

PAGE 6

NATION

Extended fast by 2 days as negotiations were on: Wangchuk

PAGE 10

LAW & JUSTICE

HC refuses to entertain PIL on NIA probe into CJP's Chalo Sansad

PAGE 11:

BUSINESS

10% US tariff to raise landed cost of Indian products, says FIEO

PAGE 13

GLOBAL

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz reshuffles Cabinet

PAGE 15

SPORTS

Joseph declined selection for Pakistan Tests, says Sammy

Protests trigger sweeping purge in NTA

From dismissals to fresh appointments, NTA begins restructuring after nationwide protests

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA
■ New Delhi

In major crackdown in any Government department in recent times, the National Testing Agency (NTA) on Friday terminated the services of 47 officials amidst the NEET-UG paper leak row followed by massive protests across the country. Late Thursday, education ministry also affected major reshuffle.

Apart from the dismissals, legal and criminal proceedings are also set to be initiated against some of the officials in NTA. The move is part of a broader push to reform the exam conducting agency functioning, with more corrective measures expected in the coming days.

"NTA has terminated 47 officials from their service. Legal and criminal actions will also be taken against some of these officials. This

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke addressing the ongoing protest at Jantar Mantar demanding the resignation of Union Minister of Education, Dharmendra Pradhan over NEET paper leak issue on Friday

is part of a complete overhaul of NTA that has been in controversy over paper leaks. While further reforms

are on the cards there will be complete overhaul of NTA," sources in the education ministry

Simultaneously NTA issued advertisements for a set of senior professional appointments at the level of General

Manager and has separately opened the engagement of sixteen Young Professionals through the Pratibha Setu portal of the Union Public Service Commission. These measures represent the first concrete step in the institutional rebuild of NTA that is being implemented in line with the recommendations of the High-Level Committee of Experts chaired by Prof K Radhakrishnan.

NTA was functioning with only 24 permanent employees against a sanctioned strength of 39 posts. The agency was relying on 73 contractual employees and 124 outsourced personnel to manage its operations.

A day earlier in a late night development, the Appointments Committee of Cabinet replaced Education Secretary Vineet Joshi with Naresh Pal Gangwar.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Tougher anti-paper leak Bill cleared

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

The Union Cabinet on Friday approved an amendment Bill to the existing Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, meant to prevent paper leaks and cheating in public examinations and to provide for fast-track courts for paper leak cases.

The Bill is expected to be tabled in the Parliament on Monday. Parliamentary affairs minister, Kiren Rijiju said PM Modi had directed that there should be no delay in bringing the Bill. "We are preparing to present the Bill, but after you receive the briefing on our Cabinet decision, we will inform you about our timing. The Prime Minister has said that there should be no delay in the Bill we are bringing regarding students. The country also wants what the Prime Minister has said, so it would not be right to resort to any tactics to obstruct it... Congress will fall into this if they continue to disrupt the

PM Modi addressing the nation through a video message on Thursday night, announcing stricter laws and fast-track courts to curb examination paper leaks

parliamentary proceedings. We are taking important steps for the future of the students," Rijiju said.

During a briefing on Cabinet decisions on Friday, information and broadcasting minister, Ashwani Vaishnav was asked several queries about the

Government's plan for strict actions against paper leaks and move for constituting a fast-track court, but he did not to answer them.

The move comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's late-night video message promising more action, amid nationwide protests over alleged irregularities in the NEET examination and growing demands for stricter safeguards to protect the integrity of competitive exams.

According to sources, the proposed legislation provides for a maximum jail term of 10 years and a fine of up to ₹10 crore. It also seeks to increase the minimum imprisonment for individuals convicted in paper leak cases from the current three years to five years.

The Bill is aimed at preventing organised gangs and institutions that indulge in unfair means for monetary gains, while protecting the candidates from its provisions.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

The Bystander

PIONEER IN SHORT

BANGLADESH PRESIDENT RESIGNS

Bangladesh President Mohamed Shahabuddin resigned on Friday, citing serious health complications, nearly two years before the end of his five-year term. Parliament Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmed assumed charge as Acting President for up to 90 days under Article 54 of the Constitution, during which a new President must be elected. In his resignation letter, Shahabuddin, 76, said he was suffering from heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney complications and autonomic neuropathy, which causes occasional loss of consciousness, leaving him physically and mentally unfit to discharge his constitutional responsibilities. Ahmed, 80, cut short a medical visit to Bangkok to return to Dhaka and formally accepted the resignation.

DELHI INTERNET CURBS FACE HC CHALLENGE

The Software Freedom Law Center, India (SFLC.in) on Friday moved the Delhi HC challenging the curbs on mobile internet services in parts of central Delhi during the ongoing CJP-led protest at Jantar Mantar over the alleged NEET paper leak and examination irregularities. The PIL was mentioned for urgent hearing before a bench led by Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya, which agreed to list the matter on Friday. However, it could not be taken up during court hours due to procedural defects. SFLC.in sought quashing of the Union home ministry's orders issued on July 17, 20, 22 and 23 directing suspension of mobile internet services within a 1.5km radius of Jantar Mantar. The petition termed the shutdown "unconstitutional, illegal and arbitrary", arguing that it violated fundamental rights to free speech, assembly, livelihood and personal liberty.

Rahul Gandhi seeks Pradhan exit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Congress upped the ante against the Government demanding immediate resignation of education minister Dharmendra Pradhan. Party leader Rahul Gandhi termed the minister a criminal and a symbol of the collapse of India's education system. "Pradhan is a criminal education minister and a symbol of the collapse of our education system and thus he must be removed from his post," he said.

Addressing a press briefing, Rahul presented before the

LoP in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi along with a victim of alleged pellet gun firing during the protest march to Parliament by CJP on 20th July

media a student protester who was allegedly shot with a pellet gun by security per-

sonnel in the Capital during the July 20 protests.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Govt stands by Pradhan, CJP holds ground

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Government and the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on Friday remained firm on their respective positions during the third round of talks between them. While the protesting students pressed that their demand for resignation of Union Minister of Education, Dharmendra Pradhan was non-negotiable, the Government ruled it out saying, "resignation is the easiest decision to take", adding that it stands with the minister. The two parties will meet again on Saturday.

The CJP spelt out its stand in a letter to the Government. "Over the last few days, we have held extensive consultations with supporters and members across the country and protesters at Jantar Mantar. We have arrived at a clear consensus that our demands, namely the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan, ₹1 crore compensation for NEET victims, and no legal action against protestors, are non-negotiable. Furthermore, the Government of India, the head of the Rapid Action Force, and the Delhi Police Commissioner ought to publicly apologise to the students who were brutally thrashed by their forces," the letter stated.

Union ministers Jitendra Singh and JP Nadda meeting with CJP spokespersons Saurav Das and Ashutosh Ranka at the Vithalbhai Patel House in New Delhi on Friday

DURING THE MEETING, CJP ALSO RAISED CONCERNS OVER THE ALLEGED DETENTION OF PROTESTING STUDENTS BY DELHI POLICE

The organisation also requested that the demands be accepted at the earliest. If not, the movement would only grow bigger and spread across the country, it said.

After the meeting Union minister JP Nadda said, "The meeting went on for almost two hours. They had three main demands and five reform suggestions for exams. We have told them that we will meet them again tomorrow (Saturday) afternoon and tell them about the discussion we had

among the Government." The parleys took hours after activist Sonam Wangchuk ended his 26-day hunger strike late on Thursday night following Government assurances on his key demands.

Students also demanded ₹1 crore compensation for the families of those who committed suicide after the cancellation of the NEET test on May 3, its spokesperson Saurav Das said.

The meeting held at the Vithalbhai Patel House was aimed at finding an amicable solution to protests over the NEET paper leak and other irregularities in the exam system.

During the meeting, the CJP also raised concerns over the alleged detention of protesting students by Delhi Police.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Supreme Court to track NEET reforms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday told the Union Government that it will closely monitor the steps taken to curb NEET examination paper leaks, while underlining that ad hocism has caused trouble for years.

A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe, which was hearing a batch of petitions, including one by the Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA), told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the Government should indicate the steps taken towards transparency, implementation of recom-

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

mendations of the Radhakrishnan committee and how the IIT model would be followed.

The seven-member Radhakrishnan committee was set up by the Ministry of Education in the wake of the NEET-UG paper leak to make recommendations on reforms in the examination process, improvement in data security protocols and the structure and functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA).

SG Mehta said there are some developments and the Government will file a detailed report on an overhaul of the examination process, which may be beyond the recommendations of the Radhakrishnan committee.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

US slaps 10% tariff on imports from India

SAGAR KULKARNI
■ Washington

The US has imposed a 10 per cent tariff on goods imported from India and 16 other countries as part of a wider action against products made using forced labour.

On June 3, when the US had proposed tariffs under Section 301 of the Trade Act, India was bracketed among countries attracting 12.5 per cent levies, but Washington took note of the amendment New Delhi made to its foreign trade policy prohibiting the import of goods produced using forced labour.

On July 14, India amended its policy to introduce that prohibition. The Government amended the foreign trade policy to prohibit the import of goods produced using forced labour, amid a US

US President Donald Trump holding a championship ring during an event to honor the 2025 World Series champions Los Angeles Dodgers on Thursday

investigation into forced labour practices in 60 countries, including India.

"As a result of these actions, the Trade Representative has advised me that the goods of these economies should be tar-

iffed at the 10 per cent rate to further encourage these economies to effectively enforce such prohibitions," US President Donald Trump said in a memorandum on the issue on Thursday.

US Trade Representative

Jamieson Greer announced the new tariffs on 60 countries on Thursday, a day before the expiration of 10 per cent additional levies on all countries.

Countries that do not have laws barring goods produced using forced labour - such as China, the United Kingdom and Japan - will face tariffs of 12.5 per cent.

The forced labour tariffs will not apply to raw materials that would lead to unavailability of domestic supply; products that would cause economy-wide disruptions and on products that cannot be produced or grown in sufficient quantities in the US.

Of the 60 countries facing the tariffs, the 10 per cent rate applies to 17 countries, including India, Canada, the UK, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

13 killed in Himachal boulder tragedy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Shimla

Thirteen people, including a six-month-old infant, were killed while two others had a narrow escape after massive boulders from a nearby hill suddenly fell on a moving taxi on the Udaipur-Pangi road in Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul and Spiti on Friday.

Fifteen people were in the SUV, which was on its way from Kullu to Killar when large boulders suddenly crashed onto the vehicle near Kadu nallah, completely crushing it. Following the impact, the rear section of the vehicle caught fire.

Bystanders and Army personnel attempted to extinguish the flames at the spot, about 70 km from district headquarters Keylong. Videos of the incident have

Wreckage of a vehicle after boulders fell on it from a hillside in Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh on Friday

also surfaced, showing the vehicle almost flattened and engulfed in fire.

A team was dispatched to the site immediately after the police received information about the accident. Relief and rescue operations are underway, and the administration is closely monitoring

the situation, police said. Apart from the infant, there were seven men and four women among the dead. One of the deceased was yet to be identified. The majority of them were from Pangi in Chamba district, police said.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

MP to set up fast-track courts in 4 cities, CM announces in Panna

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Panna

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Thursday announced that the state government will establish fast-track courts in Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur and Gwalior to ensure speedy disposal of cases related to education and employment of young people. The announcement was made during a public programme in Panna, where the Chief Minister also transferred nearly Rs 210 crore to more than 35 lakh beneficiaries under the Social Security Pension Scheme through a single-click mechanism.

Addressing the gathering, Yadav said India is progressing under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi by upholding its rich cultural heritage and the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, while working for the welfare of humanity. He said the state government would align with the Prime Minister's vision by strengthening institutional mechanisms to address issues affecting the youth. The Chief Minister announced that the Panna Medical College will be inaugurated next year, creating more opportunities for NEET aspirants to pursue medical education within the state. He also distributed certificates to beneficiaries of various government welfare schemes and honoured self-reliant gram panchayats for their achievements.

Highlighting the development of the Bundelkhand region, Yadav said migration from the area has been significantly reduced and the focus is now on transforming it



into a prosperous agricultural and industrial hub. Referring to the Ken-Betwa River Linking Project, he said the Centre has approved 90 percent funding for the nearly Rs 1 lakh crore project, which is expected to bring irrigation facilities and economic prosperity to the region. He assured that people whose land, houses or shops are affected by development projects will receive adequate compensation.

The Chief Minister also inaugurated a glass-floor viewpoint and other tourism infrastructure developed at Brihaspati Kund at a cost of around Rs 8 crore. He said the new attraction would boost tourism in Panna and draw visitors from across the country and abroad, adding that the state's natural waterfalls have the potential to emerge as globally recognised tourist destinations.

As part of a broader development package worth Rs 184.83 crore, Yadav inaugurated and laid foundation stones for multiple projects, including two Sandipani schools at Gunnor and Pawal, built at a combined cost of Rs 74 crore. He said the schools would provide quality education rooted in Indian values and culture while offering modern learning facilities.

Focusing on employment generation, the Chief Minister said the state has approved nearly 10,000 new posts in the police department, following the recruitment of around 8,000 personnel last year. He added that more than one lakh government job opportunities have been created in the state and that the government remains committed to expanding employment prospects for young people. Yadav also urged farmers

to diversify their income through dairy farming and fisheries, stating that Madhya Pradesh aims to increase its share in milk production from the current 12 percent to 20 percent. He said tourism, agriculture, industrial expansion and infrastructure development would collectively create new livelihood opportunities, particularly in Bundelkhand, where investments worth thousands of crores are being planned.

Speaking on the proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC), the Chief Minister said the state government has already approved the relevant Bill, which has also been passed by the Assembly. He asserted that a uniform legal framework would ensure equal treatment for all citizens irrespective of religion and provide greater legal protection to women, including in matters related to divorce.

MP to get 52 medical colleges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Panna

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Friday said the Madhya Pradesh government is expanding medical education to create greater opportunities for youth and strengthen healthcare infrastructure. Speaking in Panna, he said the number of medical colleges in the state will increase from 34 to 52 within the next two years. He added that MBBS seats have risen from 500 in 2002-03 to around 5,500 and will reach 10,000 in the coming years. Yadav also announced that the Panna Medical College, being developed under the PPP model, will be inaugurated next year, with construction progressing at a fast pace.



Principal Chief Income Tax Commissioner, MP and Chhatisgarh Mona Mohanty with children in a prize distribution ceremony of various activities during 167th Aaykar Divas celebration at Aaykar Bhawan in Bhopal on Friday.

Bhopal Metro to boost commuter services

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Bhopal Metro will significantly enhance its services from July 25, operating 50 trips daily for the first time between Subhash Nagar and AIIMS after the Commissioner of Metro Rail Safety approved the signalling system. The move will enable trains to run on both tracks, replacing the single-track operation that had been in place since the metro's launch in December last year.

The first train from Subhash Nagar to AIIMS will depart at 9 am, while the last service will operate between 6.30 pm and 7 pm. During peak hours, trains will be available every 15 minutes, compared with the current 75-minute interval. During

non-peak hours, services will run every 30 minutes, offering passengers faster and more convenient travel.

Metro stations will open 15 minutes before the departure of the first train, allowing commuters enough time for entry, security checks and access to platforms. Manual ticketing counters will be available at designated entry and exit gates across all stations on the priority corridor.

The Madhya Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation Limited has also introduced promotional discounts to encourage ridership. Passengers purchasing return journey tickets will receive a five percent discount, while group bookings will attract a 10 percent concession. Commuters using the MPMRCL mobile

app can earn bonus amounts on e-wallet recharges, ranging from eight percent on recharges of Rs 200 to Rs 499, 10 percent on Rs 500 to Rs 999, 12 percent on Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,499 and 15 percent on recharges between Rs 1,500 and Rs 2,000.

The upgraded signalling system marks the completion of the first phase of a major infrastructure project awarded under a contract worth about Rs 800 crore, aimed at improving efficiency, reducing waiting time and delivering a smoother travel experience for commuters across Bhopal.

The enhanced operations are expected to boost ridership by reducing waiting time and making metro travel faster, more reliable and commuter-friendly.

Teacher alleges six-month abuse

Bhopal: The police have arrested an accountant at a government school after a 47-year-old woman teacher accused him of rape and repeated sexual assault over six months in Bilkhiriya police station limits.

According to police, the accused allegedly took the woman to his house in December 2025 on the pretext of visiting a temple, where he raped her. He later allegedly threatened to kill her and continued sexually exploiting her for about six months.

The survivor recently informed her husband about the alleged abuse, following which a complaint was lodged at Bilkhiriya police station. Police registered a case under relevant legal provisions and arrested the accused, who is married and has a 22-year-old daughter.



Students express their solidarity with the protestors against the alleged irregularities in the NEET exam demanding resignation of Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, at the Board Office Square in Bhopal on Friday. Pioneer photo

Giribala Singh's bail plea order reserved in Twisha death case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

A special court in Bhopal on Friday reserved its order on the bail application of retired judge Giribala Singh, an accused in the high-profile Twisha Sharma death case, after hearing detailed arguments from both the defence and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The court is expected to pronounce its order on Saturday.

The bail plea was initially listed before Special Judge Neelam Shukla, who recused herself from hearing the matter. The case was subsequently transferred to the court of Special Judge Ram Pratap Mishra, where proceedings began at around 3 pm.

Appearing for Giribala Singh, the defence argued that she is an elderly woman and should be granted bail on humanitarian grounds. Counsel submitted that her age and health condition warranted judicial leniency and sought relief on compassionate considerations. The CBI strongly opposed the plea, contending that

gender alone could not be a valid ground for granting bail. The agency pointed out that the deceased in the case was also a woman and argued that the seriousness of the allegations outweighed the grounds cited by the defence. It urged the court to reject the application, citing the gravity of the case and the ongoing investigation.

During the hearing, the jail authorities submitted Giribala Singh's medical report before the court. According to the report, she was found to be medically fit, a factor that also figured in the arguments over whether she deserved relief on health grounds.

After hearing both sides at length, Special Judge Ram Pratap Mishra reserved the matter for orders.

The Twisha Sharma death case has drawn significant public attention, and the court's decision on the bail plea is likely to be closely watched. The ruling, expected on Saturday, is considered important for the future course of the investigation and the judicial proceedings in the case.

Mandsaur CMHO faces suspension

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ujjain

Ujjain Divisional Commissioner Ashish Singh has suspended Dr. Govind Singh Chauhan, Chief Medical and Health Officer of Mandsaur district, with immediate effect under Rule 9(1)(a) of the Madhya Pradesh Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules, 1966.

The action follows repeated complaints alleging irregularities in healthcare delivery, financial mismanagement and serious negligence in official duties. Authorities also received complaints of dereliction of duty, violations of administrative rules and repeated absence from TM and inter-departmental review meetings.

During the suspension period, Chauhan's headquarters has been fixed at the Collector's Office, Mandsaur.

The order stated the suspension was issued under Rule 9(1)(a) pending action. Divisional Commissioner Singh has assigned Dr RK Dwivedi, an ENT specialist posted at the District Hospital, Mandsaur, to hold additional charge of Chief Medical and Health Officer until further orders, ensuring continuity of administration.

Police constable rapes minor girl; colleague stands guard with son

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

In a deeply shocking incident that has raised serious concerns regarding law enforcement discipline, a 17-year-old girl was allegedly held hostage and raped by a police constable in Bhopal.

The horrific crime, which took place under the guise of a birthday celebration, involved another police constable who stood guard outside the premises with his young child while the crime was being committed. Both accused have been arrested following a swift police response.

According to the police, both accused individuals are serving as constables in the Special Armed Force. The main accused, identified as Santosh Sen, is currently posted in Dhar district and happens to be a former neighbour of the survivor. His accomplice, identified as Jitendra Rajput, is currently posted in Gwalior.

The involvement of active-duty law enforcement personnel in such a heinous crime has sent

shockwaves through the local community and the police department alike.

The investigation has revealed a chilling sequence of events leading up to the assault. On the evening of July 22, Santosh Sen orchestrated a calculated plan to lure the minor. Utilizing his wife's mobile phone, he called the teenager, extending an invitation to attend his daughter's birthday party. Trusting her former neighbour and the family-oriented nature of the invitation, the unsuspecting victim agreed to meet.

At approximately 6:30 PM, the minor arrived near the Lal Parade Ground as instructed. Upon her arrival, she found Santosh Sen and his colleague Jitendra Rajput waiting in a car. Adding a disturbing layer of false security to the situation, Rajput's young son, who is around three or four years old, was also present inside the vehicle. After gaining the survivor's confidence by repeatedly referencing the birthday celebration, Sen took her to a house situated in the bustling MP Nagar area.

Panna to get Sanskrit school, annual Katha festival: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Panna

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Friday said the teachings of saints provide guidance for a meaningful life and stressed the importance of values and Sanskaras in building a better society. Addressing the Guru Purnima celebrations at Shri Jugal Kishore Temple during his visit to Panna, he said India's festivals also convey messages of human welfare and social harmony.

The Chief Minister received the blessings of Sant Shri 108 Mahant Swami Kishordas Ji Maharaj from Vrindavan and greeted devotees from across the state. He urged people to draw inspiration from the discourses of saints and embrace a life guided by spiritual values.

Describing Panna as a miniature Vrindavan, Yadav said Orchha is similarly revered as the Ayodhya of



Bundelkhand. He called upon people to serve cows and celebrate festivals of all faiths with equal enthusiasm. He also reiterated the state's commitment to promoting Vikram Samvat and developing places associated with Lord Ram and Lord Krishna as major pilgrimage centres.

Yadav said all CM Rise Schools in Madhya Pradesh are now being operated as Sandipani Vidyalayas. He

announced that Gita Bhawans and libraries will be established in every urban local body across the state. The government is also moving ahead with its concept of developing Vrindavan villages, he said, adding that society must move from charity to selfless service. The Chief Minister said Madhya Pradesh would have one law applicable to all religions, adding that the

state is progressing on the principle of Sarva Dharma Sambhav. He also announced that Panna will host a three-day Katha festival every year and that a Sanskrit school will be established in the district.

Panna MLA and former minister Brijendra Pratap Singh said hosting saints in the district was a matter of pride and added that the state government, under the leadership of the Chief Minister, is actively working to preserve the state's cultural heritage.

BJP state president and MP Vishnu Dutt Sharma, Rajnagar MLA Arvind Pateria, other public representatives, and a large number of devotees attended the programme.

Earlier, the Chief Minister offered prayers at Shri Jugal Kishore Temple and sought blessings for the peace, prosperity and well-being of the people of Madhya Pradesh.

BMC steps up cleanliness drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Friday intensified its drive against littering, the use of single-use plastic and property defacement, collecting Rs 12,600 in spot fines from 73 violators across the city.

Acting on the directions of Municipal Commissioner Sanskriti Jain, the health department carried out inspections against individuals and establishments found violating civic sanitation norms.

During the enforcement drive, Zone 13 recorded 17 violations and recovered Rs 3,800 in fines, while Zone 14 registered 26 cases and collected Rs 3,800. Zone 15 reported 19 violations, attracting penalties of Rs 1,900, whereas Zone 16 recorded 11 cases, with fines amounting to Rs 3,100.

The civic body said the action was part of its ongoing campaign to improve cleanliness, discourage pollution, ensure compliance with municipal regulations, and promote better public hygiene across the city. The civic body said the enforcement drive will continue across all zones to ensure strict compliance with sanitation norms.

Rs 10 crore Naivedya Lok to redefine dining and leisure

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ujjain

The Ujjain Development Authority (UDA) has developed Naivedya Lok, a modern food and leisure destination in the Nanakheda area, inspired by Indore's iconic Chhappan Dukan. Built at an estimated cost of Rs 10 crore, the project is designed to transform Ujjain's urban landscape by creating a vibrant space that combines dining, culture and recreation under one roof.

Spread across nearly 28,000 square feet, the theme-based complex is the city's first dedicated open mall. Conceived as a year-round attraction, it offers a unique blend of food, entertainment and cultural experiences, making it an appealing destination for both residents and tourists.

Naivedya Lok features aesthetically designed food outlets connected through covered walkways, allowing visitors to enjoy the facility comfortably regardless of harsh sunlight or rain. The complex also includes an open-air theatre for cultural performances, artistic wall murals, Gond art installations and specially designed selfie

points, adding a distinctive visual and cultural identity to the venue.

The development has been equipped with spacious seating areas, landscaped gardens, a well-planned food court, decorative lighting, soothing background music and uniform shop signage to create an organised, attractive and welcoming ambience for visitors. The design focuses on providing a seamless and enjoyable experience for families, youngsters and tourists alike.

