to win for the first time since 2020. "It's a good spot - within striking distance," Scott said. "It's so congested, though, it's going to need a really great round. I think there's someone lurking who's going to have that." (AP)

South Zone stutter after Kaverappa shine in Duleep Trophy semifinal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bengaluru

Karnataka pacer Vidwath Kaverappa's four-for helped South Zone dismiss North Zone for 195 to take an upper hand on the opening day of their Duleep Trophy semifinal here on Sunday.

Kaverappa led a team bowling effort from the South Zone with 4/66 while his Kerala counterpart MD Nidheesh claimed 2/36, and spinner Tanay Thyagarajan returned 2/31. Kavuri Saitheja (1/24) and Shreyas Gopal (1/24) were also among the wickets. But in reply, South



Zone stuttered to reach 40 for 2 at the end of the day's play. Anshul Kamboj (1/9) cleaned up the experienced Ricky Bhui (5) while Gurnoor Brar (1/12) pinned Shaik Rasheed (0) in front of the wickets to give some respite

to North Zone, who were ahead by 155 runs in the first innings when the stumps were drawn.

Narayan Jagadeesan, batting on 34 off 58 balls with six fours, was joined by South Zone skipper Tilak Varma

(0) shortly before the end of play here. In all, seamers had a field day at the BCCI Centre of Excellence Ground 2 as they claimed eight of the overall 12 wickets to fall on the first day.

To his credit, Jammu and Kashmir opener Qamran Iqbal made a patient 76 (182 balls, 10 fours, 1 six) even as wickets tumbled at the other end on a regular basis. Coming back into the playing eleven, Sanat Sangwan (10) was the first to perish when he gave a return catch to Nidheesh. Saitheja accounted for Ayush Doseja (23) while Thyagarajan had Ayush

Badoni (2) stumped, and then cleaned up the North Zone skipper Kanhaiya Wadhawan (35). But Iqbal fought hard from the other end, keeping his defence tight and using the feet well to get his runs.

His innings ended late in the North Zone innings, when Kaverappa had him caught behind off a short ball. Kaverappa was late in the wickets column but did well to wipe out the North's tail. Bhui and Jagadeesan were successful in keeping the North Zone pace attack at bay for nearly an hour even as the new ball seamed off the pitch dangerously.

It was Kamboj who got one to nip back in to beat Bhui's defence and crash into the stumps in the 15th over, while Brar got one to straighten off the deck to crash into Rasheed's pads in front of the stumps.

Brief Scores: North Zone: 195 in 59.1 overs (Qamran Iqbal 76, Kanhaiya Wadhawan 35; Vidwath Kaverappa 4/66, MD Nidheesh 2/36, Tanay Thyagarajan 2/31) lead South Zone 40/2 in 18 overs (Narayan Jagadeesan 34 not out; Anshul Kamboj 1/9, Gurnoor Brar 1/12) by 155 runs.

Djokovic finds US Open benefit after early exit at Cincinnati

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ New York

Novak Djokovic never likes to get eliminated early in a tournament. In this case, he is looking on the bright side.

The 39-year-old who holds the record with 24 Grand Slam titles goes into the US Open fresh off losing his first match at the Cincinnati Open earlier this month. That was his first action since Wimbledon, but he is at peace with the outcome.

"It gave me time to be preparing for U.S. Open in a most adequate way," Djokovic said Saturday. "I had almost few weeks, actually two weeks, to really train and get my body and mind into the right state, prepared

for what's coming up."

Seeded fourth, Djokovic begins his quest for a 25th Grand Slam championship - and fifth in Flushing Meadows - against 48th-ranked Mariano Navone on Sunday night inside Arthur Ashe Stadium. Despite being a sizable favorite, he is not looking past Navone.

"Let's see how it goes," Djokovic said. "The opening matches are always for me, particularly in the last few years, quite challenging. So, hopefully I can overcome the first hurdle and build from there." Djokovic has played in just 16 tournaments this year, the fewest of anyone ranked in the top 95 on the ATP Tour. He reached the semifinals at Wimbledon before losing to



Jannik Sinner, was out in the round of 32 at the French Open and made it to the Australian Open final, where he lost to Carlos Alcaraz. This will be Djokovic's 20th

appearance in the U.S. Open as he joins Jimmy Connors, Andre Agassi and Feliciano Lopez as the only players to hit that milestone in men's singles. "I'm very proud of

that," Djokovic said. "Obviously, longevity was always one of the goals when I was younger: trying to have long career, trying to have more shots at Grand Slam and stay healthy long enough so that I can perform for as many years as possible."

The only one he has missed since debuting in 2005 was 2017 because of a right elbow injury. He won it in 2011, 15, '18 and most recently in '23.

Djokovic played his first U.S. Open match - a five-set marathon - against Gael Monfils, who is planning to retire but is also in the field at least one more time. "Here we are 20 years later," Djokovic said. "We're both still grinding and representing the older generation."

Mukesh, Sarkar bowl out Central Zone for 266

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bengaluru

India fast bowler Mukesh Kumar and fellow right-arm medium pacer Abhijit Sarkar scalped three wickets apiece to bowl out Central Zone for 266 against East Zone on the opening day of the Duleep Trophy semifinal here on Sunday.