To ensure safety and convenience, the facility offers round-the-clock security, CCTV surveillance and efficient traffic management. Accessibility has been strengthened with 18-metre and 30-metre-wide approach roads on both sides, ensuring smooth movement of visitors and vehicles.

Positioned as Ujjain's newest lifestyle and culinary destination, Naivedya Lok is expected to become a prominent hub for dining, leisure and social gatherings. The project is also likely to boost tourism, encourage local businesses and provide a modern recreational space that reflects the city's evolving urban character.

Monsoon returns with force across Madhya Pradesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The southwest monsoon has become active once again across Madhya Pradesh, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issuing a heavy rainfall alert for Sheopur, Mandsaur, Ratlam, Alirajpur and Panna districts on Friday.

The weather department has forecast up to four inches of rain in these districts over the next 24 hours, while light to moderate rainfall is expected in more than 50 districts across the state.

Several parts of Bhopal received showers on Friday afternoon, indicating the return of widespread monsoon activity. Rain is also likely in districts including Raisen, Sehore, Rajgarh,

Vidisha, Indore, Dhar, Jhabua, Barwani, Khargone, Khandwa, Ujjain, Dewas, Agar Malwa, Shajapur, Narmadapuram, Harda, Betul, Gwalior, Morena, Bhind, Datia, Shivpuri, Guna, Ashoknagar, Jabalpur, Katni, Narsinghpur, Chhindwara, Seoni, Balaghat, Mandla, Dindori, Rewa, Satna, Sidhi, Singrauli, Shahdol, Umaria, Sagar, Damoh, Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh and Niwari.

The renewed spell follows rainfall in more than 25 districts on Thursday. Tikamgarh recorded the highest rainfall of nearly 1.5 inches, while moderate to heavy showers were reported from Ratlam, Chhatarpur, Sheopur, Dhar, Narmadapuram, Shivpuri, Sidhi, Indore, Ujjain, Umaria, Jabalpur, Raisen, Rajgarh, Sagar, Satna, Bhopal, Betul, Chhindwara, Balaghat,

Mandla, Shajapur, Sehore, Vidisha and Dewas.

Heavy rains also led to a frightening incident in Maihar district, where five-year-old Class 1 student Rishabh Saket was briefly swept away while attempting to cross a flooded road in Bhadanpur village. Alert villagers rushed to his rescue and managed to save the child. A video of the incident has since surfaced on social media, highlighting the dangers posed by swollen streams and water-logged roads during the monsoon.

The IMD said Madhya Pradesh has received an average rainfall of 325.1 mm, or 12.8 inches, since the monsoon arrived on June 24. Although this remains around 10 percent below the normal average of 359.6 mm for the period, the rain-

fall deficit has reduced significantly in recent days. Until July 20, the state's rainfall was 17 percent below normal, but consistent showers over the past three days have narrowed the deficit to 10 percent.

Eastern Madhya Pradesh continues to record a 13 percent rainfall deficit, while western Madhya Pradesh remains six percent below normal. Of the state's districts, only 15 have recorded above-normal rainfall, while 41 districts continue to remain below the seasonal average.

Dewas has emerged as the wettest district in the state, recording 18.5 inches of rainfall, nearly 49 percent above normal. Balaghat has received around 18 inches, Sehore 17.2 inches, Seoni about 17 inches, while Bhopal has recorded 16.4

inches of rainfall so far this season. Harda, Damoh and Dindori have each received nearly 16 inches. In contrast, Alirajpur remains the driest district, recording only about 2.5 inches of rainfall.

According to weather experts, rainfall activity is expected to remain intense during the final week of July as favourable monsoon systems continue to influence central India. July is considered the most crucial month for the southwest monsoon, contributing nearly 40 percent of the state's seasonal rainfall. Officials expect the ongoing spell to further reduce the rainfall deficit, improve soil moisture levels and provide a major boost to the ongoing kharif sowing season across Madhya Pradesh.



Commuters travel on the road amid light rain showers in Bhopal on Friday.

Pioneer photo



MBBS interns underwent strike demanding a hike in their stipend with several other demands, at Government Hamidia Hospital in Bhopal on Friday.

Pioneer photo

Tension after bovine head found

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Tension prevailed in Bhopal's Nishatpura area on Friday after the severed head of a bovine was found near a chicken shop on the 80 Feet Road, close to Bhopal Memorial Hospital. The incident prompted members of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal to gather at the spot, leading to protests and raising concerns in the locality. Demanding immediate action, activists staged a demonstration outside the Mandi Karond police outpost and raised slogans against the alleged perpetrators. In view of the sensitivity of the matter, police registered an FIR against unidentified persons under relevant provisions of the Madhya Pradesh Cow Slaughter Prohibition Act and other

applicable laws. Police reached the spot soon after receiving information, secured the animal remains and initiated the process of sending them for forensic examination. Investigators are also scanning CCTV footage from nearby locations to identify those responsible for dumping the remains. Officials said all angles are being examined and efforts are underway to identify and apprehend the accused based on scientific evidence and surveillance footage. Leaders of Hindu organisations claimed this was the second incident related to bovines reported in Nishatpura within a week. On July 17, police had raided an alleged illegal slaughter and beef trafficking operation being run under the guise of a dairy in Kamal Nagar after receiving information from Hindu groups.

Sewa Sadan Hospital doctors felicitated by Rotary Club

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The Rotary Club Shahpura organised a felicitation ceremony and tree plantation drive at Sewa Sadan Eye Hospital on Friday. The club honoured the hospital's doctors, trustees and administrators for their contribution to healthcare.

Trustee Heero Gyanchandani highlighted the institution's service initiatives inspired by Paramhans Sant Hirdaram Sahib, while Trustee Suresh Awatramani outlined its eye care activities. During a visit to the newly constructed building, District

Governor Sanskar Kothari praised the hospital's services and said Rotary would explore providing a new glaucoma screening device. Club members also planted saplings, promoting environmental conservation and a greener campus.

During the event, the hospital management also shared details of its community outreach programmes and ongoing efforts to provide affordable and quality eye care services to underprivileged patients across the region. Rotary members appreciated the institution's commitment to social service and healthcare.

Anti-drug drive held in government school

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mhow

An anti-drug awareness programme was organised at Government Higher Secondary School, Pigdambar, in Mhow tehsil of Indore district on July 24 by Vikas Vishva Kalyan Samridhdi Sanstha, a social organisation working to promote drug-free communities.

Addressing students, organisation president and journalist Vikas Tyagi explained the harmful effects of drug abuse, highlighting how even first-time consumption can impact the brain and body, increasing the risk of addiction. Students were urged to refuse drugs at the very first instance, with the message that drug abuse is a chemical attack on the body.



Awareness pamphlets were distributed, and students participated in an interactive session where they answered questions and repeated key messages shared during the programme. The event concluded with an anti-drug pledge, while students who actively participated and gave impressive responses were presented with pens as appreciation.

Students were also encouraged to spread awareness

about the dangers of drug abuse among their families, friends, neighbours and other members of society.

According to the organisation, it has conducted nearly 390 anti-drug awareness programmes at schools, colleges and public places over the past four years. During this period, it has distributed more than two lakh awareness pamphlets and installed around 25,000 anti-drug awareness stickers at various public locations.

Lawyer dies of suspected heart attack at 42

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Khandwa

Criminal lawyer and BJP Legal Cell district co-convenor Vijay Choudhary (42) died of a suspected heart attack in Khandwa after suffering what initially appeared to be a bout of acidity and mild chest discomfort. His sudden demise has sent shockwaves through the legal fraternity and political circles in the district.

A resident of Housing Board Colony, Choudhary reportedly experienced uneasiness on Thursday evening. Believing it to be a minor health issue, he rode his motorcycle to a nearby private hospital for a check-up. However, he collapsed during an electrocardiogram (ECG) examination and died before doctors could stabilise him.

According to his close friend and advocate Devendra Yadav, Choudhary had begun the day with a morning walk and yoga session along with friends. Around 6 pm, he informed them over the phone that he was heading to the hospital after experiencing acidity. Nearly an hour later, they received the news of his death.

Friends said they had planned to visit Dadaji Temple later that evening, fol-

lowed by a stop at Bombay Bazaar for milk and jalebi. The group had also booked tickets for a pilgrimage to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi on August 7, a trip Choudhary had been eagerly looking forward to.

The only son of his elderly parents, Choudhary was the sole breadwinner of his family. He is survived by his parents, wife and two sons, one studying in higher secondary school and the other in middle school.

Known for his disciplined lifestyle and religious outlook, Choudhary performed daily prayers and stayed away from intoxicants. Family members and friends said he had diabetes but no history of any serious cardiac illness.

After completing his law degree in Indore, Choudhary began practising as a criminal lawyer at the Khandwa District Court in 2008. He was regarded as a dedicated advocate and was actively involved in organisational and public activities through the BJP's legal cell.

His last rites will be performed on Friday at his native village, Rajur, in Harsud tehsil.

Former inmate alleges assault, extortion at Gohad sub-jail

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gohad (Bhind)

A former inmate has accused officials at Gohad sub-jail in Madhya Pradesh's Bhind district of demanding money, assaulting him and subjecting him to harassment during his incarceration. The allegations surfaced after the inmate was released on bail, while jail authorities have rejected all the claims as baseless.

Dheer Singh Gurjar, a resident of Latkanpura village under Malanpur police station limits, alleged that he was lodged in Gohad sub-jail on July 21 after being convicted in an assault case.

According to Gurjar, the following day jail authorities

demanding Rs 50,000, allegedly assuring him that he would be exempted from cleaning toilets and performing other work inside the prison if he paid the amount. He claimed that after refusing to pay, he was assaulted by the jailer, police personnel and another inmate.

Gurjar further alleged that inmates were forced to walk with their heads bowed and their hands behind their backs, and were not allowed to freely raise grievances during visits by judicial officers or magistrates.

After securing bail on July 23, Gurjar informed his family about the alleged incident and submitted a written complaint to the police, seeking an

impartial investigation and action against those responsible.

Gohad sub-jail jailer Shivpal Singh has denied all the allegations. He said the incident referred to by Gurjar occurred during the routine evening headcount, when inmates were being lined up for counting.

According to the jailer, Gurjar repeatedly refused to sit in line despite being instructed several times and instead behaved in an unruly manner. He said police used only the minimum force necessary to restore discipline and bring the situation under control.

Rejecting the allegation that Rs 50,000 was demanded,

JLR introduces assured buyback

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

JLR India has introduced its Assured Buyback Programme along with enhanced financing solutions to make ownership of Range Rover, Defender and Discovery vehicles more accessible and predictable.

The programme offers eligible customers an assured buyback value of up to 55 percent of the vehicle's showroom price, subject to model eligibility, mileage limits and retailer-specific terms. Designed exclusively for the Indian market, the initiative aims to provide greater financial certainty and flexibility.

JLR India Managing Director Rajan Amba said the programme strengthens customer confidence by guaranteeing future vehicle value while enhancing the overall luxury ownership experience through attractive financing options.

The programme is aimed at reducing the uncertainty associated with vehicle ownership by offering customers a clearer understanding of their car's future value. Combined with flexible finance plans, it is expected to make upgrading to a new JLR vehicle easier while delivering a more seamless and premium ownership experience. The programme offers greater ownership flexibility.

726 Jan Kalyan camps process over 4.1 million applications

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The Madhya Pradesh government has successfully resolved 99 per cent of the more than 4.1 million applications received during the state-wide Jan Kalyan Shivr campaign organised from June 12 to 18. Launched on the initiative of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, the campaign was aimed at providing citizens with a single platform for quick grievance redressal and ensuring that eligible beneficiaries receive the benefits of various Central and state government welfare schemes without having to make repeated visits to government offices.

A total of 726 Jan Kalyan Shivr were organised across the state during the week-long campaign. The initiative brought together more than 23 government departments to provide a wide range of public services under one roof. Citizens were able to submit applications related to 110 different categories of services, making the programme one of the largest coordinated public outreach exercises undertaken by the state government.

According to official data, the camps received a total of 4,143,158 applications. Of these, 4,116,739 applications have already been disposed of, reflecting a disposal rate of 99 per cent. Among the

resolved applications, 4,077,081 were approved, enabling beneficiaries to access various welfare schemes and government services in a timely manner.

The campaign was conducted between World Environment Day and International Yoga Day as part of a special drive to strengthen the implementation of public welfare programmes and improve access to government services. The objective was not only to resolve public grievances quickly but also to identify eligible citizens who had been left out of welfare schemes and extend the benefits of these programmes to them.

The camps witnessed the participation of a wide range of government departments, including Revenue, Panchayat and Rural Development, Urban Development and Housing, General Administration, Public Health and Medical Education, Cooperation, Labour, Social Justice and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Finance, Planning, Economic and Statistics, Women and Child Development, Farmers' Welfare and Agriculture, Energy, Transport, Higher Education, Animal Husbandry and Dairy, Tribal Affairs, Horticulture and Food Processing, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises,

Fisheries, Technical Education, Skill Development and Employment, Scheduled Caste Welfare, and New and Renewable Energy.

Officials said the integrated approach enabled citizens to access multiple government services at a single location, significantly reducing procedural delays and improving service delivery. The initiative also facilitated better coordination among departments, allowing applications to be processed more efficiently.

The state government said the success of the Jan Kalyan Shivr reflects its commitment to citizen-centric governance and transparent public service delivery.



Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia addresses a public meeting in support of BJP candidate Ashutosh Tiwari during an election campaign for Datia state assembly by-election in Badoni, Datia district Madhya Pradesh on Friday.

IN FOCUS



A child dressed as a *warkari* takes part in Dindi procession to observe Ashadhi Ekadashi festival at Sane Guruji Vidyalyaya English Medium School at Dadar in Mumbai on Friday

Ram Temple trust sets up 9-member religious panel

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi/Ayodhya

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust has set up a permanent religious committee with nine members, including leading Hindu seers, scripture experts, and Ramanandi tradition custodians, to oversee all worship, rituals, and religious matters at the Ram temple.

The Trust's board of trustees approved the decision at a meeting on Wednesday led by president Mahant Nritya Gopal Das. The committee, headed by Trust treasurer Mahant Govind Dev Giri, will make final decisions on daily worship, major festivals, Vedic rituals, priest appointments and training, and the preservation of traditional worship practices. Other members include Jagadguru Shankaracharya Vasudevanand Saraswati, Swami Vishwaprassannathirth from Karnataka's Pejawar Math, Nirmohi Akhara mahant Dinendra Das, Mahant Kamal Nayan Das from Maniram Chhawani, Mahant



Rajkumar Das of Ramvallabh Kunj, Swami Ramanand Das of Ram Katha Kunj, Mahant Mithilesh Nandini Sharan, and Swami Parmanand Giri of Akhand Paramdham Ashram in Haridwar.

Trust treasurer Mahant Govind Dev Giri said this move puts all religious arrangements in the hands of Ayodhya's sadhus and saints. "This temple must continue to function according to the traditional Vedic

Ramanandi system of worship," he said, stressing that the committee's decisions on rituals and related matters would be final.

The panel is responsible for making sure daily puja follows the Vedic Ramanandi tradition, setting dates for festivals like Ram Navami and Vivah Panchami, organising special yajnas, and working with local mutts, temples, and gurukuls. This new structure aims to strengthen the temple's religious administration by highlighting local monastic traditions and including respected scholars from outside Ayodhya. Five of the nine members come from Ayodhya's traditional monastic community, addressing long-standing requests for greater involvement by local seers in the temple's daily spiritual life.

The Trust has also decided to restart and make permanent a training institute for priests. The school will teach worship procedures, correct mantra pronunciation, temple management, discipline, and standards of conduct. Earlier,

about 30 priests were trained before the program stopped. Since its pran pratishtha in January 2024, the Ram temple has become one of India's top pilgrimage sites, attracting millions of devotees. The Trust has made it a priority to keep the temple's rituals rooted in the Ramanandi Vaishnava tradition, which has long been linked to Ayodhya.

The new committee is expected to offer steady, clear, and authoritative guidance on all religious practices as the temple grows. Officials said the panel will do more than advise; it will directly supervise worship arrangements. Its creation is a major step in formalising the temple's spiritual governance, balancing efficient management with respect for long-standing traditions.

The board also discussed other operational issues at the meeting. However, forming the religious committee is the main effort to protect the temple's religious character for future generations. The next Trust meeting is planned for early September 2026.

Mamata to join CJP's Delhi protest on Monday

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Kolkata

In a sudden development, former Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday declared her open support for the protesters of Cockroach Janata Party and offered to join the movement at Jantar Mantar in Delhi on Monday. "Our leader will visit the protest site to express her solidarity with the students protesting against NEET exam paper leaks," a senior leader and a former party MP said, adding, "this is not a knee-jerk decision... this was already announced by Didi on July 21." The TMC leader would not, however, speak on whether Banerjee would make a token presence or actively participate in the protest.



Already our senior MPs, including Mohua Moitra and Saket Gokhale, had visited Janatar Mantar and expressed solidarity with the CJP protesters, he said adding "our leader has said that the time has come when the masks of this Government should be pulled down." He, however, said that all depended upon

the outcome of Saturday's dialogues proposed between the CJP and the Centre.

The BJP was quick to respond with Bengal Health Minister Shardwat Mukherjee calling Banerjee's decision a "deplorable" stand.

"After facing a complete rejection from the people in the elections, Mamata

Banerjee is trying to fish in the troubled waters ... she and her nephew Abhishek Banerjee are opportunist politicians and trying to catch at any straw to stay afloat after not only being deserted by her own party men but also being rejected by other opposition parties whom she approached for friendship," Mukherjee said.

Meanwhile, tension ran high in the Esplanade area of busy central Kolkata as the city on Friday witnessed a massive mobilisation of students mostly from the Left-wing parties who, along with the supporters of Cockroach Janata Party, marched from Sealdah to Dharmatala as part of an all-India student protest call given by the CJP leadership from Jantar Mantar.

Delhi Assembly, Secretariat, Army school get hoax bomb threats

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Assembly, Secretariat and an Army Public School in the national Capital received bomb threats on Friday, prompting authorities to intensify security measures and launch search operations across the premises. The threats came even as the city remained on high alert following four days of the CJP protest and associated clashes in the New Delhi district, with no suspicious object found and the threats subsequently declared hoaxes, officials said.

Teams from Delhi Police, bomb disposal squads, dog squads, and the Delhi Fire Service were rushed to the affected locations after the threats were reported. As a precautionary measure, the premises were evacuated, and thorough search operations were carried out. After nothing suspicious was found during the searches, authorities declared the threats hoaxes. Further investigation is under-



Delhi Assembly

way to identify the source of the calls and emails.

The threats arrived on a day when central Delhi was already under exceptional security deployment, with 18 Metro stations shut for the third consecutive day, Parliament Street, Tolstoy Road, and Jai Singh Marg sealed, and over 5,000 police and paramilitary personnel deployed across the New Delhi

district in response to the ongoing CJP agitation at Jantar Mantar demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

The timing of the bomb threats, coming during the most intense phase of the protest-related security mobilisation in central Delhi, adds a layer of concern for investigators who must determine whether the threats are connected to the protest environment or represent unrelated hoax activity of the kind that has become a recurring feature in Delhi over recent years.

Delhi has seen a series of bomb threat hoaxes targeting schools, Government buildings, and public institutions over the past several years. In February 2026, multiple institutions including the Delhi Secretariat, Delhi Assembly, the Delhi Army Public School in Dhaula Kuan, and Red Fort received bomb threat emails purportedly from an outfit calling itself the Khalistan National Army, with specific blast times mentioned for each location.

Uttarakhand cop face action over fake resignation at CJP protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Uttarakhand Police have initiated legal and departmental action against a suspended constable after he allegedly made "inflammatory and irresponsible" remarks and claimed to have resigned from the force while addressing protesters at the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) agitation at Jantar Mantar, officials said on Friday.



Videos circulating on social media showed Constable Sher Singh taking the stage during the protest, launching a sharp attack on the Government and the recruitment system, and

declaring that he had left the Uttarakhand Police to join the movement. At the end of his speech, he removed the Uttarakhand Police badge from his shoulder and handed it over to CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke, drawing cheers and slogans from the gathering.

Quoting freedom fighter Bhagat Singh, Sher Singh told the crowd, "Life is lived on one's own strength. Revolution comes from ideas.

DU renames SOL, approves direct PhD for 4-year UG students

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The University of Delhi's Academic Council at its 1027th meeting on Friday approved the renaming of the School of Open Learning (SOL) as the Centre for Distance and Online Education and amended PhD regulations to allow students with four-year undergraduate degrees to apply directly for doctoral programmes. Apart from these, the council also approved a scholarship in the name of the late former Union Minister and former



DUSU President Arun Jaitley for sports students. The council recorded that DU's QS World University Rankings

position has improved from the 521-530 bracket in 2022 to 322nd globally in 2027.

The meeting was chaired

by Vice-Chancellor Prof Yogesh Singh, who was also congratulated by all members present on his reappointment for a second term. He is the first Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University to serve a second term.

Singh noted that DU's overall score in the QS World University Rankings 2027 has risen to 43.8 from 23.5 in 2022, an improvement of approximately 200 places over four years, with the university holding the top position among Indian universities.

On the renaming of SOL,

the Academic Council approved changing the institution's name from the School of Open Learning to the Centre for Distance and Online Education and the designation of its head from Principal to Director.

The change is driven by the UGC's revised 2022 provisions, which require any higher education institution other than an open university that wishes to run distance and online programmes to operate a Centre for Distance and Online Education headed by a Director with the rank of at least Associate Professor.

FROM PAGE - 1

Protests trigger sweeping purge in NTA

Joshi who had a stint as NTA DG earlier was currently holding the charge of Secretary in the Department of Higher Education, School Education and as the Chairman of the University Grants Commission.

Joshi was given the charge of school education department on superannuation of Sanjay Kumar who too had an unceremonious retirement at the backdrop of CBSE's OSM digital marking fiasco, which also led massive public outrage. The outrage led to transfer of Rahul Singh as the CBSE Chairperson to be replaced by Lokhande Prashant Sitaram.

The CBI has so far arrested 13 people in connection with the NEET paper leak and is set to file a chargesheet shortly. Investigations has revealed that the leak of the medical entrance exam question paper was not limited to a single individual but was executed through a network spread across multiple States. The probe has highlighted the roles of experts associated with the examination process, teachers from coaching institutes, and middlemen.

Tougher anti-paper leak Bill cleared

The proposal comes amid a political storm over the alleged NEET paper leak and repeated disruptions in Parliament, with the Opposition demanding accountability and a discussion on examination irregularities.

PM Modi in a video statement on Thursday night promised more action would follow on Friday in paper leak cases. He refrained from attacking the Opposition or referring to those trying to harm the nation's future, as he has done in previous speeches. He focused almost entirely on students' anxieties. He acknowledged the distress caused by the paper leak, assured students that those responsible had been arrested and jailed and stressed that the Government's immediate priority was to ensure that no student lost an academic year.

The video, which has garnered nearly 20 million views, however, drew sharp reactions as well. Many users demanded that the PM direct-

ly address the role of education minister Dharmendra Pradhan and the police action against CJP leaders.

US slaps 10% tariff on imports from India

The other 43 will have to bear 12.5 per cent. The USTR statement said that Greer had taken the final action, at President Trump's direction, under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 by imposing tariffs on 60 economies for their failure to impose and effectively enforce a prohibition on the importation of goods produced with forced labour. The latest tariffs take effect at 12.01 am on Friday, just as a temporary 10 per cent import tax expires. That measure was put in place following a February Supreme Court decision that invalidated the president's "Liberation Day" tariffs introduced in April 2025.

The action will begin to correct what is both a human rights abuse and a distortive trade practice to improve the welfare of workers everywhere, Greer said in a statement here.

A Federal Note in this regard took note of India's adoption of a forced labour import prohibition after the unveiling of the proposed tariffs in June. The Trump administration initiated the two investigations after the US Supreme Court, in February, dismissed last year's "reciprocal tariffs" using emergency powers as illegal.

After the US Supreme Court struck down the sweeping reciprocal tariffs (25 per cent on India) in February, the Trump administration imposed a temporary 10 per cent tariff on all countries for 150 days from February 24 that expires on Friday.

"A reduction in the tariff from 12.5 per cent to 10 per cent is modest in percentage points but significant in signalling. It suggests that Washington is willing to calibrate enforcement while preserving the strategic trajectory of the India-US economic partnership," Abhik Sengupta, a programme officer with an industry body here, said.

India has contested both the investigations initiated by the USTR and insisted that these issues can be discussed as part of the bilateral trade agreement that is under discussion.

The US is India's second-largest trade partner and the largest destination for exports. In 2025, bilateral goods trade was pegged at nearly \$ 141 billion, with India's exports pegged at \$ 87.3

billion, according to commerce department data.

According to a report in The Washington Post, the Trump administration is expected to introduce another set of tariffs within weeks that will apply to goods from nations that subsidise excess manufacturing capacity. Those Government policies result in a flood of low-cost products on global markets that US companies can not match, officials said. (PTT)

13 killed in Himachal boulder tragedy

The deceased were identified as Bir Singh, Sanjay Kumar, Hans Raj, Budhi Singh, Bir Singh, Anil Kumar, Saurabh Singh, Anjana, Soman Angmo, Rekha, Kamla Kumari and six-month-old infant Aaru. Two people who jumped out of the car had a narrow escape. There is no telecom signal at the accident spot, which is located at the border of Pangi (in Chamba district) and Lahaul (Lahaul and Spiti district). The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and the administration in Udaipur in Lahaul-Spiti are the primary response teams at the site, officials said. Police were also part of the operation.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu directed the deputy commissioner of Lahaul-Spiti to immediately go to the incident site and supervise the rescue and relief operations. According to the preliminary information, the passengers had been stranded at Tindi as the Udaipur-Killar road was closed the previous day. They set off for Pangi on Friday after the road reopened.

Supreme Court to track NEET reforms

"Students' futures can't be jeopardised. We are going beyond the Radhakrishnan Committee. I assure you that the Government is walking 10 extra miles. I can assure you everything is being supervised at the highest level," the SG informed the SC.

The bench highlighted the Government use of the Indian Air Force to transport question papers for the NEET-UG retest and said the all these measures are ad hoc. Posting the matter to August 3, the court said it will monitor every-

thing closely and follow it up throughout the year. "We will see that complete and total institutionalisation takes place," the bench said.

On May 29, the SC stressed that the real problem relating to NEET-UG would not stop until "actual accountability arises".

SG Mehta had submitted that the Government was seriously concerned about the youths and Prime Minister Narendra Modi was personally supervising the situation so that "there is no lacunae". On May 12, the NTA cancelled NEET-UG held on May 3, amid allegations of paper leak. The retest was held on June 21. The paper leak allegations are under investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation.

Rahul Gandhi seeks Pradhan exit

He demanded that there should be action against those who shot at and baton charged students, and sought an apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the students.

"You are saying that protesters have been hit by pellet guns. I want to explain when pellet guns were fired. My brother was struck by a pellet gun when he was peacefully protesting with a Tricolour in hand," Rahul said with the injured protester, who identified himself as Sahil, by his side, as he addressed the media outside Congress Parliamentary Party chief Sonia Gandhi's 10, Janpath residence. The Delhi Police has however denied that its personnel used pellet guns against protesters during the march.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said that instead of making Dharmendra Pradhan resign and then start a meaningful discussion on the education system, PM Modi and home minister Amit Shah have resorted to denigrating the centres of learning. He said students are on ground zero because the Government is now using these much-respected universities as propaganda outlets to bully them. Kharge's statement came after the Delhi University and the Jawaharlal University warned students to stay away from protests at Jantar Mantar protests.

"Dear students and faculty, your safety matters to us. Please note that any unlawful assemblies or demonstrations at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, which are strictly regulated as per the directives of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, may invite

legal action," the Delhi University posted on X on Thursday night. A similar message was posted by the X account of JNU.

Rahul also slammed the Delhi University and asked how dare it threaten students for exercising their democratic rights.

Govt moves to criminalise insult..

This step by the Government comes amid the year-long celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram.

At the January 24, 1950 meeting of the Constituent Assembly, its President Rajendra Prasad stated that parts of Vande Mataram as adopted by the committee shall have same status as that of the national anthem. Composed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay the song played a historic role in India's freedom struggle. At present, there is no specific legal provision to prevent insults to the singing of Vande Mataram, said the Statement of Objects and Reasons of the proposed legislation.

Therefore, in order to prohibit any person from intentionally preventing the singing of Vande Mataram or causing disturbance to any assembly engaged in such singing, it is proposed to amend Section 3 of the Act to bring the national song also in its ambit, so as to make such acts punishable, the Statement of Objects and Reasons said.

Govt stands by Pradhan, CJP holds ground

The party claimed that students, volunteers, lawyers and even people delivering food were being detained while travelling to or from the protest site.

Friday's meeting took place hours after activist Sonam Wangchuk ended his 26-day hunger strike late on Thursday night following Government assurances on his key demands.

The CJP had earlier declined the Government's invitation to hold talks at a minister's residence or office, insisting that discussions should take place at a neutral venue. The outfit has maintained that its protest at Jantar Mantar will continue until Pradhan resigns.

MEA has no specific details on foreign funding claims linked to CJP protests

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday stated that it does not have any specific information or details to share regarding allegations of foreign funding connected to the ongoing local protests.

Replying to a question, whether the allegations of foreign funding in the ongoing protest is true, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: “I have no information to share on this issue with you”.

The remarks come amid intense political and legal scrutiny of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led demonstrations, which began as a youth-driven response to alleged irregularities and paper leaks in competitive exams such as NEET.

Protesters have been camped at Jantar Mantar in Delhi, demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, systemic reforms in examination processes, and related



Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal addresses a bi-weekly media briefing in New Delhi on Friday

accountability measures.

The agitation saw a major march toward Parliament on July 20 that resulted in clashes, injuries to security personnel and demonstrators, and subsequent calls for nationwide protests.

BJP leaders, including MP Nishikant Dubey, have alleged that “foreign forces” and anti-national elements

have sought to hijack genuine student outrage. References have been made to statements by banned Khalistani activist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun and other external actors. A public interest litigation filed in the Delhi High Court seeking a National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe into the protests and alleged foreign funding links

is scheduled for hearing, with the petition claiming the events form part of a broader conspiracy involving external financial influence.

CJP organisers have rejected such claims, maintaining that the movement is organic, driven by student and youth contributions, and focused on domestic grievances over unemployment, exam integrity, and governance. The group has continued protests and held talks with government representatives even as the Centre announced measures including fast-track courts for paper-leak cases and a proposed bill for stricter penalties.

The MEA’s measured response underscores that, as of now, the ministry is not in a position to confirm or elaborate on the funding allegations circulating in political discourse and social media. Domestic agencies and the courts are expected to examine the claims further as the protests and related legal proceedings continue.

Privilege motion against TMC MLA Kunal Ghosh

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

There was more problem for senior pro-Mamata Trinamool Congress MLA Kunal Ghosh with Bengal Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shankar Ghosh on Friday moving a breach of privilege motion against him for disrespecting the Speaker and decorum of the House.

The development comes close on the heels of the TMC leader being marshaled out the House for two successive days after he got embroiled in serious altercation with Speaker Rathindranath Bose and Akrujjaman and the ‘official’ Chief Whip of the (break-away section of) TMC.

“There is a conspiracy being hatched to suspend me permanently or even take away my membership of the



House through the backdoor... after they failed to defeat me in the elections... I don’t care being robbed off my membership... but as an honest soldier of Mamata Banerjee I will continue to raise my voice as and when required,” Ghosh said though inside the House he apolo-

gised to both the Speaker and the TMC Chief Whip saying “If any of my actions appeared disrespectful, I express my regret.” The Speaker had presently kept the issue with himself for consideration.

“The matter is currently under my consideration, and I will deliver my decision in

due course,” he said.

The altercation started when Ghosh protested against Akrujjaman’s decision to remove his name from the list of speakers. Akrujjaman is presently the official Chief Whip nominated by the larger faction of a 62-member strong break-away faction of the TMC.

Sobhandeb Chatterjee the leader of Mamata Banerjee section which has about 18 MLAs with them had nominated Kunal Ghosh deliver his speech for the TMC.

Kunal told the Speaker while putting across his plea, “since the other side has been designated as the ‘Opposition,’ we are being denied the opportunity to speak... this is injustice and should be addressed.”

Thousands attend students’ protest in Mumbai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Mumbai

Thousands of protesters converged in Dadar area here on Friday under the banner of Shiv Sena (UBT) to seek Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan’s resignation over the NEET paper leak, with party leader Aadiitya Thackeray saying he has urged CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke not to return until the demand is met.



Mumbai Police faced a fresh onslaught of criticism after a video showing an official allegedly handling a

woman activist inappropriately went viral. While police claimed that his action was being “misin-

terpreted”, the Opposition demanded his immediate suspension.

Holding tricolours and placards in their hands, thousands of students and activists gathered at the iconic Shivaji Park ground in Dadar area as part of a ‘Tiranga Morcha’ (procession) organised by the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena (UBT).

The protest culminated with the playing of the national anthem.

Devotee dies due to suffocation during Puri Rath Yatra, toll mounts to three

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Puri (Odisha)

A devotee died allegedly due to suffocation while pulling the ‘Darpadalan’ chariot of Goddess Subhadra during the Bahuda Yatra, the return car festival, on Friday, police said. The deceased was identified as Abhiram Das (57) from Cuttack. He suddenly fell down while pulling the chariot near Bagala Dharmasala and was immediately rushed to Puri District Hospital, where he died during treatment, a police officer said.

“The deceased had hypertension and was under medication. He suddenly collapsed and died during treatment,” Director of Health Service (DHS), Mahesh Mohan Panda said. The medical officer said that about 100 people were brought to the district hospital in Puri. They complained of uneasiness and most of them were released after primary treatment and rest for some time.

Seven of them were admitted to the hospital and their condition is stable and they would soon be discharged, he said. Police said though there was no crowd rush near the chariot, the weather in Puri was hot and humid. The relative humidity level in the coastal town was recorded at 85 to 90 per cent in the evening.

Govt directs GitHub to remove Bitchat amid security concerns

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH

■ New Delhi

The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C), under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), has directed Microsoft-owned GitHub to remove repositories hosting Bitchat, a Bluetooth-based messaging application developed by former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey. The notice, issued on 23 July 2026, required GitHub to restrict access to the source code, Android version and related software releases within three hours.

Bitchat is an open-source tool that lets people communicate offline when regular networks are not available. The government used the Information Technology Act, 2000, and related rules to issue its directive to GitHub.

The I4C stated that Bitchat’s technical architecture enables decentralised peer-to-peer messaging over Bluetooth mesh networks without relying on mobile networks, the internet or centralised servers. This design, the notice said, significantly impedes lawful interception, attribution and investigation by law enforcement agencies.

The reason being, the app poses a “substantial risk of misuse by anti-national elements, terrorist organisations and organised criminal



groups” seeking to evade lawful surveillance. Bitchat is precisely what its critics fear. It is a peer-to-peer tool that works without internet, cellular networks, phone numbers or central servers. Messages hop between nearby devices over Bluetooth Low Energy mesh networks: no registration, no logs, no single point of interception. Jack Dorsey designed it as a simple offline side-channel for classrooms, flights, or town squares.

Sources say there is a genuine security concern here. Law enforcement has legitimate needs to investigate real threats. An app that leaves no digital trail complicates attribution and is hard to trace.

This application allows anonymous communication without user registration, phone number verification or centralised message logging. Messages are transmitted directly between nearby devices, which the

government argued could facilitate the circumvention of lawful restrictions imposed during situations involving public disorder, riots, terrorism, organised crime or internet shutdowns.

Intelligence reports suggested that these platforms might be used to organise illegal gatherings, spread false information, encourage radicalisation, and support criminal activities that threaten India’s sovereignty, integrity, defence, security, and public order. The directive came after officials noticed that some participants in the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar used Bluetooth-based messaging apps when internet access was temporarily restricted near the protest site.

The CJP has been organising demonstrations seeking the resignation of the Union Education Minister over issues related to competitive examinations. Dorsey shared a copy of the notice on X and stated that the Government of India does not like technologies like Bitchat and wants it taken down. The Internet Freedom Foundation has described the order as unconstitutional, arguing that it targets the application’s architecture rather than specific unlawful content and bypasses standard judicial procedures for content blocking.

Memorial to be built in Budgam for cop martyred on Amarnath Yatra duty



MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

A befitting memorial will be constructed in Lalpora village of Budgam district, in honour of Head Constable Ashiq Hussain Qureshi, who was martyred on Wednesday in a terrorist attack at Lal Chowk, Anantnag, while deployed on Amarnath Yatra security duty.

Leader of Opposition in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Sunil Sharma, on Friday visited the family and paid heartfelt tributes. Sharma said the country would remain indebted to the family that has lost two generations in the service of the nation.

The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, also paid heartfelt tributes to the brave policeman and conveyed his deepest condolences to the bereaved family. He said the entire nation is proud of brave-heart Ashiq Hussain Qureshi, whose courage, sacrifice, and devotion to duty will remain etched in our collective memory.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah also conveyed his condolences directly to the family.

“The Home Minister had asked me that when I visit here, I should connect him with the family. He also said that when he comes to Kashmir, he will definitely visit them,” Sharma said.

Recalling the family’s history of sacrifice, Sharma said Ashiq Hussain’s father had also laid down his life in 1995.”Thirty-one years

ago, in February 1995, Ashiq Hussain’s father was martyred. Today, the son has also sacrificed his life while protecting the nation. Not just we, but the entire country is indebted to this family, and I do not think we can ever repay that debt.”

Responding to a demand from villagers that Lalpora be developed as a model village in recognition of its sacrifices, Sharma said efforts would be made to create a lasting memorial.

“This is a family of two martyrs. To keep their name alive and to give Lalpora its identity, we will make every effort to ensure there is some memorial — a statue, a ground, a school or some other mark of remembrance in this village,” he said.

Assuring the family of continued support, he added: “On behalf of my party and the Government of India, I have assured them that a family which has given two martyrs to the nation will never be left alone. This will not remain only in words; they will practically feel that the nation and the Government of India stand with them.”

LG Sinha also assured the family that the administration stands firmly with them and will ensure their well-being and dignity. The Lieutenant Governor also assured full support to the family until martyr Ashiq Hussain Qureshi’s son finishes his studies and becomes eligible for a compassionate government appointment.

Nation Focus



Odissi dancers pose for photographs in front of the chariots of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra before the ‘Bahuda Yatra’, or the return car festival in Puri, Odisha on Friday

PTI

Puri Bahuda Yatra begins, lakhs join deities’ procession

Lord Jagannath and his sibling deities began their Bahuda Yatra on Friday amid tight security, with lakhs of devotees thronging Puri to take part in the festivities. The Bahuda Yatra marks the return journey of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra to the 12th-century Jagannath Temple after their week-long stay at the Gundicha Temple, about 2.6 km away.

The rituals commenced with servitors carrying the deities in the traditional ‘Goti Pahandi’ (procession in a queue) to the chariots stationed outside the temple.

Though the ‘Pahandi’ was scheduled to begin at noon, it commenced at 10.50 am. Amid chants of “Jai Jagannath” and “Haribol”, the deities were taken one after another to their respective chariots.

(PTI)



Students’ protest rocks Bihar Assembly on final day

A heated exchange between the ruling side and the opposition over students’ protests in various parts of Bihar disrupted the assembly proceedings for about an hour on Friday. As soon as the House assembled for the final day of the monsoon session, RJD’s Alok Mehta rose in his seat to demand a discussion on the unrest that began with protests in the state capital a couple of days ago and spread to various other districts on Thursday over the NEET paper leak.

“Several students have been injured in lathi charge. In Jehanabad, police even fired gunshots on Thursday. There must be a discussion on attempts to repress students raising legitimate demands,” Mehta said.

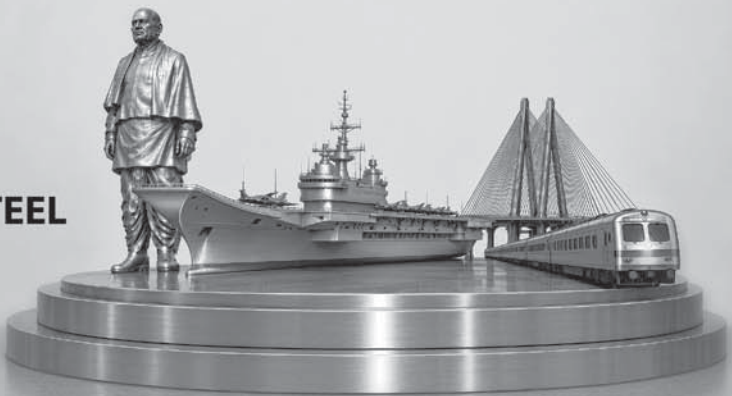
(PTI)



सेल SAIL



Great Place To Work. Certified



IT TAKES A DIFFERENT TYPE OF STEEL TO BUILD A NATION

SAIL - Building India's icons

Disclaimer : Images used are for representational purpose only

Extract of Standalone Unaudited Financial Results for the Quarter ended 30 th June, 2026					
(₹ Crore unless stated otherwise)					
Sl. No.	Particulars	STANDALONE			
		Quarter ended		Year ended	
		30 th June, 2026	31 st March, 2026	30 th June, 2025	31 st March, 2026
		Unaudited	Audited	Unaudited	Audited
1	Total Income from Operations	26245.64	30813.45	25921.46	110810.24
2	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before tax and exceptional items)	2302.80	2653.46	889.76	5002.08
3	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after exceptional items)	2158.79	2323.68	889.76	4333.86
4	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax	1636.00	1679.51	685.48	3233.48
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	1524.36	1958.91	567.86	3199.83
6	Paid-up Equity Share Capital (Face Value of ₹10/- each)	4130.53	4130.53	4130.53	4130.53
7	Reserves (excluding revaluation reserve)	55589.19	54064.83	52093.74	54064.83
8	Securities Premium Account	235.10	235.10	235.10	235.10
9	Net Worth	59719.72	58195.36	56224.27	58195.36
10	Paid up Debt Capital/Outstanding Debt	31969.95	31921.62	36074.92	31921.62
11	Debt Equity Ratio	0.54	0.55	0.64	0.55
12	Earnings per equity share (of ₹10/- each) (not annualised)				
	1. Basic (₹)	3.96	4.07	1.66	7.83
	2. Diluted (₹)	3.96	4.07	1.66	7.83
13	Debt Redemption Reserve	-	-	2.06	-
14	Debt Service Coverage Ratio (number of times)	1.66	7.26	2.74	3.84
15	Interest Service Coverage Ratio (number of times)	4.80	5.25	2.04	2.86

Extract of Consolidated Unaudited Financial Results for the Quarter ended 30 th June, 2026					
(₹ Crore unless stated otherwise)					
Sl. No.	Particulars	CONSOLIDATED			
		Quarter ended		Year ended	
		30 th June, 2026	31 st March, 2026	30 th June, 2025	31 st March, 2026
		Unaudited	Audited	Unaudited	Audited
1	Total Income from Operations	26245.67	30813.49	25921.76	110810.84
2	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before tax and exceptional items)	2330.69	2831.58	967.81	5173.73
3	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after exceptional items)	2186.68	2501.80	967.81	4505.51
4	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax	1644.05	1835.47	744.58	3372.80
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	1586.29	2174.42	626.58	3433.65
6	Paid-up Equity Share Capital (Face Value of ₹10/- each)	4130.53	4130.53	4130.53	4130.53
7	Reserves (excluding revaluation reserve)	57807.86	56225.36	55401.67	56225.36
8	Earnings per equity share (of ₹10/- each) (not annualised)				
	1. Basic (₹)	3.98	4.44	1.80	8.17
	2. Diluted (₹)	3.98	4.44	1.80	8.17

Note:

1) The above Financial Results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors at their respective meetings held on 24th July, 2026.

2) The above is an extract of the detailed format of Unaudited Financial Results for the Quarter ended 30th June, 2026 filed with the Stock Exchanges under regulation 33 and 52 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of these Financial Results are available on the Stock Exchange websites of NSE and BSE at www.nseindia.com and www.bseindia.com respectively and under the Investor Relations section on the Company's website www.sail.co.in.

For and on behalf of Board of Directors

Sd/-

(Dr. Ashok Kumar Panda)

Chairman & Managing Director

Place : New Delhi

Dated: 24th July, 2026

Buy SAIL SeQR TMT bars for a strong home at www.sailsuraksha.com



स्टील अथॉरिटी ऑफ इण्डिया लिमिटेड

STEEL AUTHORITY OF INDIA LIMITED

There's a little bit of SAIL in everybody's life

Registered office : Ispat Bhawan, Lodi Road, New Delhi 110 003

Tel: +91 11-24367481, Fax: +91-11 24367015, E-mail: investor.relation@sail.in, Website: www.sail.co.in

CIN: L27109DL1973GO1006454

 SAILSteel

 Steel Authority of India Limited

 SAILsteelofficial

 Steel Authority of India Limited



States Focus



SIX-MONTH EXTENSION FOR BENGAL CHIEF SECRETARY: GOVT

The Centre on Thursday approved a six-month extension in service for West Bengal Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Agarwal beyond his scheduled date of retirement on July 31, according to an official order.

The extension will take effect from August 1 and remain valid till January 31, 2027, following approval by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), a senior official said on Thursday.

The state Government had forwarded a proposal to the Centre on July 15 seeking an extension for Agarwal, who assumed charge as the chief secretary on May 11 this year. A senior state Government official said the extension would ensure continuity in the administration at a time when several key policy decisions and developmental programmes are underway.

(PTI)



ANNAMALAI TO LAUNCH COASTAL CLEANUP DRIVE IN SOUTH TN

Former BJP chief K Annamalai, who launched the "We The Leaders" movement, is scheduled to visit a few southern coastal districts to launch a massive coastal cleanup drive, a source said on Friday.

He would visit Kanyakumari on August 2 in his capacity as leader of the movement to officially launch the state-wide initiative from the Kanyakumari Beach Road, and initiate a similar drive in Uvari in Tirunelveli district, Manapad and Tiruchendur in Tuticorin district.

Interestingly, Kanyakumari district has registered the highest number of volunteers for the "We The Leaders" that Annamalai had announced on June 5, an insider said.

(PTI)

Extended fast by 2 days as negotiations were on: Wangchuk

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Sonam Wangchuk on Friday termed the end of his 26-day hunger strike the "beginning of accountability", saying he decided to call off the fast only after receiving assurances from the Government and MPs across parties on his key demands for examination reforms and protection of the peaceful protesters.

The educator-activist also said that he extended his fast by two days because negotiations with the Centre were continuing.

"End of hunger... Beginning of accountability," Wangchuk posted on X, where he shared a video explaining his decision to end the fast, which he began at the Jantar Mantar on June 28 in support of the Cokroach Janta Party's (CJP) ongoing protest demanding accountability for paper leaks, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation, and reforms in the examination system, among others.

According to the post, Wangchuk ended his fast after 26 days upon getting assurance from the Government and MPs of all



Social activist Sonam Wangchuk with Union Health Minister JP Nadda, Union Minister of State Jitendra Singh and Apex Body of Ladakh at Medanta Hospital after Wangchuk ended his 26-day indefinite hunger strike at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram

PTI

political parties that the issue of accountability in the 'failing' examination system would be discussed in Parliament.

The Government also assured that the families of those students who took their lives after the NEET-UG paper leak in May would be adequately compensated, and no cases would be registered against the students and youth protesting peacefully.

In the video, Wangchuk also disclosed that he extended his hunger strike by two days because negotiations with the Centre were continuing.

"Negotiations were on for these assurances since the last two days, for which I had to extend my hunger strike. I could have extended it further if required," he said.

Wangchuk also shared the text of the assurance letter that Health Minister J P Nadda read out at the hospital before he broke his fast.

"The Government is positive on not registering cases against those protesting peacefully at Jantar Mantar in Delhi and those who participated in the march to Parliament on July 20," the letter said.

It also said that the Government had "already assured threadbare discussions to find solutions to paper leaks and educational reforms for exams in Parliament", and was "positively considering suitable compensation for the suicide victims of recent NEET paper leaks".

Wangchuk ended his hunger strike late on Thursday night in the presence of his wife Gitanjali Angmo, Nadda and Union minister Jitendra Singh at the Medanta Hospital in Gurugram.

RESIGNATION OF DHARMENDRA PRADHAN NON-NEGOTIABLE: CJP TO UNION MINISTERS

New Delhi: The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on Friday told the Government that its demand for Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation is non-negotiable and asked for a public apology to the protesting students who were "brutally thrashed" on July 20.

In a meeting with Union ministers J P Nadda and Jitendra Singh, the CJP also demanded Rs 1 crore compensation for the families of those who committed suicide after the cancellation of the NEET test on May 3, its spokesperson Saurav Das said.

The two-hour meeting held at the Vithalbhai Patel House was aimed at finding an amicable solution to protests over the NEET paper leak and other irregularities in the exam system.

Nadda said the ministers heard their demands and conveyed that they will get back to the CJP. "We will again meet on Saturday," he said.