East Zone captain Ishan Kishan's decision to bowl first after winning the toss was bang on as Mukesh (3/56) and Sarkar (3/38) shared six wickets between them, while Mohammed Shami (2/42) and off-spinner Md Kounain Quraishi (2/49) picked up two wickets each to bundle out Central Zone in 80.1 overs. Rinku Singh (60



off 88), and opener-cum-wicketkeeper Aryan Juyal (46) were the top-scorers for Central Zone.

Central Zone never got the going after being sent into bat as they lost wickets at regular intervals to lose half of their side at 125 by 45th over. Rinku and Harsh Dubey

(27) then tried to stabilise the innings, stitching together 55 runs for the sixth wicket to keep the momentum for Central Zone.

But once Dubey was caught in plumb in front of the wicket by Quraishi in the 60th over, Central Zone's innings fell apart.

Saransh Jain (13) and Aryan Pandey (22) got starts but failed to capitalise.

Tail-ender Yash Thakur (30 off 26) used his big-hitting skills to get Central Zone forward but the innings eventually folded inside the 300-run mark.

Brief Scores: Central Zone: 266 all out in 80.1 overs (Rinku Singh 60, Aryan Juyal 46; Abhijit Sarkar 3/38, Mukesh Kumar 3/56).

\$400M spent, zero points: Tottenham loses again in Premier League as Liverpool rescues another draw

STEVE DOUGLAS ■ London

Tottenham's remarkable \$400 million summer spending spree isn't translating to any on-field success so far in the Premier League.

Two games. Zero points. Indeed, big-spending Spurs are still searching for their first goal of the campaign after being beaten 2-0 at home by Newcastle on Saturday, a week on from being ripped apart in a 3-0 loss at Brentford.

Five of Tottenham's slew of new signings started the game - including Sandro Tonali, whose every touch was booed by the visiting fans after his \$133 million departure from Newcastle, and Omar Marmoush, whose

loan move from Manchester City was only finalized on Thursday. They made little impact as Tottenham was picked off in the second half, with Anthony Elanga swiveling in the penalty area and bending in a shot off the post in the 62nd minute and Yoane Wissa hooking home a clever finish from close range in the 72nd.

For Tottenham manager Roberto De Zerbi, creating the right mentality in a club coming off back-to-back 17th-place finishes in the 20-team Premier League is the "biggest challenge." "Unfortunately," the Italian said, "you can't buy the mentality in the transfer market." Spurs are one of three teams to have lost both of their

games so far and it looks like it will take time for so many new players to gel. One of them, Savio, wasn't in the squad for Saturday because of a muscle injury.

Not since the 1974-75 season has Tottenham lost its two opening matches of a league campaign without scoring. "I am sorry to the fans for the environment," De Zerbi said. "Because after two defeats, maybe somebody can think it's the same story, the same as the last two seasons. I have no doubt it's not like this."

The Andoni Iraola era is yet to catch fire at Liverpool.

For the second straight weekend, Liverpool needed a late equalizer to rescue a point in the Premier League



as summer signing Victor Munoz's 82nd-minute strike earned a 2-2 draw against Nottingham Forest at Anfield.

The Reds also drew 2-2 last week in Iraola's first league



match in charge - and on that occasion a stoppage-time penalty by Dominik Szoboszlai denied Newcastle.

There might be teething problems early in Iraola's

tenure - notably in defense, where Liverpool continue to look shaky - but at least there has been some fighting spirit.

Liverpool twice came from behind against Forest, with Alexander Isak scoring Liverpool's first equalizer in the 60th to cancel out Dan Ndoye's first-half goal.

Then, after Morgan Gibbs-White converted a penalty to regain the lead for the visitors, Munoz smashed in a shot off the crossbar after running onto a through-ball from Florian Wirtz.

The Liverpool match was attended by Amit Bhatia, the leader of an investor group - also containing Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and Facebook co-founder Eduardo Saverin - that has

reached an agreement to buy a minority stake in the club for a reported estimated figure of \$2.2 billion.

Bhatia posed for photos with Liverpool owner John Henry on the field ahead of the game against Forest, which was also preceded by news that the Reds have agreed to a \$166 million deal to buy Bradley Barcola from Paris Saint-Germain.

The CBS Arena became the Premier League's latest new stadium as Coventry hosted a top-flight game for the first time since 2001 - when the club was playing at Highfield Road. A big occasion for Frank Lampard's team was spoiled by losing 1-0 to fellow promoted team Hull, which is on a maximum six points after

stunning Manchester United last weekend with a 2-0 home win.

Liam Miller scored the 82nd-minute winner for Hull, which started the season as the big favorite for relegation.

Another weekend, another painful stoppage-time concession by Bournemouth.

James Tarkowski's goal in the first minute of added-on time secured Everton a 1-1 draw and came a week after Bournemouth lost 2-1 at Manchester City thanks to Josko Gvardiol's goal in the same minute.

Everton, which is unbeaten after opening with a 2-0 win over Crystal Palace, started Iliman Ndiaye - a winger who is reportedly of interest to Man City. (AP)