"We told Union ministers that our demand for the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan is non-negotiable," Das told reporters after the meeting.

The CJP, which has been spearheading the protests that started at Jantar Mantar on June 20, was also represented by its spokesperson Ashutosh Ranka.

Besides the demand for Rs 1 crore compensation for families of suicide victims, Das said the CJP is also asking that FIRs against protesters should be withdrawn.

In a letter to the Government, the CJP spelt out its stand. It acknowledged the "Government's eagerness to find a mutually beneficial solution" and said, "Over the last few days, we have held extensive consultations with supporters and members across the country and protesters at Jantar Mantar. We have arrived at a clear consensus that our demands, namely the resignation of Mr Dharmendra Pradhan, Rs 1 crore compensation for NEET victims, and no legal action against protestors, are non-negotiable."

(PTI)

1st week of Monsoon Session washed out as Opposition sticks to Pradhan's resignation demand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The first week of the Monsoon session of Parliament was washed out as the Government and the Opposition continued to be at loggerheads over the demand for Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation before a debate on NEET paper leak issue in both Houses.

Hitting out at the Opposition, the Government said making "excuses" and attaching "pre-conditions" before a debate will send a wrong message to the country. In the first week of the session, both Houses

could not take up any legislative agenda except for introduction of a bill each in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

In Lok Sabha, a bill to replace an ordinance which increased the number of judges of the Supreme Court from 34 to 38 was introduced but could not taken up for consideration and passage despite being listed every day. The bill has to be passed into an Act of Parliament before the session concludes on August 13 else the ordinance will lapse.

In Lok Sabha, Question Hour could not be held for even 15 minutes in five days.

In Rajya Sabha, a bill was



introduced on Friday to make insult to the national song Vande Mataram a criminal offence, despite being listed for introduction on multiple days.

When Lok Sabha met at 12

noon after an earlier adjournment, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju pointed to the Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi and said the Government has

repeatedly reached out to Opposition parties to let debate on the paper leak take place. He said while several Opposition MPs are of the view that the debate should take place, Gandhi should make his party members understand the need for a discussion. Rijiju said making excuses and attaching pre-conditions before a debate will send a wrong message to the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also assured of a stringent law on paper leaks and holding trial of the accused in fast-track courts, he said, while also noting that activist Sonam Wangchuk

has ended his hunger strike.

He said the Union Cabinet will take a decision on the proposed law on Friday.

However, the Congress and other Opposition parties continued to insist on resignation of Pradhan and shouted slogans like "Istifa do", following which the House was adjourned for the day.

Similarly, Rajya Sabha was adjourned within minutes of assembly after Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge sought to raise the issue of lathi-charge on students who are protesting against the paper leak and pressing for the resignation of Pradhan.

Drugs worth ₹6.89 cr seized in 3 separate operations in Mizoram, 2 held



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Aizawl

Drugs worth more than ₹6.89 crore were seized in three separate anti-drug operations in Mizoram, police said on Friday.

Two persons, including one from Assam, were arrested in connection with the seizures, they said.

The biggest haul was made in the early hours of July 21 when two men riding a scooter were intercepted on the Zokhawthar-Melbuk road near Muallrawt in Champhai district, close to the India-Myanmar border, police said.

The suspects abandoned the scooter and fled after spotting the police patrol, they said.

A search of the vehicle led to the recovery of 6.73 kg of methamphetamine tablets, estimated to be worth ₹4.75 crore, they added.

A case was registered at the Zokhawthar police station under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

In another operation on July 23, a special police team intercepted a truck on the basis of intelligence inputs in Saitual district. A search of the vehicle led to the seizure of 2 kg of morphine, valued at around ₹2.09 crore in the illicit market, the statement said. The truck driver, identified as Kabir Hussain (30) of Tarapur village in Assam's Cachar district, was arrested, police said.

On the evening of July 15, the Champhai Police Special Task Force intercepted a car at the Khankawn check gate and recovered 24 grams of heroin, valued at ₹4.8 lakh, from the possession of the driver, they said.

CBI brings Avinash Arjun Rathod back from UAE in joint operation

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), along with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), coordinated the successful deportation of Red Notice subject Avinash Arjun Rathod from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Rathod arrived in Mumbai on 23 July 2026 and was immediately taken into custody by the Maharashtra Police. Rathod is the main suspect in a major financial fraud worth hundreds of crores. He avoided arrest for years after running an investment scam that took people's savings.

The CBI says this case shows India is getting better at finding and bringing back economic offenders who escape overseas.

According to official reports,

Rathod is wanted for large-scale financial fraud. He and his team convinced people to invest in several schemes by promising fake fixed monthly returns. After collecting the money, he moved it through different bank and demat accounts, cheating investors.

Investigators say the scheme primarily operated through APS Wealth Ventures, a Pune-based company that Rathod started in 2011. He and his team promoted it as a stock market investment and targeted middle-class families, Government workers, and professionals across Maharashtra, including Pune, Mumbai, and Vidarbha. They promised high fixed returns and claimed investments could double in 20 months. People invested anywhere from a few lakhs to over a crore, with some putting in all their life savings.

To gain trust, the accused gave



small early returns to the first investors, using a Ponzi-style method that encouraged people to refer others and grow the

scheme. By early 2023, things started to fall apart. When investors asked to withdraw their money in March 2023, Rathod

said he was ill and asked for more time until 10 April.

During this time, his wife, Vishakha Rathod, ran the office and spoke with investors. But on the promised date, both disappeared. Investors then found out their money was gone and the couple had escaped to Dubai.

Numerous investors filed complaints with the Economic Offences Wing of Pune Police. An FIR was registered at Chaturshringi Police Station, and the investigation revealed the extent of the fraud.

Losses are estimated at ₹125 crore from over 600 investors, and the total could reach ₹700 crore over several years. No matter the final amount, many families lost their savings, retirement money, and financial security.

A non-bailable warrant was issued, and Indian authorities asked INTERPOL for help.

A Red Notice was put out for Rathod, making him wanted worldwide. Getting him back from the UAE took ongoing efforts by the MEA, coordination from the MHA, and steady follow-up by the CBI. He returned on 23 July 2026, ending years of work. After the suspect arrived in Mumbai, Maharashtra Police took him into custody and will present him in court.

The CBI may lead or closely monitor the investigation, focusing on tracing funds, identifying additional suspects, and recovering assets for victims.

This case highlights the persistent issue of investment fraud, which exploits public trust in financial markets and the allure of 'assured returns.' The APS Wealth Ventures case serves as a reminder of the risks associated with unregulated or inadequately vetted investments.

Road safety experts call for adoption of low-cost safety solutions to reduce accidents

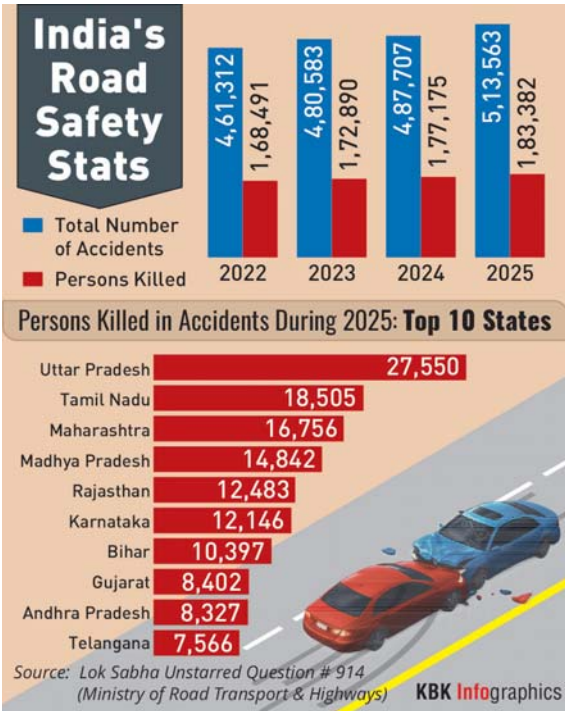
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Road safety experts on Friday highlighted the alarming state of road safety in the country and underscored the urgent need for practical, scalable and cost-effective solutions to prevent road accidents. They noted that India can significantly reduce road fatalities through affordable and evidence-based interventions in cities.

Speaking at a conference organised by the India chapter of International Road Federation (IRF), IIT Delhi professor emeritus Geetam Tiwari said road markings to enhance night-time visibility can substantially improve road safety in cities. Implementation of international best practices can reduce crashes while improving mobility for all road users, Tiwari added.

IRF president emeritus K K Kapila said most urban crashes occur due to everyday design deficiencies on ordinary roads operating at normal traffic speeds.

"Low-cost engineering measures such as roundabouts, raised pedestrian



crossings, traffic-calming measures, improved street lighting and safer intersection designs have been proven to reduce crashes by 20 to 80 per cent, often at a fraction of the cost of major infrastructure projects.

"Such interventions can be implemented much faster and deliver immediate safety benefits," Kapila added.

Jitendra Kaushik, CEO, Onnyx Electronisys, showcased innovative technological solutions supporting urban traffic safety.

Rajasthan CM's Gram Vikas Chaupal focuses on participatory rural governance

VIVEK SHARMA ■ Jaipur

Rajasthan Chief Minister Shri Bhajan Lal Sharma's Gram Vikas Chaupal initiative is focusing on participatory governance by taking the administration directly to villages and facilitating interaction between the Government and rural citizens.

With an emphasis on strengthening governance at the grassroots, the Chief Minister has been visiting rural areas, holding open interactions with villagers, inspecting development projects, and reviewing the implementation of welfare schemes on the ground. The initiative aims to create a direct communication channel between policymakers and citizens to address public concerns and improve service delivery.

The Gram Vikas Chaupal serves as a platform where women, farmers, youth, livestock rearers, frontline workers, and local residents discuss issues ranging from agriculture and employment to water conservation, sanitation, animal husbandry, education, and rural infrastructure. Beneficiaries of



Government schemes have also shared their experiences directly with the Chief Minister, providing feedback on implementation.

One of the instances highlighted during the initiative involved schoolgirls informing the Chief Minister that their Government Senior Secondary School did not offer a Science stream. Following the interaction, Shri Bhajan Lal Sharma directed officials to address the issue, and the Science stream was subsequently approved and introduced, according to the state Government.

The Chief Minister has also interacted with children, women, and senior citizens while reviewing the condition of village schools,

Anganwadi centres, and other public facilities. These visits have enabled the Government to identify local challenges requiring administrative attention.

Beyond grievance redressal, Gram Vikas Chaupal has also been used as a mechanism for monitoring development projects. During village visits, officials present progress reports on ongoing works, while the Chief Minister reviews implementation, directs timely completion of projects, and seeks accountability from the concerned departments. Several local issues have also been addressed through discussions with officials during these visits.

In another instance cited by the Government, a woman

appealed for the transfer of her husband to a location closer to home because of their child's special medical requirements. Acting on the Chief Minister's directions, the transfer order was issued within hours, officials said.

According to officials, the programme is not limited to grievance resolution. Villagers are also encouraged to share ideas and suggestions for future development planning, with the objective of making them active participants in Rajasthan's development process.

Political observers say the Gram Vikas Chaupal combines public participation, administrative accountability, and direct interaction between citizens and the Government. They note that the initiative seeks to strengthen rural governance by enabling the administration to respond more effectively to local issues.

As Rajasthan continues to focus on rural development, Gram Vikas Chaupal has become an important part of the state's outreach efforts, with the Government presenting it as a model for citizen-centric governance.



Assam flood : 47 dead, 40 missing, 7.21 lakh people affected

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

The flood situation in Assam remained critical on Friday with many rivers continuing to rise following incessant rains, while 47 people died in the deluge and over 7.21 lakh people are affected across 11 districts, officials said. Around 40 people are still missing and the toll might increase, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

To review the rapidly deteriorating situation, Sarma will chair a video conference with district commissioners and senior officials stationed across the flood-affected districts to assess the administration's ongoing response in handling the crisis.

"The situation has improved slightly, but we still have not



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma chaired a virtual review meeting with the District Commissioners of the flood-affected districts to assess the latest flood situation in Upper Assam with a special focus on accelerating rescue and relief operations PIONEER PHOTO

been able to reach around 20 per cent of the affected people. I believe we will be able to reach them by today," he told reporters.

According to information, around 40 people are missing, and the death toll is expected to rise further, Sarma said.

"The Government will stand by the flood victims and will help as far as possible. A central Government team will visit the state to assess the flood damage on July 25," he added.

A spokesperson of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) said that the river Dikhow at Sivasagar town continues to flow "above the severe flood condition" at 9 am on Friday. "Due to the continuous increase in the water level of

Dikhow, citizens have been advised to stay away from the river," she added.

At present, the Buridihing river at Khowang, Disang at Nanglamuraghat, Dikhou at Sivasagar, Dhansiri at Numaligarh and Kushiara at Sribhumi are flowing above the danger level.

According to the ASDMA flood bulletin issued on Thursday night, six people have lost their lives in the deluge during the last 24 hours. Sivasagar district has witnessed four people, including one woman and one child, drowning in flood waters; followed by two, including one child, in Charaideo, it added.

With these fatalities, the total number of deaths in this year's

floods has increased to 47 across the tate. According to the authority's flood report, more than 7.21,000 people have been affected in Charaideo, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Hojai, Jorhat, Kamrup, Kamrup Metropolitan, Karbi Anglong, Nagaon, Sivasagar and Tinsukia districts.

Sivasagar is the worst-hit district with nearly 3.8 lakh people affected, followed by Charaideo with almost 1.9 lakh people and Jorhat with more than 1.2 lakh people reeling under floodwaters.

The flood situation has worsened significantly since Wednesday, when more than 6.53 lakh people were affected across 11 districts. The ASDMA stated that the administration has been oper-

ating 358 relief camps and relief distribution centres in nine districts, currently caring for 24,124 displaced individuals.

Multiple agencies like the Army, NDRF, SDRF, Fire & Emergency Service, police and civil agencies have rescued around 5,000 people from different parts of Golaghat, Jorhat and Sivasagar, it added.

At present, 883 villages are under water, and 25,375.44 hectares of crop areas have been damaged across Assam, the ASDMA said. Embankments, roads, bridges and other infrastructure have been damaged by flood waters in different districts of the state.

On account of widespread flooding, 3,71,609 domestic animals and poultry are affected across the state.

Rescue operations conclude in rain-battered Palghar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Palghar

Heavy rains claimed two lives in Maharashtra's Palghar district over the past two days, where the local administration and two National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams rescued 244 people from flooded areas, officials said on Friday.

Schools and educational institutions in the district have been directed to remain closed on Friday as well for safety reasons, they said. Vivekanand Kadam, chief of the district disaster management cell, said the multi-agency rescue and



A worker transplants paddy saplings at a field in Maharashtra PTI

relief operations concluded around 5 am. Several localities in Palghar went under-water following intense rainfall, with Dahanu and Talasari among the worst-affected areas.

Kadam said the death toll rose to two after another

body was recovered in Dahanu on Thursday. The man who was washed away in floodwaters is yet to be identified, he said. Earlier, another man's body was found in a nullah.

The official said 244 persons were rescued from

various waterlogged locations across the district. These included 124 from Palghar town, 65 workers stranded at a factory in Talasari, and 25 people trapped at a farmhouse in Gundale. A relief team official described the deluge as the worst the district had faced in the past decade.

Several close calls were reported during the down-pour. Four passengers narrowly escaped on Thursday when their car plunged into a waterlogged trench on Sun City-Ghas Road in Vasai West after the driver swerved to avoid a stray dog. Locals pulled all four

occupants safely out of the partially submerged car.

Six persons, including four passengers, were trapped inside an MSRTC bus stranded in rising floodwaters in Saivan. Local residents again stepped in, pulling them to safety with ropes.

As floodwaters receded, traffic resumed on affected roads and bridges.

Officials said they had prioritised carrying out panch-namas (spot inspections) to assess the extent of monetary and property losses suffered by residents.

District Collector Indu Rani Jakhar monitored the situation, they added.

Modi Govt first to bring anti-paper leak law: Kerala BJP President



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala BJP president Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Friday said that the Narendra Modi Government was the first in the country to bring a law to prevent question paper leaks.

In a Facebook post, Chandrasekhar, the MLA from Nemom constituency, said that it was the Modi Government which formulated the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act of 2024.

The BJP leader also claimed that he was part of the ministerial committee that framed the legislation and was, therefore, clearly aware of the developments that the Modi Government has implemented for the youth of the country since 2014. "Therefore, we must reject the false propaganda being spread against Modi on this issue," he asserted.

His assertion comes amidst intense protests in Delhi by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) and students against the Centre and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the alleged irregularities in various nationally-conducted exams, including NEET.

Ken-Betwa activist Amit Bhatnagar ends 18-day hunger strike on mother's request

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Chhatarpur

Activist Amit Bhatnagar has ended his 18-day fast over displacement issues resulting from the Ken-Betwa river linking project and other irrigation schemes in Madhya Pradesh.

Their mother persuaded him to end his fast after he reached his hometown Bijawar in Chhatarpur district, following his discharge from the hospital, Bhatnagar's brother Ankit said. "He was not keeping well. Our mother made him break the fast after he reached home," Ankit said.

Chhatarpur Collector Parth Jaiswal said that Bhatnagar was shifted to his hometown after his health improved. He had been admitted first to Bijawar Civil Hospital and later to the ICU of the district hospital after the police removed him from the protest site.

The Chhatarpur police broke up the protest at Kupi village on July 19, citing rising water levels in the Barana river during the monsoon. Bhatnagar had then said that his fast would con-



tinue. The protest began on July 3 beneath an under-construction bridge over the Barana river.

Protesters demanded an inquiry into alleged irregularities in rehabilitation and payment of compensation to those displaced by the Ken-Betwa Link Project and other irrigation schemes, besides seeking statutory rights for affected families. They alleged large-scale corruption in the implementation of rehabilitation pack-

ages and sought an impartial probe to ensure justice for families yet to receive benefits.

Bhatnagar had claimed that on the day the administration cleared the protest site, he was preparing to present documents to the media alleging irregularities worth ₹400 crore. Before Bhatnagar ended his fast with coconut water, local organisation Jai Kisan Sangathan, which participated in the agitation, alleged in a statement that his family, journalists, social activists and fellow protesters were not allowed to meet him during his hospitalisation.

It also claimed that women in several villages had launched a *chulha bandh* (no-cooking) protest in support of the agitation. The organisation quoted Bhatnagar as saying that his agitation was not directed against any individual, political party or Government but sought to protect the constitutional, environmental and legal rights of tribal communities and project-affected families.

NEET paper fallout: Congress, BJP hold protests, counter-protests in Karnataka

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Bengaluru

Protests and counter-protests over the alleged NEET question paper leak and the political fallout from the issue were held across several parts of Karnataka on Friday, with police detaining protesters, preventing rival groups from clashing and stepping up security at multiple locations.

Student groups, Dalit organisations, Youth Congress activists and civil society groups held protests over the alleged NEET irregularities and the reported police action against students in Delhi. The BJP has been protesting against the attack on its leaders during their agitation near the Congress office

in Bengaluru on Wednesday. Congress workers reportedly threw eggs at BJP legislator BP Harish, when he took part in the agitation to protest the Congress demonstration in front of the BJP office at Malleswaram in the city.

In Vijayapura, the BJP, led by district president Gurulingappa Angadi, held a protest at Ambedkar Circle, accusing the Congress Government of "hooliganism" and later marched towards the Deputy Commissioner's office.

Simultaneously, Progressive Dalit organisations and Aam Aadmi Party activists opposed the BJP protest, raising slogans against the party. Police intervened to prevent a confrontation between the two groups, detained more



Police personnel detain Congress workers after they staged a protest over the NEET paper leak issue at Hubballi in Dharwad district, Karnataka PTI

than 15 Dalit activists and brought the tense situation under control.

In Hubballi, students and Youth Congress activists staged a demonstration outside the Karnataka Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS), alleging that the Centre had failed to ensure transparency in the NEET examination. Protesters attempted to burn effigies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, but police prevented the attempt and seized the effigies.

A brief verbal altercation followed before the protest ended peacefully amid heavy police deployment. In Kalaburagi, members of the Democratic Thought Forum organised a protest march at Jagat Circle, con-

demning the alleged lathi charge on students protesting at Delhi's Jantar Mantar over the NEET issue.

In a separate demonstration, the Sneha Jagruti Suraksha Manch submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner seeking a fair probe into the alleged NEET irregularities and comprehensive reforms in the education systems.

The BJP also organised a separate protest in Kalaburagi, blocking traffic at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Circle before attempting to march towards the district Congress office. Police stopped the protesters by erecting barricades and detained several BJP leaders and workers, including MLA Avinash Jadhav and former MLA Dattatreya Patil Revoor.

3-member team probes DGP's unnatural death in Tripura

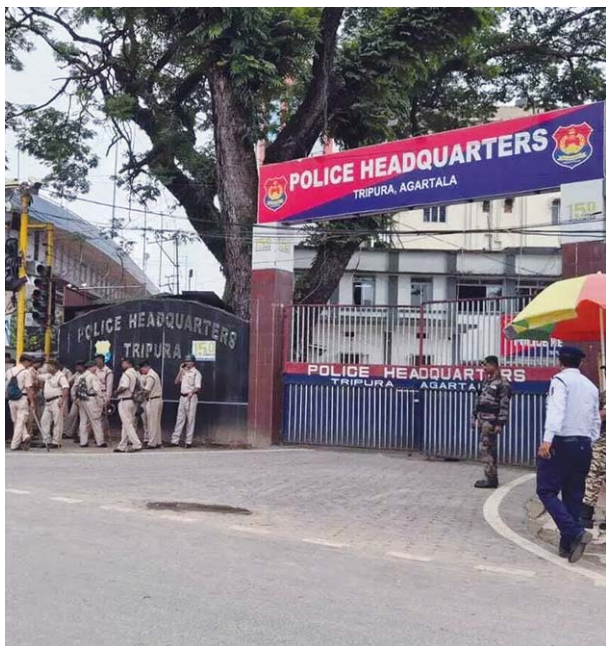
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Agartala

A three-member team headed by the West Tripura SP will investigate the unnatural death of DGP Anurag Dhankar, said a state Government order issued on Friday.

Dhankar, who led the CBI probe into the alleged ₹13,000 crore PNB fraud involving diamondaire Nirav Modi and the reinvestigation of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, was found hanging in the washroom of his chamber at the state police headquarters here on Monday.

"The unnatural death of DGP Anurag Dhankar will be investigated by a three-member team led by West Tripura Superintendent of Police (SP) Namit Pathak. West Tripura Additional SP



Druba Nath and Sub Inspector (SI) and existing Investigating Officer (IO) Subhojit Deb will assist the SP in the investigation," the Tripura Government order said. In case of necessity, the SP may co-opt any other officer from the Tripura Police Crime Branch or any other unit.

For any technical support, the West Tripura district superintendent of police may seek help from the cyber crime unit, the order said.

"Progress report in connection with the investigation may be submitted on a weekly basis to Inspector General (IG), Law and Order, Manchak Ipper for perusal of the Director General of Police (DGP), Tripura," the order said. State Home Secretary Abhishek Singh said the

police have already received the post-mortem report but stopped short of disclosing its content.

"The police have received the post-mortem report of the DGP. Investigation into the unnatural death is progressing as per law," he said.

Earlier, DGP in-charge GS Rao had hinted at forming a team to supervise and investigate the unnatural death of Dhankar.

As part of the investigation, uniform, official vehicle and electronic devices of Dhankar were seized for forensic examinations, another officer said.

The last rites of the 1994-batch IPS officer were performed in his native village Baraut in Baghat, Uttar Pradesh, with full honour on July 22.

Tripura BJP chief asks leaders to minimise differences ahead of local body elections

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Agartala

Tripura BJP president Abhishek Debroy urged party leaders to minimise their differences and work in unison to strengthen the organisation, asserting that internal factionalism would only weaken the party.

His remarks come as the BJP gears up for the elections to the Village Committees under the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) and urban local bodies, including the Agartala Municipal Corporation (AMC).

Addressing a party programme at Bishalgarh Town Hall in Sepahijala district on Thursday, Debroy



Abhishek Debroy

referred to the recent organisational reshuffle in which MLA Sushanta Deb was replaced as the BJP Yuva Morcha state president by Arindam Deb.

"Some may say Sushanta Deb has been sidelined because he is no longer the Yuva Morcha president. The same thing happened to me when I was removed as the

Gomati district president. At that time, some people said I had been sidelined. But today I am the state president. Had I not been removed from that post, I would probably not have become the state president," he said.

Describing the BJP as an inclusive organisation, Debroy said leaders are re-assigned to different responsibilities to strengthen the party, and a change in organisational position should not be viewed as a setback.

Issuing a warning against factionalism, he said he would not work for any particular group within the party. "I have been entrusted with the responsibility of leading the state unit for the next three years," he said.



Editor's
TAKE

Exam leak response
shifts to fast-track courts

PM Modi's announcement of fast-track courts for exam paper-leak cases signals the Government's intent to strengthen accountability and expedite justice

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement of fast-track courts for examination paper-leak cases is, technically, a way forward. However, to say it will pacify the protesters, the short answer is no. The Government's response has arrived 45 days into a sit-in at Jantar Mantar, three days after a "Chalo Sansad" march on Parliament ended in lathi charges, and a day before a nationwide strike called by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), the youth outfit leading the agitation. The demand on the street was never primarily about court speed. It was - and remains - the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

That mismatch explains why the announcement has, if anything, hardened the standoff rather than softened it. CJP's national spokesperson dismissed it as a fix for the wrong fracture. Having said that, fast-track courts are still worth having: certain, swift punishment beats the slow cases that previously allowed leak networks to regroup. They can act as a deterrent and dissuade perpetrators from such adventurism. It may not be a remedy for paper leaks, but it is certainly one of the many steps required to fix the problem.

Parliament's Monsoon Session, which opened the same day the march was blocked, remains deadlocked over the issue. None of this looks like a movement preparing to stand down - CJP called another round of strikes explicitly to protest the police crackdown, not to welcome the court announcement.

There is also a credibility problem no single X post can fix. This is not India's first paper-leak reckoning. The 2024 NEET-UG leak produced near-identical protests, an identical resignation demand, a new central law criminalising exam fraud, and a seven-member expert panel under former ISRO chief K. Radhakrishnan that filed roughly sixty recommendations. Two years and one more compromised exam later - the same racket, investigators say, also breached the 2025 paper - the cycle repeated. Fast-track courts prosecute a leak after it happens. They do nothing to stop the next one. That is the more useful question buried under the resignation politics: what actually stops a paper from leaking? The evidence points to an insider problem, not a punishment gap: leaks trace back to the question-setting, printing and transport chain, where coaching-linked intermediaries buy access - not outside hackers.

The Radhakrishnan committee's central recommendation - which the Supreme Court is now pressing the ministry to implement - was structural: replace the National Testing Agency's dependence on contractual staff with permanent, professional staffing, and build identity-linked custody records for every hand a paper passes through. Separately, the ministry's own plan to shift NEET to a computer-based, possibly multi-stage format from 2027 would shrink the payoff of any single leak, but that does not happen overnight. CJP's demands now include compensation for the families of a dozen-plus students it says have died by suicide since the exam was scrapped and re-run - a grief no courtroom timeline addresses. Pacifying this protest will likely require visible proof that the Government is willing to listen to them and has a plan to fix the problem once and for all.

The price of Western pragmatism

As Riyadh consolidates its regional influence despite persistent human rights concerns and a complex ideological legacy, the Kingdom's rise reflects a broader truth: in international politics, strategic interests often eclipse professed principles



NILANTHA
ILANGAMUWA

Saudi Arabia and Iran were hardly natural allies during the reign of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, yet their rivalry remained largely contained within the conventions of statecraft. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 transformed that competition into something altogether different. From that moment onwards, West Asia became the arena for a struggle that extended far beyond borders, armies and diplomacy.

Over the following decades, sectarian identity became increasingly weaponised as political currency. Sunni and Shia communities that had coexisted for centuries across the region found themselves drawn into conflicts manufactured by states pursuing influence rather than reconciliation. Reports that circulated during the opening phase of Donald Trump's war on Iran suggested that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, rather than Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, had urged Washington that the moment had come to topple the already weakened government in Tehran. Whatever the extent of Riyadh's influence over Washington's decision-making, the broader strategic reality is unmistakable. The region has entered another dangerous phase, while Saudi Arabia finds itself emerging as one of its greatest geopolitical beneficiaries.

For decades, Western governments have presented themselves as guardians of democracy, human rights, freedom of expression and the international rules-based order. Yet these same standards have demonstrated remarkable flexibility whenever Saudi Arabia occupies the centre of the discussion. The murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul was not merely another human rights violation; it became one of the most thoroughly documented acts of state violence in modern diplomatic history. Yet only a few years later, many of those same governments, businesses and political figures returned to the Kingdom with remarkable enthusiasm, demonstrating how moral language often survives only until sufficiently large strategic or commercial incentives appear.

Amnesty International's latest report documents widespread abuse of Filipino domestic workers in Saudi Arabia, alleging excessive working hours, unpaid wages, physical and sexual abuse, and severe restrictions on their freedom under the Kingdom's labour sponsorship system. The organisation has urged Saudi authorities to strengthen legal protections, dismantle the remaining elements of the kafala system, and ensure accountability for employers accused of exploitation. The historical record surrounding Saudi Arabia's religious establishment presents another uncomfortable



THE SEIZURE OF
THE GRAND
MOSQUE IN MECCA
IN NOVEMBER 1979
EXPOSED THESE
CONTRADICTIONS
WITH
EXTRAORDINARY
CLARITY. YAROSLAV
TROFIMOV'S THE
SIEGE OF MECCA
PRESENTS THE
UPRISING NOT AS
AN ISOLATED ACT
OF FANATICISM BUT
AS A MOMENT THAT
REVEALED THE
INTERNAL
TENSIONS OF
SAUDI RELIGIOUS
AND POLITICAL LIFE

The writer is a columnist
based in Colombo

reality. The ideological movement established by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab emerged not merely as a theological reform movement but as a doctrine that sharply distinguished between those regarded as authentic believers and those deemed to have fallen into unbelief. As David Commins demonstrates in *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*, the alliance between religious doctrine and the House of Saud became one of the most enduring political partnerships in modern history.

The ideological infrastructure established through schools, charities and universities extended far beyond the Arabian Peninsula, with enormous resources invested in exporting a particular interpretation of Islam that profoundly shaped later generations of radical movements. The seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in November 1979 exposed these contradictions. Yaroslav Trofimov's *The Siege of Mecca* presents the uprising as a moment that revealed the internal tensions of Saudi religious and political life. Juhayman al-Otaybi and his followers did not reject Wahhabi doctrine. They claimed to be restoring it to what they believed was its uncompromised form. Their rebellion emerged from accusations that the Saudi monarchy had abandoned genuine Islamic governance through its alliances with Western powers, growing wealth and accommodation with modernity.

Rather than fundamentally challenging the ideological assumptions that had nourished such radicalism, the monarchy strengthened many elements of the religious establishment in exchange for renewed political legitimacy. The global expansion of conservative religious institutions accelerated during precisely the same period that transnational jihadist movements were beginning to emerge.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan transformed this ideological current into an international military enterprise. Backed by the United States, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan during the Cold War, thousands of foreign volunteers, including Osama bin Laden, travelled to Afghanistan under the banner of jihad. Al-Qaeda emerged through a convergence of ideological, geopolitical and military circumstances rather than Saudi religious doc-

trine alone. Nevertheless, both bin Laden and fifteen of the nineteen perpetrators of the September 11, 2001 attacks were Saudi nationals, while al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State developed overwhelmingly within extremist Sunni traditions rather than Shia movements associated with Tehran. This does not absolve Iran of supporting armed proxies, a reality starkly illustrated by Yemen. It does, however, complicate simplistic narratives that portray one source of extremism as the exclusive threat.

Against this historical background, the newly signed civilian nuclear cooperation agreement between the United States and Saudi Arabia represents far more than an energy partnership. During the Cold War, Washington actively helped establish Iran's civilian nuclear programme under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, supplying its first research reactor, highly enriched uranium fuel and technical expertise through the Atoms for Peace initiative. That programme was presented as a peaceful endeavour, yet the infrastructure created with American support later became central to one of the world's most contentious nuclear disputes.

Reports indicate that the agreement departs from what has long been regarded as the American 'gold standard' for nuclear cooperation by not requiring Saudi Arabia permanently to renounce uranium enrichment and spent-fuel reprocessing. Those distinctions matter because civilian nuclear programmes and military nuclear capabilities exist upon a technological continuum. Not every country possessing civilian reactors pursues nuclear weapons, but every nuclear weapons programme requires technological foundations that civilian programmes may eventually provide. The issue is therefore not immediate weaponisation but future strategic options.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of this agreement lies not within its technical provisions but within the broader political transformation that made it possible. History rarely rewards the most virtuous governments. More often, it rewards those that recognise that power is ultimately negotiated through interests rather than principles. Mohammed bin Salman appears to have understood this better than many of his counterparts. While liberal democracies continue to present themselves as defenders of human rights, democratic accountability and the international rules-based order, their policies towards Riyadh repeatedly demonstrate the exact opposite. Whatever history's final verdict on his legacy may be, one conclusion is difficult to dispute: Mohammed bin Salman has transformed Saudi Arabia's geopolitical position with remarkable effectiveness. In a region fractured by war, exhausted by proxy conflicts and increasingly shaped by transactional diplomacy, he has outmanoeuvred many of his rivals and critics alike. For now, he has the last laugh.

PIC TALK



A man looks towards the base camps for the Amarnath Yatra amid rain at Baltal in Ganderbal district.

PHOTO: PTI



DEEBA
SALIM IRFAN

2ND
OPINION

Few years back, at one of my writing retreats, a participant gave me a story.

"It isn't very good " she said quickly. "I haven't written in forty years."

Forty years. I looked at her. Wondered what had happened in those decades. Not because she hadn't written, but because she had stopped believing she could write. Life had happened, of course.

Marriage. Kids. School runs. Ageing parents. Deadlines. Responsibilities. The small acts of care that hold families together. As I listened to her I thought about all the things we give up.

The girl who wanted to write stories.
The young man who dreamed of opening a café.
The woman who wanted to start a business.

The things we leave for later



The traveller who kept postponing the trip. We don't stop wanting these things. We just think there will be time later. Later is a tricky word.

It sounds reassuring. Patient. Responsible. Years fly past fast. One day you put a dream on hold for a few months. The next twenty years have passed.

Lately I've noticed something changing. Friends in their fifties are taking courses they never took in their twenties. A neighbour is learning Arabic. Another started an online business from home. Someone I know started his PhD well into his 60's because education was unfinished.

These stories won't make headlines. They move me more than tales of quick success. Maybe because they're not about achievement. They're about giving yourself permission. Permission to start before you're ready. Permission to be bad at something. Permission to want more from life even when life has

given you much. We live in a culture that loves youth. Ads and social media content try to convince us that our best years are behind us by forty. That one cannot achieve much after. But, as I grow older, my faith in these claims is shaking. I've met women who became more confident with every passing year, well into their late fifties. More than they were in their twenties. I've seen people find purpose after retirement. I've seen friendships grow, marriages appear from places buried for decades.

Dreams return. Life is not a road. It's like a mountain path. There are bends. There are pauses.

Sometimes there are stretches where nothing happens. Then unexpectedly the view changes. The participant finished her story. Then she wrote another. Last year she sent me a message to say one of her pieces was published. I was happy, for her. What stayed with me was something else she wrote. "I wish I hadn't waited this long." I understand what she meant. Maybe there's another way to look at it. She started. And sometimes, that is the bravest thing a person can do.

The writer is an award-winning, Dubai-based author exploring themes of memory, identity and emotional truth through storytelling, and is the founder of TheWriteScene.com

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer @TheDailyPioneer
instagram.com/dailypioneer linkedin.com/in/The Pioneer

LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE
TRADITIONAL INDIAN VALUES

India is known to the world for its rich culture and traditions. This cultural richness has not emerged on its own. Hinduism has enriched the customs of the country and is not only a major religion of India but a civilisational strength that has defined its societal norms. Its ability to accommodate diversity has taught the world how different faiths can coexist without confrontation.

The Vedas, Puranas and Gita are not merely sacred texts but gateways to enlightenment that have helped a civilisation survive and excel through pragmatism, scientific reasoning and philosophical analysis. Holi, Diwali and Durga Puja are more than vibrant festivals; they provide opportunities for community gatherings where people from all walks of life

participate. Indian culture has traditionally considered marriage sacred. However, the growing practice of live-in relationships is changing centuries-old social traditions. Cohabitation without marriage has traditionally been considered contrary to Indian values. Live-in relationships can sometimes lead to conflict when partners disagree over marriage.

Our habit of importing Western technology, education and fashion has also influenced our way of living, which may not always suit Indian traditions and values. It is time to consider what example such practices will leave for future generations if the sanctity of Indian traditions is to be preserved.

KABIR AHMED SAIKIA | ASSAM

Education reforms need accountability

It is heartening to note that activist Sonam Wangchuk has ended his 26-day-long hunger strike after assurances from the Centre on education reforms. It is a welcome move. As the student protest intensified, violence erupted, similar to what had happened earlier during the CAA and farmers' protests. Anti-social elements, allegedly with foreign support, took control of the situation. The Congress, too, wanted to score political mileage against the Modi Government. Sonam's decision to call off his fast before the violence spread further is to be applauded.

The Government, on the other hand, should bring reforms to the education sector. Many students have died because of the pressure to pass the NEET examination to become doctors.

NEET provides a proper platform to select meritorious students and ensure quality medical education. There are some bottlenecks that should be overcome through experience; banning it altogether is unwanted and uncalled for. There must be accountability and transparency at all stages.

The Government can also consider nationalising the education and health sectors and moving them out of the clutches of politicians.

NR RAMACHANDRAN | CHENNAI

Nuclear safeguards must remain

Apropos the editorial 'The US ends its clear non-proliferation policy' (July 24), it rightly highlights the dangers of weakening long-standing nuclear safeguards for short-term strategic and commercial gains. By allowing Saudi Arabia access to civilian nuclear technology without the stringent restrictions imposed in earlier agreements, the United States risks undermining the global non-proliferation framework it once championed.

The omission of explicit limits on uranium enrichment and the absence of stronger IAEA oversight could encourage other countries in the region to demand similar concessions. At a time when tensions surrounding Iran's nuclear programme remain high, such a move may trigger a costly and destabilising arms race across the Gulf.

While every nation has the right to pursue peaceful nuclear energy, that right must be balanced with robust transparency and internationally accepted safeguards. Commercial interests and geopolitical competition should never take precedence over global security. Congress must carefully scrutinise the agreement to ensure that strategic partnerships do not come at the cost of weakening decades of efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation.

SANJAY CHOPRA | MOHALI

Assam struggles against the deluge

It is a matter of urgency for the Government to act on the current flood situation in Assam. Heavy rainfall has affected thousands of people, while the Disang river is flowing above the danger level in many areas. The rescue efforts of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority have not been sufficient, resulting in the Indian Army being called in for support.

So far, more than 6.5 lakh people have been displaced. In several places, entire villages are under water, causing immense hardship to residents. The situation in Sivasagar, Charaideo and Golaghat is particularly severe. Twenty-one people have already lost their lives due to the floods.

At this critical juncture, the Government must take all necessary measures to restore normalcy. We cannot halt rain or floods, but effective management and adequate preparedness can significantly reduce people's suffering.

The Centre, along with Assam's neighbouring states, should take the initiative to support affected communities, strengthen rescue and relief operations, and help residents deal with the flood crisis effectively.

KIRTI WADHAWAN | KANPUR

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

Bundelkhand’s long road from neglect to renewal

For decades, Bundelkhand remained on the margins of development. Today, however, the region is witnessing a remarkable turnaround. Backed by major investments in infrastructure, improved connectivity and new industrial initiatives, Bundelkhand is steadily emerging as a key growth centre for Uttar Pradesh



PRIYANKA SRIVASTAVA

Although Uttar Pradesh’s Bundelkhand region is advancing towards becoming the state’s second Noida today, for nearly seven decades after Independence it was condemned to a fate marked by bandits, drought and mass migration. Spanning roughly 29,000 Sq Kms and home to nearly 8.2 million people across seven districts, this vast territory was systematically kept outside the mainstream of development for a prolonged period. Under successive regimes of the Congress, the Bahujan Samaj Party and, above all, the Samajwadi Party, resource scarcity, neglect of schemes and administrative apathy remained the norm. Promises were routinely made, yet tangible change on the ground remained conspicuously absent.

This is the same land that, under the leadership of Rani Lakshmbai of Jhansi, raised the banner of self-respect during the Revolt of 1857. Stung by that uprising, the British administration deliberately set out to cripple Bundelkhand economically and socially as a punitive lesson.

After Independence there was hope that the land of these great warriors would finally receive its rightful due. Instead, successive Congress, BSP and especially Samajwadi Party governments converted colonial-era neglect into a permanent political arrangement. The old pattern was further entrenched so that the absence of development could always be excused by a ready-made narrative of backwardness and insecurity.

The artificial narrative of ‘Dasyu Pradesh’: A design to keep investment away

During the tenures of Mulayam Singh Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav, Bundelkhand’s image was deliberately projected as the stronghold of the dacoits of Chambal and Bundelkhand. Rather than recognizing the region’s latent potential, official policy reduced it to a mere “dacoit-affected zone.”

This carefully constructed narrative sent a clear signal to industrialists and investors across India and beyond: Bundelkhand was unsafe for trade and capital. Dacoits received political patronage; their criminal pasts were glorified. Consequently, while new industries and infrastructure rose elsewhere in the state, Bundelkhand’s public identity remained confined to chilling tales of outlaw gangs.

The criminalisation of a generation of youth

The greatest disservice under Congress, BSP and SP rule was inflicted on the future of Bundelkhand’s young people. Hands that should have held quality education, modern skills and technical knowledge were steered instead towards pistols and the underworld, exploiting unemployment and despair.

With employment opportunities absent and the education system in ruins, local youth faced only two bleak choices: join mafia or dacoit gangs, or migrate to the slums of Delhi, Mumbai and Surat to work for subsistence wages. ‘Under Samajwadi Party governance’, youthful energy was channeled not into learning or livelihood but into muscle power and political muscle-flexing.

Government machinery as silent spectator and willing accomplice

During SP rule, successive dreaded dacoit gangs operated parallel administrations in full public view. The terror spread by figures such as Thokia, Dadua and Ragia was so complete that law and order simply ceased to exist in rural areas.

Most painfully, the state government and police administration remained passive onlookers instead of acting. Political patrons in power exploited these gangs for electoral advantage, booth capturing and ‘vote-bank consolidation’.

Punishment postings and the free rein of the mining mafia

‘Government machinery’ in Bundelkhand was deployed ‘not for public service’ but to silence ordinary citizens and plunder local resources. Police and



administrative officers regarded postings there as “punishment postings.” Those who arrived either capitulated to the corrupt system or chose silence. In return, under SP rule the mining and land mafias were granted open license to loot sand from the rivers. Illegal extraction from the Ken and Betwa drained the public exchequer while ordinary farmers feared even setting foot in their own fields.

The cost of limited political weight and step motherly fund allocation

A key political calculation behind this prolonged neglect was Bundelkhand’s modest electoral footprint — only four Lok Sabha seats and nineteen Assembly seats. Whether under Congress, BSP or the SP of Mulayam and Akhilesh Yadav, electoral strategy always prioritised regions with larger seat shares or stronger captive vote banks. Because of its limited political leverage, Bundelkhand never received priority in budgetary allocations. The bulk of state resources was diverted elsewhere, while the region was dismissed with the label “backward area” and token announcements.

Farmers parched by drought and relief looted by corruption

Bundelkhand’s natural geography is arid and plateau-like, yet successive governments left this structural challenge unaddressed. Between 2013 and 2015, under Akhilesh Yadav’s government, severe drought drove farmers into starvation, debt and suicide. Irrigation projects remained buried in files for years. The ultimate betrayal came when drought-relief supplies and “relief packets” themselves became ‘casualties of corruption’. The administration simply labelled the crisis a “natural disaster” and washed its hands of responsibility.

The end of neglect under the double-engine government

The arrival of the double-engine government—Narendra Modi at the Centre and Yogi Adityanath in Uttar Pradesh after 2017 — has brought an epochal shift. The Bundelkhand Expressway has linked the region directly to both the national and state capitals.

Mega projects such as the Defense Industrial Corridor (Jhansi node) and the Bundelkhand Industrial Development Authority (BIDA) are accelerating industrialisation. The centuries-old drinking-water crisis has been addressed through the ‘Har Ghar Nal Scheme’, freeing mothers and sisters from kilometres-long walks for water. Power supply has been fully stabilised, and scheme benefits now reach citizens directly, free of middlemen.

The story of Bundelkhand is a stark reminder of how a historically and strategically significant region was systematically sidelined for political convenience. Neglect that began under British rule reached its zenith under Congress, BSP and especially Samajwadi Party governments. Arming the youth with pistols, allowing dacoits to flourish, and denying basic amenities had become the region’s enforced destiny.

While the double-engine government since 2017 has begun writing a new chapter of development and has visibly transformed the atmosphere, the fact remains that the ‘planned impoverishment of Bundelkhand’ until 2017 is a documented chapter of history whose full redress will still require considerable time.

The author is an Assistant Professor at Allahabad Degree College, University of Allahabad

Dear youth, how about a real revolution?



ACHARYA PRASHANT

The state stands indicted. An administration under which question papers travel faster than justice has failed its first duty. The syndicates that sell children’s futures for cash deserve the harshest prosecution the law can build. Nothing that follows dilutes that verdict by one drop. In every act of injustice there are two things, not one. First, the action; second, your understanding of the action and response to it. You are examining the minister with full ruthlessness. Now extend the same examination to the examiner. If the test is fair, why should anyone be exempt? Including you.

The paper leaked, somebody sold it, and somebody also bought it. Show me one buyer of the paper in the march. Ask yourself: the students whom the next leak reaches in time, will they be marching or memorising the leaked paper? Is it not the ego’s oldest trick to shout about the action so that the actor is never discussed? Man acts from a corrupt centre, and no rearrangement of actions has ever cleaned a centre. Correction is the cleaning of the centre of the old one. Not that you leave the street, but that you clean the one who walks on it.

Look at what your placards demand. A fair examination, an accountable minister; in other words, a cleaner race. Not one placard in the whole capital asks the prior question: is this race so important that a young person takes his life for it? In 2022, this country recorded 13,999 student suicides. No paper had leaked in that year, and the children still died anyway. So the leak did not build the machine that equates a rank with a life.

A whole civilisation has told its seventeen-year-olds that their self-worth is tied to their scorecards. When the result collapses, the young person concludes that he has collapsed. That conclusion is the real killer. A movement that wins a resignation but leaves this machine untouched is preparing the next round of casualties.

A monkey entered the house and wrecked the room. Now the mother returns. Whom does she slap? The monkey, or the child who left the door open? I am only asking why one of them has ten million investigators and the other has none. Who opened the door? The people you now want to drag from their chairs were carried to those chairs by you. What exactly were you doing in the polling booth?

Outer revolution must follow inner revolution, or it is only an outing. Has your family’s extra income, legally called black money, not been quietly set aside for your sister’s dowry? On the morning of the great march: “Mummy, extra parathas today, I am off to do revolution.” Whose money bought the flour, beta? Here is a qualifying exam for revolutionaries. Announce at home: I refuse the corrupt rupee. This exam does not cancel your march; it qualifies you for it. A revolution that reaches the road but never reaches the dining table has not begun. It begins as one unbearable question: why am I the way I am?

Half a century ago, this country saw its largest student uprising, against corruption itself. Its young heroes then ruled states for decades. The record of that rule includes the very corruption convictions their movement was born to prevent. Fifteen years ago, another anti-corruption wave electrified the nation. Its crusader became a governing politician and collected corruption cases of his own. The chair did not corrupt the pure. The chair only handed a bigger stage to an ego nobody had ever questioned. Rotate the patients as often as you like; the disease holds the ward. They do not prove that marching is useless; they prove that unfit marchers are useless. And nothing changed, because the winners were the same unexamined egos as the losers. The failure was never in the feet; it was in the centre the feet carried. That is why fitness comes first. Not instead of the march, but before it. Suppose you win, and the minister resigns. The ego does not weep because it was hurt. It weeps because it has not yet been paid for the hurt. The resignation is the payment. And a compensated victim never again faces the mirror. Prosecute the guilty. A scalp is a trophy, and trophies educate nobody. Krishna stood on a battlefield, not in a hermitage. He took one warrior, and he refused to let him shoot a single arrow until that warrior had self-knowledge. He refused to let him fire, and he equally refused to let him flee. He purified the fighter, and then he said: Now Fight! The bar is honesty, and honesty does not take years at all. I have a problem with blindness on the street. Educate yourself in the self: one hour a day with a text that questions the questioner, before the phone is touched. Then educate the voter beside you.

Then vote, then organise, then contest, and then march. The march of the awakened is not merely permitted; it is awaited. The word revolution means a complete turning. So turn, but turn fully: towards yourself. There is no revolution without love. Not slogan-love, but love as the ego’s own decision to turn upon itself and dissolve. Rage rearranges the world and leaves the actor intact. Love alone changes the actor.

Dear youth, you want revolution, and you are right to want it. First the mirror, then the march. The real revolution is not housed in any ministry or maidan. It first lives in you. Then come out, and I will be marching in your middle.



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



BRAJESH KUMAR TIWARI

India today faces a striking paradox. Educated youth are struggling to find meaningful work, while firms are struggling to find job-ready technicians, mechanics, electricians, machine operators, repair workers and supervisors. This is not merely an unemployment problem; it is a capability mismatch. Degrees have expanded faster than usable workplace skills, and certificates have often grown faster than employer confidence. As Skill India completes eleven years on July 15, 2026, the central question is no longer whether India can train at scale. It is whether training can translate into productivity, wages, dignity and real bargaining power in the labour market.

What India did gain from Skill India
Skill India’s most visible achievement has been its large scale. Under PMKVY, from 2015 to 31 December 2025, 1.64 crore candidates were trained or oriented, while 1.29 crore were certified. Women’s participation has also been notable, with 74.29 lakh women trained by 30 June 2025, accounting for nearly 45 per cent of total candidates. In the first three phases, where placement tracking was linked mainly to the Short-Term Training component, 56.89 lakh candidates were certified and 24.3 lakh were reported placed, reflecting a placement rate of about 42.8 per cent. PMKVY 4.0 has moved beyond basic placement reporting towards wider career pathways, including self-

employment, wage employment, on-the-job training and digital linkages. By 31 December 2025, it had trained 27.09 lakh candidates and certified 18.79 lakh. Its focus on future skills is visible through over 600 industry-aligned courses in AI, 5G, cyber security, green hydrogen and drones.

Yet the core criticism has become sharper: Skill India did better in mobilising candidates, issuing certificates and building scheme visibility than in transforming the labour market. PLFS 2025 shows why. Only 4.2 per cent of Indians aged 15-59 had received or were receiving formal vocational or technical training; among 15-29-year-olds, the share was just 5.0 per cent. The Economic Survey, using PLFS 2023-24, also noted that 65.3 per cent of the workforce had no vocational training, while only 4.1 per cent had formal training. The skilling architecture expanded, but its real penetration into the workforce remains shallow.

Quality has been an equally serious concern. The 2025 CAG audit of PMKVY found that 6.54 lakh certified candidates across 705 job roles did not meet the minimum entry age at the start of training. Many others were certified despite not meeting educational or technical eligibility norms. Field inspections found closed training centres, weak attendance compliance, and gaps in placement strategy, monitoring and recognition-of-prior-learning certification. The larger message was clear: India created a large certification system without fully protecting the credibility of certification.

Employer linkage remains the weakest link. NITI Aayog found that 94 per cent of surveyed employers were willing to hire more PMKVY-trained candidates, and IIPA reported that 70.5 per cent of sur-



veyed candidates were placed in their desired skill sector. Yet placement tracking was mainly linked to PMKVY’s first three phases, not PMKVY 4.0. When tracking weakens, accountability also weakens. This is worrying for MSMEs, which need trusted hiring signals and easy apprenticeship routes, not just more course completions. The rural-urban divide also persists. PLFS 2025 shows youth unemployment at 8.3 per cent in rural India and 13.6 per cent in urban India. Secondary education attainment was 61.9 per cent in rural areas and 79.7 per cent in urban areas. Skill India has widened access, but structural gaps in schooling, connectivity, migration networks and local employer density remain unresolved. India’s skilling strategy should not be based on a single model viewed only through the lens of a foreign system. Germany shows the importance of tying classroom instruction to practical workplace training. Almost 89 per cent of vocational upper-secondary students participate in programmes that blend school-based learning with on-the-job experience. In this way, some 94 per cent of recent vocational graduates get a job within two years. South Korea, meanwhile, demonstrates how robust academic rigour, institutional rigour and competent quality assurance

can enhance results, even when vocational education attracts comparatively fewer students.

Another key lesson from Singapore is to not see vocational education as a lesser or second choice. The Institute of Technical Education and the broader SkillsFuture ecosystem have given vocational skills more social recognition, career mobility and lifelong relevance. The Philippines shows how a national mechanism can broaden the horizons of competency-based assessment and certification, with 13.76 lakh enrolments and nearly 10.81 lakh workers certified in 2024.

The importance of legally supported apprenticeship programmes is underscored by Brazil. By April 2026, the nation boasted 7,26,025 active young apprentices, suggesting the efficacy of a system in which employers participate in workforce development. India does not have to follow the entire path of any of these models. The big takeaway is that we are going to need a trusted skilling system that enables meaningful employer involvement, stronger apprenticeships, portable qualifications, high-quality standards, and job outcomes - not just enrolment and certification numbers.

Viksit Bharat is not only a GDP target; it is a productivity target. India cannot become a major manufacturing hub, high-value services exporter, green-transition economy and digital public infrastructure leader when only about 4 to 5 per cent of its people are formally vocationally trained. Manufacturing needs technicians, machine operators, quality controllers, maintenance workers and supervisors. Services need coders, cloud-support staff, logistics workers, care workers, sales teams and hospitality professionals. Green growth will

require solar technicians, EV maintenance workers, building-efficiency specialists and workers for recycling, waste management and industrial retrofitting. PMKVY 4.0’s shift towards electronics, IT-ITES and future skills is therefore welcome, but India needs a much wider base of applied workers, not only a small class of elite engineers.

AI can support this transition, but it cannot replace basic institutional reform. For most workers, the need is not advanced AI-building skills, but stronger digital ability, data awareness and problem-solving. AI should be used for personalised learning in Indian languages, adaptive practice and better matching of learners with jobs and apprenticeships. Used well, AI can improve assessment quality and make reskilling continuous; used poorly, it will create one more dashboard without creating one more employable worker. India now needs hard but practical reforms. PMKVY 4.0 should restore compulsory tracking of placement, wages and retention, publish district-wise outcomes, and link public payments more closely with verified employment results. Apprenticeships must become simpler for MSMEs through pooled agencies, standard contracts, digital stipend support and shared trainers. In the medium term, vocational education must enter schools, ITIs, polytechnics and universities as a mainstream pathway, with portable credits under NCF. Skill India’s first decade proved it can certify at scale. Its second must prove that skills improve young Indians’ bargaining power.

The writer is an Associate Professor at Atal School of Management, IITM

Your Trusted Management Advisory

www.transglobeadvisors.in

Order Order

Pet dog plays crucial role in solving 2021 Mohali murder



A Mohali court convicted and sentenced a man to life imprisonment in a 2021 murder incident with a pet dog of the victim playing a crucial role in cracking the case.

The court of Additional Sessions Judge Vikrant Kumar awarded a life term to Jagir Singh, a resident of village Parol, for the murder of goat farmer Sucha Singh, a resident of Chhoti Badi Naggal village in Mohali in June 2021. The court also imposed a fine of ₹1 lakh.

Two other accused Desraj and Satnam Singh were, however, acquitted in the murder case.

The court also rejected the prosecution's plea for capital punishment, stating that the case did not qualify as one of the "rarest of rare".

The court convicted the accused on July 17 and the sentence was pronounced on July 22.

According to the prosecution, Sucha Singh went missing on June 12, 2021, after leaving home to graze his goats.

The family came to know that Jagir Singh took Sucha to his house for making enclosure for goats. When Sucha did not return home that day, Jagir told the family that Sucha had gone with one Desraj. But Sucha did not return home, prompting the family to lodge a missing complaint with police. Despite the family carrying out search at their own level for over a week, Sucha Singh could not be found. Thereafter, the family members of Sucha Singh went to Jagir's farmhouse on June 20, 2021. The family also took along their pet dog Rocky.

When the family members were looking for Sucha Singh, their pet dog Rocky went towards a small pit. The family then started digging and found Sucha's T-shirt. Later police was called in and the headless body of Sucha Singh was exhumed from the spot.

(PTI)

Delhi court acquits man in 2011 murder case

A Delhi court has acquitted a man in a 2011 murder case, saying the prosecution failed to prove the charges beyond reasonable doubt after key witnesses turned hostile and the forensic evidence did not support the case.

The court, however, convicted him for absconding after he pleaded guilty to the offence. Additional Sessions Judge Vandana was hearing the case against Amit Kumar, who was accused in the murder of property leader Ranbir Singh, who was shot in Bawana's Pooth Khurd area in June 2011. An FIR was registered against the accused under IPC sections 302 and 120B and the Arms Act. In the order dated July 14, the court said, "There is no hesitation in holding that the prosecution has failed to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt, and accordingly, the accused, Amit Kumar, deserves the benefit of doubt and hence stands acquitted."

The court noted that the complainant and other material witnesses did not support the prosecution during the trial and failed to identify the accused. It also said that the ballistic report did not link the recovered pistol with the bullets found in the deceased's body. "Even vide the forensic evidence, no incriminating evidence could be proved against the accused persons as discussed above."

(PTI)

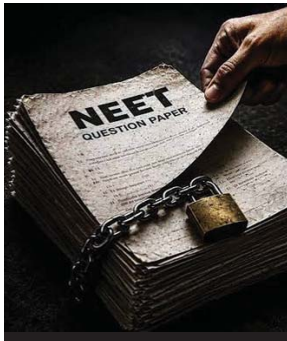
Centre assures strict steps to curb NEET paper leaks

The Supreme Court on Friday told the Centre that it will closely monitor the steps taken to curb NEET examination paper leaks, while underlining that ad hocism has caused trouble for years.

A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe, which was hearing a batch of petitions, including one by the Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA), told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the Government should indicate the steps taken towards transparency, implementation of recommendations of the Radhakrishnan Committee, and how the IIT model would be followed.

Mehta said there are some developments and the Government will file a detailed report, which may be beyond the recommendations of the Radhakrishnan Committee. "Students' futures can't be jeopardised. We are going beyond the Radhakrishnan Committee. I assure you that the Government is walking 10 extra miles. I can assure you everything is being supervised at the highest level," Mehta submitted. He added that two years back, a similar issue arose and right from printing to transportation, everything was explained to the court. The bench said that the Government deployed the Airforce to transport question papers for the NEET-UG retest, but all these measures are ad hoc.

(PTI)



HC refuses to entertain PIL on NIA probe into CJP's *Chalo Sansad*

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Friday refused to entertain a PIL seeking a probe by the NIA or any "specialised agency" into the Cockroach Janta Party-led march to Parliament on July 20 to protest against the NEET-UG paper leak and other related issues.

A bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia said the alleged incidents of vandalism were given the knowledge and notice of the authorities, who would take action according to the law.

The bench also said it was for the Centre to refer any case to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) for investigation, and not the court.

In view of the court's observations, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta asked the petitioner's counsel to consider withdrawing the PIL, following which the petitioner



requested the bench to withdraw the same.

"The PIL is dismissed as withdrawn," the court ordered.

The petitioner, Satish Kumar Aggarwal, the ex-vice president of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha, said in the PIL that the participation of activists and political leaders as well as the alleged involvement of foreign-funded organisations, has raised serious questions about the "true nature,

purpose, and objectives of the protest".

It said these concerns call for a "comprehensive investigation" to ascertain if any "external elements were involved in activities prejudicial to public order, national security, and the sovereignty and integrity of India".

"In these circumstances, the petitioner seeks appropriate directions for registration of an FIR, a thorough and impartial investigation into the incidents connected to

the protests, and further investigation by an appropriate specialised agency, including the National Investigation Agency, if the competent authority considers that the material disclosed warrants investigation under the applicable law," the plea submitted.

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) has been protesting since June 20 demanding Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation over alleged examination irregularities.

On July 20, thousands of protesters gathered at the Jantar Mantar for a *Chalo Sansad* march to press their demands, despite heavy security deployment.

As the crowds swelled, police lathi-charged and tear-gassed the protesters when they attempted to march towards Parliament, on Day 1 of the Monsoon Session.

The ensuing clashes left several police personnel and protesters injured.

SC restricts uploading proceedings online



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday barred posting, reposting or uploading of audio-video recordings of court proceedings on social media and other digital platforms without prior permission of the concerned secretary general of the apex court or the registrar general of the high courts.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana also sought responses from the Centre and others on a plea raising the misuse of live-streaming and circulation of videos of

court proceedings on social media.

"As an interim measure, it is directed that there shall be no extraction, modification, dissemination posting, reposting and uploading of audio-video visual recordings of judicial proceedings on social media or other digital platforms without prior permission of the secretary general of this court or the registrar general of the jurisdictional high courts," the bench said.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh, appearing for the petitioner, highlighted the misuse of videos of court proceedings on social media and other digital platforms.

Building contractor suicide: Ex-MLA, wife get anticipatory bail; no relief for MNS leader

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Pune

A sessions court in Pune has granted anticipatory bail to former MLA Ravindra Dhangekar and his wife in connection with the suicide of a building contractor, while rejecting a similar plea filed by MNS leader Bala Shedge.

Additional Sessions Judge Aniruddha Gandhi granted anticipatory bail to the Dhangekar couple on Thursday on a personal bond of ₹25,000 each with one surety of the like amount, subject to conditions.

The court, however, rejected the anticipatory bail application of Shedge, whose name allegedly figured in the suicide note and a video purportedly recorded by the deceased before taking the extreme step.

The case pertains to the suicide of Khalil Sheikh (65), a building centring contractor and labour supplier, at his residence in Gultekdi on July 16. Based on a complaint lodged by his wife Sultana Sheikh, the Swargate police registered a case against Shiv Sena leader Dhangekar, his wife Pratibha Dhangekar,



Shedge, Raghunath Gowda and eight others for abetment of suicide and other offences. According to the complaint, Khalil Sheikh had recorded a video before his death alleging that he had been cheated in business. A purported suicide note was also found pasted on the wall outside his house.

The complaint alleged the accused had failed to pay him dues, causing him severe financial distress. It further claimed Shedge threatened to kill Sheikh and had seized his centring material, a temporary structure that supports buildings or structural elements during construction, leading to sustained harassment that allegedly drove him to end his life.

While granting relief to the Dhangekar couple, the court observed that Ravindra Dhangekar's name did not appear in the suicide note and that he had no direct business dealings with the deceased.

The court also noted that Dhangekar's wife had retired from the partnership firm linked to the construction business on August 19, 2025, and therefore had no direct connection with the deceased or his business at the relevant time. On these grounds, the court held that custodial interrogation of the Dhangekar couple was not warranted and granted them anticipatory bail, while declining similar relief to Shedge.

SC proposes special courts for Manipur violence cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday proposed setting up special courts to conduct day-to-day trials in criminal cases arising from the 2023 ethnic violence in Manipur. It also directed probe agencies to expeditiously complete pending investigations and ensure that victims receive copies of chargesheets.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana took note of the fact that many victims and their families are yet to get copies of the chargesheets filed by the CBI and the state

SIT in criminal cases. The lawyers will have to be provided the chargesheets within one week of legal aid counsel contacting them, the court said.

More than 200 people have been killed, several hundred injured and thousands displaced since ethnic violence first broke out in Manipur on May 3, 2023, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Hearing a batch of pleas relating to the violence, the apex court permitted the legal aid counsel represent-



ing the victims to approach the offices of the chief justices of the Gauhati and Manipur chief justices to seek copies of the chargesheets.

Senior advocate Vrinda Grover informed the bench

that despite previous directions, the families of two deceased victims had told her they had still not received the copies. She said one legal aid counsel had received the documents while another

was still awaiting them. The law officer clarified that chargesheets were sensitive criminal records and required to be furnished only to victims and their lawyers and not to women's groups or public interest litigants.

"We are informed by (Vrinda) Grover that regardless of the directions or status report, she has been informed by victim families that chargesheets have not been supplied to them. She was able to contact the legal aid counsels, one of whom has received a chargesheet. Others are awaited," the bench said.

"We direct the legal aid counsels to immediately

contact the office of the chief justices of high courts Manipur and Gauhati. The authorities will ensure supply of chargesheets not later than one week from the date legal aid counsel contacts them," it ordered.

Proposing to set up special courts to conduct day-to-day trials in criminal cases, the bench asked Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the state government, SIT and the CBI, to collate information about the cases where the investigations are complete and chargesheets are filed and also give details of those matters where probe is incomplete.

Media reports reckless, no plea related to CJP protests filed: CJI Surya Kant

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Friday dismissed as "reckless" media reports that he had denied urgent hearing on a plea challenging the July 20 police action against students, saying it was only a representation and not a petition.

No such petition was filed, he stated. "In the last two days, a completely false statement was made that a matter was filed, and the media is absolutely free from all responsibility and falsely reporting that the Chief Justice refused to list the matter," he said. "Till morning 10 am, not a single page has been filed. It was one representation... sent by Mishra or someone. How can I treat the



representation as a writ petition? And people start recklessly reporting this," the CJI said while lawyers were mentioning their cases for urgent listing on Friday.

On Wednesday, a lawyer sought urgent hearing on the police action against students during the Cockroach Janta Party-led protest march here on July 20. "I have the

videos as well regarding police brutality... If it can be listed tomorrow (Thursday)... students are there," the lawyer had said.

He said the students had allegedly been subjected to police brutality during the protest. The CJI had declined the request and made it clear that the bench was not inclined to examine

video footage at the mentioning stage. "We are not interested in videos, we don't have time to watch... We don't want to watch videos," the CJI had said. When the counsel reiterated that students had been beaten up and again referred to the video evidence, the CJI had said, "Don't waste our time. We don't want to watch any videos."

The Cockroach Janta Party led march on July 20 witnessed clashes between protesters and security personnel, who used lathis and tear gas to disperse crowds attempting to move towards Parliament. The protestors were demanding the resignation of Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation over NEET exam leak issue.

SC to hear pleas on police action against students

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to hear on July 27 two separate petitions alleging police excesses on students protesting against the NEET paper leak. The matter was mentioned before a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana. Senior advocates Shyam Divan and Gopal Sankaranarayanan mentioned the matter.

Urging the bench to list the matter for hearing, Sankaranarayanan said both the pleas have been filed and they have been numbered by the apex court registry. Students have been staging protests in several states against the paper



leak. The Cockroach Janta Party-led march on July 20 in Delhi witnessed clashes between protesters and security personnel, who used lathis and tear gas to disperse crowds attempting to move towards Parliament.

The protestors were demanding the resignation of Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation over NEET exam leak issue.

iexceed

Appzillon™

AI Powered Digital Banking Solutions

WWW.i-exceed.com

Odisha: HCLTech to invest ₹14,257 cr to set up data center



IT major HCLTech, in partnership with AI firm Sarvam and the Odisha Government, will set up its first AI data centre in the upcoming Odisha Sovereign AI Park, with a planned capital outlay of ₹14,257 crore.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to this effect was signed by HCLTech, Sarvam, and the Odisha Government in the presence of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, HCLTech Chairperson Roshni Nadar Malhotra, HCLTech CEO & MD C Vijayakumar, and Sarvam Co-Founder Pratyush Kumar.

"... Relating to its proposed entry into the full-stack AI market, HCLTech.... plans to set up its first AI data centre in the upcoming Odisha Sovereign AI Park.

"The AI data centre will be established in partnership with Sarvam and the Government of Odisha. The planned capital outlay for the project will be ₹14,257 crore, including financial assistance from the Government of Odisha.

Gold drops to ₹1.47 lakh/10g, Silver down ₹5,000 in Delhi



Gold prices dropped by ₹2,000 to ₹1.47 lakh per 10 grams in the National Capital on Friday due to profit-taking by traders.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity depreciated by ₹2,000 to ₹1,47,200 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes), marking its second straight day of losses. Gold traded at ₹1,49,200 per 10 grams on Thursday, according to local traders.

Silver prices also declined by ₹5,000 to ₹2,24,700 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) due to heavy selling. The white metal had settled at ₹2,29,700 per kg in the previous session.

Traders said bullion prices remained under pressure in the domestic market amid weak buying sentiment.

However, in the international markets, spot gold gained marginally to trade at \$4,063.70 per ounce and silver rose nearly 2 per cent to \$58.59 per ounce.

"Spot gold traded higher marginally around \$4,060 per ounce in the overseas markets as Brent oil has retreated nearly 4 per cent following a spike of 12 per cent in five days," said Praveen Singh, Head of Commodities at Mirae Asset ShareKhan.

Rupee recovers 18 paise to settle at 96.55 against US dollar

The rupee recovered 18 paise to close at 96.55 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday amid likely intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

A combination of factors, including heightened tensions in West Asia, FI outflows, and sustained negative sentiments at the domestic equity markets, maintained pressure on the local unit, according to forex traders.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened weaker at 96.81 and traded in the range of 96.30-96.81 before eventually settling at 96.55 (provisional), up 18 paise from its previous close.

The rupee ended 20 paise weaker at 96.73 against the US dollar on Thursday. The US military announced the 13th night of strikes on Thursday against Iran as clashes escalated over shipping routes. The attacks came after Yemen's Houthi rebels said they attacked two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea, potentially widening the Iran war as international oil topped \$100 a barrel.



India engaged with US for negotiating trade pact: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Government is studying all the developments and remains engaged with the US in the framework of negotiating a bilateral trade agreement (BTA), Parliament was informed on Friday.

In a written reply to the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada said that the Government remains in continuous consultation with relevant stakeholders, including farmers, agricultural exporters, industry bodies, ministries/departments and export promotion councils on issues related to import tariffs imposed by the US.

The Government has also taken into account inputs received from States on issues related to import tariffs

imposed by the US, with a view to safeguarding India's trade interests, he said.

The India-US BTA negotiations were launched following the meeting of leaders from both sides in February 2025, where the two countries adopted the "Mission 500" objective of expanding bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030.

Negotiations continued through multiple rounds, and the two countries announced a framework for an interim trade deal on February 2, 2026.

Following the US Supreme Court judgement dated February 20, 2026, invalidating reciprocal tariffs, reciprocal tariffs are no longer in force.

However, the US Government has issued Executive Orders imposing 10 per cent tariffs on certain



File photo

products from all countries under section 122 of the US Trade Act 197.

"The Government is studying all the developments and remains engaged with the US

Government in the framework of negotiations for a BTA which includes recent meetings of negotiating team of both sides in Washington, DC (20-22 April), New Delhi (1-4

June), and the recent visit of the US Trade Representative to New Delhi (22-24 June)," Prasada said.

Replying to another question, the minister said following the implementation of India-SAFTA (South Asia Free Trade Agreement), India's exports to SAFTA increased from about \$5.5 billion in 2005-06 (pre-FTA year) to \$25.8 billion in 2025-26.

Major export destinations include Bangladesh, wherein exports increased from \$1.7 billion in 2005-06 to nearly \$10.6 billion in 2025-26 (41.1 per cent share of SAFTA exports); Nepal, from \$0.9 billion in 2005-06 to \$7.4 billion in 2025-26 (28.9 per cent share); and Sri Lanka, from \$2 billion in 2005-06 to \$5.5 billion in 2025-26 (21.4 per cent share).

He also said ASEAN contin-

ues to be one of India's most important FTA blocs. This pact came into force in January 2010.

India's exports to ASEAN increased from about \$18.1 billion in 2009-10 (pre-FTA year) to \$38.4 billion in 2025-26, more than doubling over the period.

Major markets include Singapore, wherein exports increased from \$7.6 billion in 2009-10 to nearly \$11.9 billion in 2025-26 (30.9 per cent share of ASEAN exports); Malaysia, where exports increased from \$2.8 billion in 2009-10 to over \$6.8 billion in 2025-26 (17.8 per cent share); Vietnam, from \$1.8 billion in 2009-10 to \$6.7 billion in 2025-26 (17.3 per cent share); and Thailand, where exports increased from \$1.7 billion in 2009-10 to US 5.1 billion in 2025-26 (13.2 per cent share).

India, Israel conclude second round of trade pact negotiations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The second round of negotiations for the proposed free trade agreement between India and Israel covering multiple issues such as trade in goods and services, rules of origin, technical barriers, intellectual property rights, customs procedures and trade facilitations has been concluded this week, an official statement said on Friday.

The negotiations were held here during July 20-23.

"The discussions were constructive and forward-looking, with both sides undertaking detailed technical deliberations aimed at narrowing gaps and identi-



fying areas of convergence," the Commerce Ministry said.

It added that India and Israel share complementarities across several sectors and the proposed FTA presents an opportunity to further enhance bilateral trade and deepen economic integration.

"During this round, technical experts from both sides held dedicated techni-

cal sessions covering areas including trade in goods, trade in services, rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, intellectual property rights, customs procedure and trade facilitation, economic cooperation and other chapters under the proposed agreement," it said.

The statement added that both sides remain committed to working towards the early conclusion of a balanced, comprehensive and mutually beneficial FTA which will further expand trade and economic ties between the two countries.

Total merchandise trade between the two countries stood at \$3.93 billion in 2025-26.

10% US tariff to raise landed cost of Indian products, says FIEO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The 10 per cent tariff imposed by the US on imports from India will increase the cost of Indian products in the American markets, though the overall impact should be viewed in the proper competitive perspective rather than through the headline tariff alone, according to exporters.

The United States has imposed a 10 per cent tariff on goods imported from India and 16 other countries as part of its efforts to combat the use of forced labour in the production of such items.

The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO)



has stated that "while the additional 10 per cent Section 301 tariff imposed by the United States on imports from India will increase the landed cost of Indian products, the overall impact should be viewed in the proper competitive perspective rather than through the headline tariff alone".

SC Ralhan, President, FIEO,

said the fact that India has been placed in the lower 10 per cent tariff category, while several competing exporting nations including China, Vietnam, Thailand, Türkiye, UAE, Brazil, South Africa and others face a higher tariff of 12.5 per cent.

This has helped India secure a relatively favourable position compared to many of its global competitors, he said.

Ralhan added that many of India's direct competitors in labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, garments, leather and footwear, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Malaysia, have also been subjected to the same 10 per cent tariff.

Adani Energy Solutions bags ₹8,500 crore transmission project in Andhra Pradesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Adani Energy Solutions Ltd (AESL) on Friday said it has secured a ₹8,500 crore transmission project in Andhra Pradesh.

The project was awarded through a tariff-based competitive bidding (TBCB) framework of the Centre where AESL emerged as the most competitive bidder, a company statement said.

The transmission system would facilitate integration and supply of power to the proposed green hydrogen and green ammonia projects in the Vizag area, catering to an estimated demand of 4,500 MW.



It will also support the growing load requirement expected from the Pendurthi-Vizag region, where a new wave of data centre and digital infrastructure investments is taking shape.

The project will be housed

under a Special Purpose Vehicle, Vizag Power Transmission Ltd.

Its scope involves the establishment of a 4×1500 MVA, 765/400 kV GIS substation at Pendurthi (Vizag) and a 3×1500 MVA, 765/400 kV Khammam-II substation.

With this, AESL will add 1,582 ckm (circuit kilometre) of transmission lines and 10,500 MVA of transformation capacity, taking its overall transmission network to 29,531 ckm and 1,33,675 MVA of transformation capacity.

"The Vizag transmission project is an important step in building the energy backbone for India's next generation of industrial growth. It will support the development of green hydrogen and green ammonia capacity in Andhra Pradesh, while also strengthening the grid for emerging digital infrastructure demand in the Pendurthi-Vizag region," Kandarp Patel, CEO, AESL, said.

Crude oil futures ease 2% to ₹8,876/barrel on profit-booking



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Crude oil futures fell 2 per cent to ₹8,876 per barrel on Friday as traders booked profits after the recent rally, even as global benchmark Brent hovered near the \$100-a-barrel mark amid geopolitical tensions in West Asia that kept supply concerns alive.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), crude for the August delivery declined by ₹148, or 1.64 per cent, to ₹8,876 per barrel in a business turnover of 17,232 lots.

The September contract also eased ₹154, or 1.79 per cent, to ₹8,426 per barrel in 2,125 lots.

Traders said profit-booking capped gains after crude prices logged their strongest weekly rally in months on fears of supply disruptions.

In the international markets, Brent oil futures for September delivery traded marginally lower at \$100.28 per barrel on the Intercontinental Exchange,

while West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for the same month contract fell 0.53 per cent to \$91.70 per barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

"Brent crude prices are holding near \$100 after crossing the level for the first time in two months this week," said Anindya Banerjee, Head of Commodity and Currency Research, Kotak Securities.

He said the rally was triggered by Yemen's Houthi attacks on two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea, as well as US President Donald Trump's threat of a massive strike on Iran, and Kazakhstan's suspension of exports through the Caspian pipeline following drone strikes.

Banerjee said investors are watching the Babel-Mandeb Strait, warning that any significant disruption to shipping through the Red Sea could propel Brent towards \$120 per barrel, as global oil inventories have been depleted by months of continuous drawdown.

SEBI imposes penalties of ₹7.5 cr on 21 entities in Axis MF front-running case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Capital market regulator SEBI on Friday levied fines totalling ₹7.5 crore on 21 entities, including Axis Mutual Fund's former fund manager Viresh Joshi, and barred them from the securities markets for up to seven years in a case related to front-running allegations.

Front-running refers to an illegal practice in the stock market where an entity trades on the basis of advance information from a broker or analyst before the



information has been made available to their clients.

Also, the ₹30.56 crore impounded in compliance with the directions of the interim order dated February 28, 2023, shall be

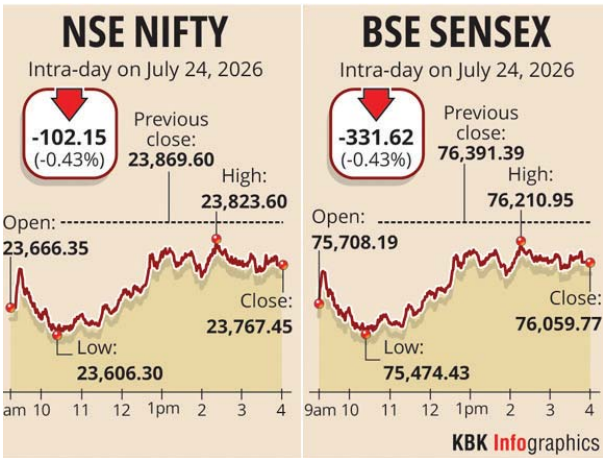
treated as the disgorgement amount for all the entities, the regulator said in a 146-page final order.

The regulator has also directed these entities to pay 12 per cent annual interest on the disgorgement amount.

SEBI said it had concluded that "Viresh, Sumit Desai, Pranav Vora, Vaibhav and along with the other noticees, namely, the Kurani Group apart from Prijesh, the Marfatia Group and the Jajoo Group colluded to execute a scheme to front run the orders of the Big Client".

Market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Friday, extending the losing streak for the fifth consecutive session, as investors remained cautious due to rising oil prices amid geopolitical tensions in West Asia and renewed concerns over US trade tariffs. Fresh foreign fund outflows and selling in blue-chip HDFC Bank also dented market sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 331.62 points, or 0.43 per cent, to settle at 76,059.77. During the day, it tanked 916.96 points, or 1.20 per cent, to 75,474.43. The 50-share



FROM THE WORLD

PAKISTAN

Imran son seeks global help

Former prime minister Imran Khan's son has urged the international community to intervene claiming his father, who has not been incarcerated for 1,100 days, urgently needs medical attention. Currently lodged in solitary confinement at the Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi, the 73-year-old international cricketer turned politician was arrested on August 5, 2023 after an Islamabad trial court found him guilty of corrupt practices in the Tosha Khana (national treasury) case. Imran Khan has been subsequently arrested and convicted in several other cases leading to continued incarceration. "It has now been around 1,100 days since my father, Imran Khan, was imprisoned, and my brother and I haven't heard his voice since March. For months, we've been denied contact with him," Kasim said. (PTI)

CHINA

Attacks Philippine ships again

Chinese coast guard ships fired powerful water cannons at two Philippine fisheries vessels on Friday in the South China Sea, the third confrontation in the disputed waters this week as Manila hosted annual ministerial meetings at which Asian and Western Governments renewed their alarm over China's maritime aggression. The latest high seas faceoff happened near the Scarborough Shoal, the Philippine coast guard said, adding that a Chinese coast guard ship also approached a Philippine Government fisheries vessel, the BRP Datux Paduhinog, at a distance of seven meters (23 feet) in what it called a "reckless" maneuver that created a serious risk of collision.The Chinese coast guard reiterated China's sovereign control over the fishing atoll and said it took control measures against several Philippines vessels illegally operating in the waters. (AP)

Drones target US base in Iraq, conflict escalates

JULIA FRANKEL/ STELLA MARTANY
■ Irbil

Drones carrying explosives targeted a city in northern Iraq where US forces are stationed and sirens rang out in Bahrain on Friday, hours after the American military said it finished its 13th night of strikes against Iran. The conflict has flared again over the past week, as the US pounded Iran while Tehran attacked ships in the Strait of Hormuz and targeted US assets and allies in the region. The strait, which is a crucial passage for the world's energy supplies, is at the centre of the latest fighting since Iranian attacks can effectively shut the waterway, sending fuel prices soaring worldwide and causing widespread economic turmoil. The Iranian-allied Houthi rebels added further pressure this week by targeting two Saudi tankers in the Red Sea, making good on a threat to cut off an alternative route for the region's oil. Despite the war's unpopularity — and its widespread damage to Iran and the global economy - the latest round of fighting has no clear off-ramp. Iran's Health Ministry said 55 people have been killed and over 600 wounded in strikes in recent weeks. The US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28 and have offered shifting goals for the war, including toppling Tehran's Government and eliminating its nuclear programme. But the conflict has devolved into a fight for control of the Strait of Hormuz - with Iran apparently hoping to win concessions by inflicting damage on the global economy and the US trying to limit that damage. US-led forces intercepted and shot down five explosive-laden drones over Irbil on Friday morning, according to security officials in northern Iraq. "Fortunately, the incident caused no casualties or damage," they said. An Associated Press journalist heard at least seven blasts in the city, the capital of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region, and saw at least four plumes of black smoke rising from areas near or inside a base at the city's airport that hosts US forces. Flights continued as normal at the airport, the state-run Iraqi News Agency reported, citing the facility's director. US military officials in Iraq did not respond to a request for comment. In recent years, the US maintained about 2,500 troops in Iraq for training and to conduct operations against the Islamic State group with Iraq's military. Many of those have withdrawn, but a small contingent of military advisers and others remains - many of whom have moved to Irbil. Iran's Revolutionary Guard urged people in neighbouring countries to stay away from bases with American troops while asking people to report the places where they are stationed, according to a statement read out on state TV. As the US has bombed Iran, Tehran has targeted several countries in the region that host American troops. Bahrain, which is home to the US Navy's 5th fleet, said it intercepted and shot down Iranian aerial attacks on Friday. It did not say if there were any casualties or damage. US strikes overnight hit a naval base for the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard in the north of Iran, the semiofficial news outlets Fars and ISNA reported Friday morning. Blasts from US bombardment overnight were also reported on Iran's Qeshm Island, a base for naval assets including drone boats that Iran can use to attack vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, as well as in Isfahan province, home to a major Iranian air base and one of Iran's nuclear sites. (AP)



The Iranian-allied Houthi rebels added further pressure this week by targeting two Saudi tankers in the Red Sea, making good on a threat to cut off an alternative route for the region's oil. Despite the war's unpopularity

— and its widespread damage to Iran and the global economy - the latest round of fighting has no clear off-ramp. Iran's Health Ministry said 55 people have been killed and over 600 wounded in strikes in recent weeks. The US and Israel

Sri Lanka welcomes US tariff reduction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Colombo

Sri Lanka on Friday welcomed the US decision of lowering to 10 per cent the tariff on goods imported from the island nation saying it will send a strong signal to investors about the country's economic reforms. The US imposed the 10 per cent tariff on goods imported from Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and 13 other countries as part of a wider action against products made using forced labour. The decision to lower tariffs from 12.5 per cent to a minimum of 10 per cent was a result of Sri Lanka's decision to ban the import of goods produced using



forced labour. "The move is expected to deliver positive results for exporters, while reflecting Sri Lanka's ongoing commitment to fair trade, responsible business practices, and internationally accepted labour standards," a statement from the Ministry of Finance said. The tariff reduction will enhance the competitiveness of Sri Lankan exports in the US market, sending a strong signal to investors and buyers about the country's dedication to sustainable economic reforms, it added. The island's main trade chamber, reacting to the US decision, said, "The reduction will provide some relief to exporters navigating a highly competitive and uncertain market place." Under the 'Trump Tariffs' announced in early 2025, Sri Lanka was billed to pay a reciprocal tariff rate of 44 per cent, which if implemented, was to have a devastating effect as the US is Sri Lanka's single largest export market. The local exporters then feared that the 44 per cent tariff would have been non-competitive and would push

Sri Lankan exports out of the US. Later, Sri Lanka's tariff was brought down to 20 per cent alongside those of Vietnam, Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia, and Cambodia. In February this year, the US Supreme Court struck down and invalidated the reciprocal tariffs. In early June, the US imposed a 10 per cent tariff for 15 countries that had enforced forced labour import prohibitions and a 12.5 per cent for 45 countries with no such prohibitions. On July 10, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake gazetted Sri Lanka's prohibition on the importation of goods produced using forced labour.



Delegates pose for a group photograph during the High-Level Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) in Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines PTI

Pakistan expresses concern over recent tensions in West Asia

SAJJAD HUSSAIN ■ Islamabad

Pakistan on Friday expressed concern over the recent West Asia tensions and called for dialogue, restraint and de-escalation by all sides to achieve peace in the region. Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said this in a meeting with his Iranian counterpart Seyyed Abbas Araghchi on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, the Foreign Office said. Pakistan, which previously mediated a ceasefire between the US and Iran, is making efforts to prevent the collapse of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which was signed last month between the two countries. The Islamabad MoU is a 14-point interim peace deal aimed at ending the war between Iran and the US. The two countries have engaged in hostilities over the past week with the US attacking Iran and Tehran targeting ships



Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar

in the Strait of Hormuz and American assets in the region According to the Foreign Office, the two ministers reaffirmed the close and long-standing ties between Pakistan and Iran and reviewed the evolving regional situation. Dar, who is also Pakistan's deputy prime minister, expressed "deep concern over recent regional tensions and underscored the importance of dialogue, restraint, de-escalation by all sides, and sustained diplomatic engagement to achieve lasting peace and stability", it said. (PTI)

UK PM begins work from new No 10 North

ADITI KHANNA ■ London

British Prime Minister Andy Burnham began work from the new No 10 North in Manchester on Friday, which is designed to split the Government's power base out of 10 Downing Street in London. The new northern England branch of the PM's office at Heron House in Manchester was declared "open for business" as Burnham arrived to chair the first meeting of the National Economic Council of senior ministers, mayors and business leaders. He plans to spend at least one day a week at No 10 North, which he said would be more than just an office. "It's not just a new office. Through this place, power is going to flow, energy is going to flow, new ideas are going to come through," said Burnham, in his address to the staff. "I cannot tell you what a proud moment this is. I think this might be the best day of my life. "My generation of people growing up here, and it's true of places all over the country, to get on in life you had to leave where you were because things weren't here... that is what No 10 North is all about: putting power in every postcode so that people can turn things around for themselves and make changes just as this great city has done and the other English cities are doing through devolution. "Turning things round because of that ability to be able to do more for themselves," he said. Burnham, who took charge as Prime Minister on Monday, was joined in Manchester by Chancellor John Healey and Louise Haigh, who is overseeing the "Office for the Prime Minister and Cabinet" – a new department that will encompass 10 Downing Street, No 10 North and the Cabinet Office. "This isn't about Government working in its old way, it's about the Treasury, No 10, close together, the heart of Government, then driving the same mission from here right out into all parts of the country," he stressed. (PTI)



going to flow, energy is going to flow, new ideas are going to come through," said Burnham, in his address to the staff. "I cannot tell you what a proud moment this is. I think this might be the best day of my life. "My generation of people growing up here, and it's true of places all over

the country, to get on in life you had to leave where you were because things weren't here... that is what No 10 North is all about: putting power in every postcode so that people can turn things around for themselves and make changes just as this great city has done and the other English cities are doing

Seaplane carrying 11 crashes into island north of Seattle, all aboard are rescued

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Seattle

A seaplane carrying 11 people crashed near an island tourist destination north of Seattle and caught on fire, prompting a quick, successful rescue by multiple agencies via boat and air to get injured passengers and the pilot to hospitals. Videos posted on social media show the aircraft banking to one side as it flies low over the water near some boats close to shore. The plane makes a hard landing, first on one float, then briefly skips into the air before hitting the rocky coast. The person taking the video gasps as a crunching sound is heard when the plane



crashes just out of sight. Witnesses rushed to help. People can be seen getting out of the plane as smoke rises before bright orange flames engulf the fuselage, which came to rest partially submerged against a large

rock. "An Urgent Marine Information Broadcast was issued to mariners in the area, and numerous good Samaritan vessels responded to assist," the US Coast Guard said Friday in a statement about the crash, which hap-

pened. The crash, which involved a pilot and 10 passengers, happened more than two weeks after a seaplane carrying eight people made a rough landing in New York City's East River, causing minor injuries. In 2022, federal regulators ordered seaplanes to be inspected following a deadly crash in the waters of Puget Sound northwest of Seattle. Thursday's crash happened in Shallow Bay near Sucia Island in the northern San Juan Islands. The archipelago between Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia, is a popular summer vacation spot known for its ferries, whale watching and hiking.

Poland's biggest Opposition party faces split over tensions about its direction

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Warsaw

Poland's main Opposition party faces a split in a disagreement over its future direction, with the party leader saying on Friday that more than 30 lawmakers have effectively left. The conservative nationalist Law and Justice party ran Poland from 2015 to 2023, when the current liberal Government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk took power. During that time, it tightened control over the courts by appointing loyalist judges to higher courts and punishing critics with disciplinary action. The Tusk Government's efforts to reverse those changes have repeatedly been blocked by two successive presidents sympathetic to Law and Justice. Still, tensions within Law and Justice have simmered as a national election next year approaches, and it faces a challenge from parties further to its right. Longtime



leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski and Mateusz Morawiecki, Poland's prime minister from 2017 to 2023, have been at the centre of the spat. Morawiecki represents a relatively moderate faction and in April set up an association called Development Plus, which many in the party view with suspicion.

UNESCO adds West Bank site, Lebanese castles to World Heritage list

KIM TONG-HYUNG ■ Seoul

A United Nations committee voted on Friday to inscribe a major archaeological site in the West Bank and a set of castles in southern Lebanon as World Heritage sites, despite objections from Israel, which had urged the committee to reject the bids. The decision at a UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation meeting in South Korea came days after Israel's Foreign Ministry urged the committee to reject efforts to designate the small West Bank town of Sebastia and the Lebanese castles, calling the nominations a "weaponisa-



tion of cultural heritage." At their meeting in Busan, members of the UNESCO committee decided to place Sebastia and five castles in Lebanon's Mount Amel area on both the World Heritage

List and the List of World Heritage in Danger after reviewing the nominations on an emergency basis. Sebastia, a hilltop town about 10 kilometers (6 miles) northwest of Nablus in the

Israeli-occupied West Bank, is identified by scholars as ancient Samara, capital of the biblical Kingdom of Israel. The area's archaeological remains span the Iron Age, Roman, Byzantine and Islamic periods. Christian and Islamic tradition holds that John the Baptist was buried there, according to a UNESCO website. Sebastia's nomination, first submitted by the Palestinian delegation to UNESCO in 2012, argued that World Heritage status was needed to help preserve the site, saying it remains largely undeveloped under Israeli control and requires additional conservation despite attracting

tourists. The designation comes as Israel, which does not recognize a Palestinian state, moves to expropriate large swaths of land around the site, even as it faces pressure to crack down on violence by Israeli settlers in the Palestinian territory. The five castles in the Mount Amel region are recognized for their layered architectural heritage, combining Crusader, Ayyubid, Mamluk and local influences, reflecting the evolution of fortified architecture over nearly nine centuries, according to a UNESCO description. In Tuesday's statement, Israel's Foreign Ministry accused the Palestinian delegation of

waging a "hostile, one-sided campaign" at UNESCO by falsely portraying Sebastia as an area facing an emergency, calling the effort a political attempt to "erase the site's profound, well-documented Jewish and Christian history." Israel withdrew from UNESCO in 2019, accusing the organization of being biased against it and of downplaying its historical ties to the Holy Land. Israel's Foreign Ministry also took objection to efforts to list Beaufort Castle in southern Lebanon as a World Heritage site. The castle was part of the nomination covering five castles in the

Mount Amel area. The ministry said Hezbollah, an Iran-backed militant group, has turned Beaufort Castle into a military stronghold by building tunnels beneath the site and launching rockets from the area, and accused UNESCO of ignoring those developments. UNESCO and the Lebanese embassy in South Korea declined to comment on the Israeli claims about Hezbollah. The UNESCO committee placed another Lebanese site, Tyre, an ancient Phoenician city in the southern part of the country, on the list of world heritage sites in danger. (AP)

South Africa mourns veteran freedom fighter Shanthie Naidoo

FAKIR HASSEN ■ Johannesburg

South Africa is mourning the passing of anti-apartheid activist Shanthie Naidoo, who died peacefully on Friday at the age of 91. A central figure in the liberation struggle, Naidoo was one of the grandchildren of Gandhian lieutenant Thambi Naidoo, as the then young lawyer Mohandas Gandhi, later to become the Mahatma, led the fight against laws discriminating against Indians at the turn of the 19th century. During the height of the apartheid-era state repression, Naidoo endured 371 days of solitary confinement and brutal interrogation, yet steadfastly refused to betray her comrades, most notably her friend and political sister, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the former wife of Nelson Mandela. Naidoo was born in Pretoria on March 6, 1935, directly into the frontline of South African resistance. Her grandfather, Thambi Naidoo, was a key lieutenant to Mahatma Gandhi during the early satyagraha campaigns, and her parents, Roy and Ama Naidoo, made their family home in Doornfontein. (PTI)



4 Palestinians, 1 Israeli dead after West Bank shooting

JULIA FRANKEL ■ Jerusalem

Four Palestinians and one Israeli were killed in a shooting in the northern West Bank, health officials said on Friday. Several more people were injured.

The circumstances of the shooting, which occurred near the city of Nablus, were not immediately clear. Violence in the Israeli-occupied territory has flared in recent days. The Palestinian Health Ministry in Ramallah said the four Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces.

Israel's Magen David Adom rescue services did not say who had killed the Israeli man. Palestinian health officials said they were treating four injured Palestinians, three in critical condition. Israel's rescue service said two injured Israelis were being airlifted out of the West Bank.

The Israeli military said in a statement that soldiers responded to a report of an attack on Israeli civilians hiking near the settlement of Havat Gilad, west of Nablus. It said it had imposed a "temporary cordon" around Nablus and the nearby Palestinian village of Tell.



More than a dozen gunshots can be heard in the footage, which is less than a minute long.

The military said the suspect was one of the people killed in the field. It did not respond to questions about why soldiers killed the

other men — all of whom were related — or how long after the original altercation the killings took place.

Later, army chief Eyal Zamir said he was sending more troops to the occupied West Bank, where soldiers have encircled Tell and the nearby city of Nablus. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also said Israel would "act forcefully" following the incident. (AP)

Bangladesh President Shahabuddin resigns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dhaka

Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin, a former ally of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, resigned on Friday, two years ahead of the end of his tenure. "I am suffering from various health complications," the 76-year-old leader was quoted as saying by The Daily Star newspaper.

He was responding to a question about the reason for his resignation. A Bangabhaban — the president's house - spokesman said that Shahabuddin's representatives have left his office for the parliament carrying his resignation letter.

The resignation letter would be submitted to parliamentary Speaker Hafizuddin Ahmed, who would serve as Acting President in accordance with the Bangladesh Constitution until a new President is elected.

"I can't make any official comment on the resignation until the Speaker receives the letter," the spokesman said. His resignation



Mohammed Shahabuddin

comes amid speculations that Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's Government was uncomfortable with the largely titular head of the state, according to media reports.

A 1971 Liberation War veteran and former lower judiciary judge, Shahabuddin had taken the oath in April 2023 for a five-year term.

He was elected to the highest office by the previous parliament and is the only person still holding his constitutional position, long after the violent July-August 2024 student-led street protest that toppled Hasina's Awami League Government.

Guyana ferry death toll rises to 72 amid salvage effort



BERT WILKINSON ■ Georgetown

The confirmed death toll from the recent capsizing of a state ferry off Guyana's coast rose to 72, with more bodies recovered as a multinational team struggled to salvage the partially submerged vessel. Of the estimated 179 people aboard, 76 people were rescued. The Government has estimated that 100 may have died in the accident, which would make it the worst marine tragedy on record for the South American nation. Prime Minister Mark Phillips said late Thursday that crews have widened the search area and are determined to find all those who were aboard so loved ones can bury them with dignity. "The Government of Guyana continues to stand in solidarity with all those

affected during this difficult time and will ensure that every available resource is deployed until the operation is brought to a safe and dignified conclusion," he said.

The MV Barima departed the capital, Georgetown, on Saturday and was headed to Port Kaituma when it began taking on water and capsized in Atlantic waters off the Essequibo coast. Phillips said that the ferry was not insured, and that the Government is paying for the funeral and other related expenses.

Death toll rises as international crews try to salvage capsized ferry in Guyana Divers from countries including Brazil and Trinidad are trying to salvage the vessel, with officials saying they hope to inspect it for any possible damage that could shed light on what happened. (AP)

India to fund portal for United Nations for global ICT security

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ United Nations

India has said it will fund a portal for the UN for global ICT security, which will bridge the capacity gap that continues to separate developed and developing States.

India also said digital technology benefits can only be fully realised when accompanied by robust security and the capability to defend against emerging threats.

Scaled, demand-driven capacity-building for Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for the

Global South is both achievable and effective when pursued with sustained political will, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish said.

He was addressing the Plenary Session of the Global Mechanism on ICTs in the Context of International Security on Thursday when he also welcomed the establishment of a Dedicated Thematic Group on cyber capacity building.

The first substantive plenary meeting from July 20-24 of the UN's permanent cyber mechanism advanced plan for the



global cyber capacity-building system with member states discussing topics, including funding, implementation and

fellowships for women.

"It is with particular happiness that my delegation recalls that the proposal for a

dedicated Global ICT Security Cooperation and Capacity-Building Portal was originally an Indian initiative, first tabled in 2022," Parvathaneni said.

"We are pleased to announce today that, having seen this idea through years of deliberation to consensus and eventual adoption, India will be providing the entire funding towards the operationalisation of this Portal as a Portal of the United Nations so that concrete, tangible action can finally follow years of discussion," he said.

India's support will help enable the technical estab-

lishment of the Portal and its maintenance, ensuring that the platform envisaged, comprising a repository of resources, a capacity-building calendar, a needs-based catalogue of opportunities and an interactive discussion board, can move from design to reality, he said.

CERT India will undertake the technical consultancy work required for the Portal's testing and infrastructure development, he announced. CERT-In is India's national nodal agency for responding to computer security incidents as and when they happen.

Deposed Türkiye's Opposition leader forms new party

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Ankara

The deposed leader of Türkiye's main Opposition party on Friday formed a new political party to challenge President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, months after he was removed from his post by a court order that his supporters slammed as a political move to weaken the Opposition.

Ozgur Ozel and 90 other legislators formally resigned from the Republican People's Party, or CHP, and then registered the new political party — named the "New Party" — with the Interior Ministry.

"May it be auspicious for our homeland, our nation, and our party," Ozel said in a video posted on X, showing him signing a document formalising his resignation from the CHP, Türkiye's oldest political party.

In May, a court of appeal annulled a 2023 party congress vote that appointed Ozel as CHP chair. The court decision, which cited alleged irregularities, reinstated the unpopular Kemal Kilicdaroglu as leader. Ozel's ouster sparked outrage among many CHP supporters. Ozel, 51, had succeeded the 77-year-old Kilicdaroglu after



Ozgur Ozel

13 years of what many analysts described as ineffective Opposition to Erdogan.

Ozel's supporters view his ouster as part of a wider crackdown on the opposition. In the past two years, hundreds of elected mayors and other officials from CHP-run municipalities have been detained as part of criminal investigations, mostly into alleged corruption.

They include Ekrem Imamoglu, the mayor of Istanbul, who is widely considered the strongest potential challenger to Erdogan.

Imamoglu, who represents the CHP, has been imprisoned since March last year and faces criminal cases that could result in decades-long sentences.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz reshuffles Cabinet

GEIR MOULSON ■ Berlin

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz reshuffled top posts on Friday as he tries to boost the fortunes of his deeply unpopular Government ahead of regional elections in which a far-right party could get its first state governor.

Merz took office less than 15 months ago with pledges to reform and turn around Germany's economy, Europe's biggest, after years of stagnation. But that economic turnaround has been slow to start. And the middle-of-the-road coalition of Merz's centre-right Union bloc and the centre-left Social Democrats, two traditional rivals, has yet to persuade voters that it can produce results.

That has resulted in Merz's popularity sinking to rock-bottom levels,



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz

while the far-right Alternative for Germany, or AfD, has gained support on the back of widespread discontent.

Merz took the opportunity to make a series of changes after a senior ally quit as the leader of his party's parliamentary group over personal conduct that undermined his credibility. Merz plans to put his chief of staff, Thorsten Frei, in

that job. The German leader said Health Minister Nina Warken will take Frei's place at the chancellery, a post that is key to the smooth functioning of the Government. She will be the first woman to take that job. Another close ally, Carsten , the general secretary of Merz's Christian Democratic Union party, will become health minister.

Merz said there will be further Cabinet changes, but didn't offer details. He said those decisions will take "a few days yet, and perhaps more time." "The personnel changes follow a clear line," he said. "We want a Government that works with great vigour and pleasure and also represents the personal diversity of our society and politics. We are a reform Government and want to continue showing that." (AP)

Democrats to finalise their 2028 presidential nominating calendar

JOEY CAPPELLETTI/MEG KINNARD ■ Washington

Democrats are poised to lock in the party's 2028 presidential nominating schedule on Friday, likely cementing a dramatic break from decades of tradition by keeping Iowa off the top of the calendar and elevating more racially diverse States.

Either South Carolina or Nevada is expected to go first, and each state has aggressively campaigned for the coveted spot.

The decision by the Democratic National Committee's Rules and



Bylaws Committee will need to be approved by the full organization, which is scheduled to meet in August. The overhaul reflects

Democrats' effort to give greater influence to states that better mirror the party's diverse coalition, particularly Black and Latino voters,

after years of a calendar led by Iowa and New Hampshire, two states with overwhelmingly white electorates. "I think that it is good that we don't take the order for granted, and just copy and paste it every cycle," said New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a progressive considered a potential 2028 candidate.

The decision will also shape the opening stage of what is expected to be a crowded Democratic presidential primary. Without an incumbent or clear frontrunner, the states that vote first could once again play an out-

sized role in determining which candidates gain momentum, attract donors and emerge as viable contenders. Republicans still need to do their calendar. They're expected to stick with their traditional early-state lineup led off by Iowa and New Hampshire.

President Joe Biden successfully pushed to move South Carolina to the front of Democrats' 2024 calendar after the state revived his struggling 2020 presidential campaign. South Carolina has long been the first Southern contest and has served as a key test of candi-

dates' support among Black voters. But with Democrats now preparing for a wide-open presidential primary, the fight over the calendar has become more contentious.

In May, Democratic leaders in a handful of southern states lobbied for South Carolina to reprise its role as the party's first-in-the-nation contest holder, arguing in a letter to the DNC that the state best represents the initial playing field for presidential candidates to build the coalitions needed to win and serves as "a moral and political compass for our party and our nation." (AP)

Murmu urges Romanian to participate in India's growth

ASHWINI SHRIVASTAVA ■ Bucharest

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday asked Romanian companies to participate actively in India's growth story, citing significant untapped potential in economic partnership between the two countries.

Addressing the India-Romania Business Forum, she said India is today one of the world's fastest-growing major economies. "Our economic growth is driven by sound macroeconomic fundamentals, a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem, a large and skilled workforce, and sustained commitment to reforms," Murmu said.

India is undergoing a remarkable transformation, emerging as a global leader



President Droupadi Murmu paid tribute at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, at Bucharest, Romania. The monument embodies Romania's gratitude to its fallen soldiers and is a national symbol of patriotism, unity and peace

in technology, innovation, and sustainable development and experiencing significant success in sectors like renewable energy, digital technology, information technology, telecom, auto and auto-components, pharma and biotechnology, space and fintech, the President said. Romania, with its strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, highly skilled human resources, advanced industrial capabilities and strong integration with the European Union, remains a natural and valuable partner for India, she said.

Romania serves not only as an important destination for investment but also as a gateway to the wider European market, Murmu said. "There is significant untapped potential in our economic partnership.

Bilateral trade has expanded steadily over the years, but it remains well below its true potential," the President said.

Indian companies are exploring Romania as a strategic entry point to the European market, while Romanian businesses can explore new opportunities in India, she said.

"I am confident that our business communities will seize these emerging opportunities and transform them into successful commercial partnerships.

I also encourage Romanian companies to participate actively in India's growth story," Murmu said. She said our businesses can build resilient supply chains, generate employment, promote innovation and create sustainable prosperity for our peoples. (PTI)

Canada ready to respond if Trump's new tariffs go into affect: Carney

JIM MORRIS ■ Vancouver

Prime Minister Mark Carney said that Canada is intensifying negotiations with the United States to reach a comprehensive trade deal but is prepared to respond should President Donald Trump's threat of 50 per cent tariffs on Canadian goods comes into affect.

The new tariffs, announced by Trump on Monday, are scheduled to come into effect Aug 19. "If these tariffs, or other measures come into force, there's a full range of things that we can do in that regard," Carney said after meeting with Canada's premiers and territorial leaders in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

Carney said "everything's on the table" if an agreement can't be reached before the tariffs kick in. "We don't need to respond in advance," he said. "In fact, I think it would be counterproductive at this stage to respond in advance." The new tariffs cover a wide range of goods, including honey, liquor, cement, dairy products, some wood



products, hockey sticks and other items. They exclude energy products, potash, fish and critical minerals, but would include goods previously protected from import taxes by the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA.

That 2020 trade pact was not renewed by the US, triggering a new set of negotiations that could run until 2036. (AP)

PROSPECT



Former CAG Vinod Rai unveiling a coffee table book titled 'Vinod Rai, Essence and Times' which is a collection of photos, stories of the bureaucratic journey as well as his early life authored by former spokesperson of CAG BS Chauhan.

Flipkart partners with India Post for parcel delivery

E-commerce firm Flipkart on Friday said it has partnered with the Department of Posts for the delivery of parcels to consumers through India Post.

Through this partnership, Flipkart will gain access to the Department of Posts' vast network of over 1.6 lakh post offices. This will enable wider market reach, improved delivery efficiency and enhanced serviceability, particularly in remote and rural locations, the e-commerce platform said in a statement. "Under the agreement, the Department of Posts will provide last-mile delivery services for Flipkart shipments across India," the statement said.

As part of the collaboration, Flipkart will utilise India Post's extensive network for parcel delivery services across urban, semi-urban and rural areas, including remote and underserved regions.

Adani Group says no plans to launch an airline

Adani Group on Friday denied media reports and market speculation that it is planning to enter the airline business, calling the claims "entirely baseless and factually incorrect."

"We would like to categorically deny the recent media reports and market speculation suggesting that Adani Enterprises is planning to launch an airline. These reports are entirely baseless and factually incorrect," an Adani Enterprises spokesperson said.

The spokesperson added that Adani Enterprises is not evaluating any proposal to enter the airline business.

SAIL declares financial results for Q1 FY27

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has declared its financial results on Friday for the quarter ending 30th June, 2026.

The company reported strong profitability in Q1FY27, with net profit rising by over 138 per cent compared to the corresponding period last year (CPLY). During Q1FY27, SAIL moderated volumes compared to CPLY by advancing certain scheduled repairs and maintenance during the quarter, a step necessitated by geopolitical volatility that disrupted the supply chain across the globe. This forward looking & planned interven-



tion is expected to support greater production stability and improved performance in the coming quarters.

Commenting on the results of the first quarter of the current financial year,

Chairman & Managing Director, SAIL, Dr Ashok Kumar Panda said, "Amid global uncertainties, the domestic steel industry demonstrated resilience backed by sustained demand

PERFORMANCE OF Q1 OF FY27 AT A GLANCE				
Particulars	Unit	Q1 25-26	Q4 25-26	Q1 26-27
Crude steel production	Million Tonnes	4.85	5.08	4.76
Sales volume	Million Tonnes	4.55	5.32	4.16
Revenue from operations	₹ Crore	25,921	30,813	26,246
Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA)	₹ Crore	2,925	4,762	4,356
Profit before exceptional items and tax	₹ Crore	890	2,653	2,303
Exceptional items	₹ Crore	0	(330)	(144)
Profit before tax (PBT)	₹ Crore	890	2,324	2,159
Profit after tax (PAT)	₹ Crore	685	1,680	1,636

in domestic steel consumption. SAIL, through enhanced operational efficiencies, prudent cost management and focused marketing initia-

tives, has delivered a significantly profitable first quarter in FY27. The company remains confident of leveraging robust manufacturing

capabilities and continues to strengthen performance while capitalising on the sustained domestic steel demand."

Inaugural Assam Premier League set to begin on August 1 with 8 teams in fray

TONY DAS
■ Guwahati

The stage is set for the inaugural season of the Assam Premier League (APL), with eight teams preparing to battle for the coveted title across a packed 23-day cricketing calendar from August 1 to 23, 2026.

The tournament will get underway on August 1, with Charaideo Sunrisers taking on Barpeta Braves in the opening encounter at 2:00 pm. The opening day double-header will then see Tezpur Titans face Dibrugarh Warriors at 7:00 pm.

Season 1 will feature 43 matches, including 40 league-stage encounters, two semi-finals and the grand finale. Each team will face every other side once during the league stage, along with three reverse fixtures, setting up several intriguing rematches and potential rivalries as the race for the top four intensifies. The opening weekend will continue with another exciting double-header on August 2, as Barak Legends take on Nagaon Rangers before Guwahati Royals begin their campaign against Jorhat Stallions in the evening fixture.

Among the matches to watch out for will be the battle between Dibrugarh Warriors and Guwahati Royals, with the two sides meeting twice, first under lights on August 10 and again



on August 18. Charaideo Sunrisers and Guwahati Royals will also face off twice, on August 11 and August 19, setting the stage for another potentially compelling rivalry.

The schedule also throws up a number of repeat contests that could develop into marquee rivalries during the inaugural season. Tezpur Titans and Guwahati Royals meet on August 8 before renewing their rivalry on August 15, while Dibrugarh Warriors and Jorhat Stallions clash on the same two weekends, on August 8 and August 16. Barpeta Braves and Nagaon Rangers will face each other on August 7 and August 16, while Charaideo Sunrisers and Nagaon Rangers meet on August 9 and again on August 17.

The Barpeta Braves-Barak Legends contest will also get a second chapter, with fixtures scheduled for August 9 and August 17.

The final day of the league stage on August 20 could

prove decisive in determining the semi-final line-up, with Tezpur Titans taking on Barak Legends at 2:00 pm before Dibrugarh Warriors face Nagaon Rangers in the final league encounter at 7:00 pm.

The top four teams at the conclusion of the league stage will progress to the semi-finals on August 21. The second and third-placed teams will meet in the first semi-final at 2:00 pm, while the table-toppers will face the fourth-placed side in the second semi-final at 7:00 pm.

Following a break day on August 22, the inaugural Assam Premier League champions will be crowned on Sunday, August 23, with the grand finale scheduled for 7:00 pm. With eight teams representing different parts of Assam and a schedule featuring several repeat match-ups, the inaugural season is poised to create new cricketing rivalries while offering players a competitive platform to showcase their talent.

REC LTD Q1 FY27 profit jumps 23%, declares ₹4.25 interim dividend per share

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Board of Directors of REC Limited on Friday approved the standalone and consolidated financial results for the quarter ended June 30, 2026. REC reported a net profit of ₹4,149 crore for Q1 FY27, up 23 per cent from ₹3,362 crore in Q4 FY26. Net interest income stood at ₹5,212 crore compared to ₹4,961 crore in the previous quarter, registering a growth of 5 per cent.

Despite a dynamic operating environment, the company sustained a healthy net interest margin of 3.34 per cent, reflecting the strength of its lending portfolio and disciplined financial management. REC delivered an annualised earnings per share of ₹63.04 for the quarter ended June 30, 2026.

REC's standalone loan book stood at ₹5.90 lakh crore as on June 30, 2026, the largest for any CPSU-NBFC in India. Net worth grew 15 per cent year-on-year to ₹91,836 crore as on June 30, 2026, aided by growth in profits. The renewable energy portfolio continued to witness robust traction and grew to ₹78,596 crore, constituting 13.32 per cent of the overall loan composition. This reinforces REC's commitment to fostering sustainable infrastructure development and accelerat-



ing the growth of green energy in India. The infrastructure and logistics portfolio grew to ₹59,289 crore, accounting for over 10 per cent of overall loan assets.

Driven by sustained initiatives to improve asset quality, the company reduced its Stage-3 loan assets to total loan portfolio ratio to 0.11 per cent. The Capital Adequacy Ratio stood at 23.06 per cent as on June 30, 2026, against the regulatory minimum of 15 per cent mandated by RBI, indicating ample opportunity to support future growth. In line with its consistent dividend distribution track record, the Board of Directors declared the First Interim Dividend of ₹4.25 per equity share of face value ₹10 each.

The strengthening fundamentals of the Indian power sector have contributed to improved financial position of power utilities, resulting in stronger credit profiles and, consequently, lower provisioning requirements. Reflecting its customer-

centric approach, REC proactively shared these benefits with borrowers by rationalising lending rates, resulting in a yield of 9.55 per cent in Q1 FY 2026-27.

The company was recognised with the 'NBFC of the Year' Award at the 3rd Annual Bharat NBFC & FinTech Summit & Awards 2026 and the 'AI & GenAI Adoption Excellence Award' at the 2nd Bharat PSU Manthan & Excellence Awards 2026, underscoring its strong business performance, digital innovation, and leadership in leveraging advanced technologies.

REC Limited said it is strategically broadening its business footprint through targeted investments in conventional power, renewable energy and infrastructure & logistics development in the country. The company also continues to be a strategic partner to the Government of India in implementing government programmes, policy and reforms and is steadily fostering long-term growth.

Delhi Registrar restores members' rights over stilt parking in Dwarka Housing Society

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCS), Delhi, has set aside resolutions passed by Shakti Cooperative Group Housing Society Ltd, Dwarka, declaring them illegal and unenforceable insofar as they sought to extinguish members' vested rights over stilt parking spaces.

In its order dated July 7, 2026, the RCS held that stilt parking spaces allotted to members between 2000-2003, after payment of approximately ₹77,000 per slot, are transferable and inheritable along with the flats.

The dispute arose from resolutions adopted in the

Society's Annual General Body Meetings of 2019 and 2020, which mandated that stilt parking be treated as part of the common areas and required surrender of such spaces upon transfer of flats.

Members led by Dr Aruna challenged these resolutions, contending that stilt parking had been separately allotted for consideration nearly two decades earlier.

RCS Krishna Kumar Singh (IAS) observed that the Society had collected separate payments, issued receipts and allotment letters, and permitted exclusive use of stilt parking for over 20 years. "Rights which have crystallised through contractual allotment, payment of consideration and long-

standing possession acquire a vested character and cannot subsequently be divested by a mere resolution of the General Body," said the order.

The RCS relied on the principles laid down in the Delhi High Court's ruling in Vijay Gupta vs Nav Nirman CGHS Ltd, which held that once a cooperative society has allotted parking spaces for consideration and such allotments have remained acted upon over a long period, the society cannot subsequently divest members of their accrued rights by passing a resolution. The RCS further clarified that reliance on the Supreme Court's judgement in Dr GN Khajuria vs DDA was misplaced, as the factual and

legal context was distinguishable. The order directs Shakti CGHS Ltd to restore original stilt parking allotments within 15 days; recognise such allotments in all future transfers, succession, or membership changes; and avoid any further action inconsistent with the Delhi Cooperative Societies Act, 2003 and Rules, 2007. The complaint was accordingly allowed, providing relief to members who had contested the society's attempt to redefine their property rights.

The decision underscores that cooperative governance must remain fair, reasonable, and consistent with statutory principles and cannot override vested contractual rights.

Ujjivan SFB to launch the third edition of its Rath Yatra flagship campaign

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhubaneswar

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Limited (Ujjivan SFB) is set to launch the 3rd edition of its Rath Yatra flagship campaign, called 'Bhakti Ra Dori', across Odisha from 20th to 24th July.

This activity is an experiential activation where participants pull a virtual chariot, using the sacred journey of a 'Rath Yatra' experience, as a metaphor for purpose, direction and financial progress.

Ujjivan SFB aims to celebrate Odisha's rich cultural heritage while reinforcing its commitment to empower-



ing aspirations, fostering financial inclusion and build-

ing deeper connections with local communities. The five-

day activation will be hosted across six Ujjivan SFB branches in Odisha.

Commenting on the initiative, Lakshman Velayutham, Chief Marketing Officer, Ujjivan Small Finance Bank, said, "The response to last year's Mann Ki Rath was genuinely heartening. When you meet customers in a space they care about, the connections go far beyond a transaction. This year, we have woven technology into the cultural realm to make it more personal. We want to celebrate Rath Yatra alongside our customers and communities in Odisha, with a renewed sense of faith to realise one's aspirations."

DAILY SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

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

SOLUTION (24.7.26)

6	1	7	4	3	2	8	5	9
5	2	3	6	8	9	7	1	4
4	9	8	1	7	5	2	6	3
8	7	5	9	4	6	1	3	2
2	4	6	8	1	3	9	7	5
1	3	9	5	2	7	4	8	6
3	8	4	2	6	1	5	9	7
9	6	2	7	5	8	3	4	1
7	5	1	3	9	4	6	2	8

DOUBLE CROSSWORD

SATURDAY | JULY 25, 2026

ACROSS

1 Studious exterior of certain males (5)

6 Rod or Kathy, perhaps (5)

9 Reg Cole as an artist (2,5)

10 She is in time (5)

11 Dance with an eccentric bachelor (5)

12 Some artists can make music with it (5)

13 Half the guides in Pennsylvania can't fly! (7)

15 Little chap in a horse box (3)

17 The hard stuff (4)

18 In the red, you want a price cut and a pay increase (6)

19 Where fruit's concerned, loses out (5)

20 Agreement not to fast during an

DOWN

2 Easter puzzle? (6)

3 Deigns to change one's intention (6)

4 Like a fox's grisly end? (3)

5 Bear disaster at Birkenhead (5)

6 Bad situations bringing superficial damage (7)

7 Travel erratically out to the right (4)

8 Tales of a fabulous fellow (6)

12 Brainless as Billy? (5)

13 People who made pictures without a bit of pleasure (5)

14 Explosive part detonated, as is well known (5)

15 Cross this out, roughly, in part (5)

ACROSS

8, In-a word

9, Well spent

13, Leave

14, Notes

15, Im-it-ate

16, Past-t-ives

17, Alitch

18, Get-up

20, Shrug

22, Out-set

23, Bowler

25, L-1st-ing

27, Drilled

30, D-re-ams

31, Follow

32, Cases

35, Dates

36, Sol-V-e

37, Not-iced

39, C-or-sage

41, Clear

42, A-part

43, Object-i-on

44, Cor-king

DOWN

1, Ann(U)als

2, Sweeping

3, Brings round

4, Jet setter

6, Spring roll

7, Ann(als)

10, Sl-opes

11, Str-a-t-its

12, Temper

19, Tellers

21, Rai-me-nt

24, Drawing

26, Time sharer

28, Collector

29, Alter-ed

30, De-D-uce

32, Cut-backs

33, Sed-a-te

34, Ass-erts

38, C-hains

40, Ruby

BRIEFLY

Volpato has tested positive for cocaine, says Police



Cristian Volpato, who represented Australia at the World Cup, has allegedly tested positive for cocaine and also for speeding, New South Wales state police said Friday.

They said the the 22-year-old Volpato, who switched allegiances from Italy to Australia before the World Cup, was allegedly clocked at 50 kilometers per hour (30 miles per hour) over the designated speed limit when police stopped him on Sydney's Anzac Bridge early Friday morning.

He was subjected to a roadside drug test which returned a positive result for cocaine, police said in a statement on Friday.

Volpato made three appearances for the Socceroos at the World Cup.

(AP)

British Open winner Ryan arrives back in New Zealand



Ryan Fox arrived back in New Zealand on Friday after carrying the British Open championship -winner's claret jug from one side of the world to the other, hankering for some sleep and a gourmet pie. Fox was embraced at Auckland airport by his father, former All Blacks rugby player Grant Fox, as he arrived with his wife Anneke and two children. Fox birdied the final hole at Royal Birkdale last Sunday for his first major win. "It's good to be back," he said.

A few hours later, media found the 39-year-old Fox at his local bakery, enjoying his favorite steak, bacon, jam and cheese pie. He hopes in coming days to be able to show off his trophy to New Zealand, to get in some fishing and maybe a round of golf. But first, sleep.

Fox has had a hectic schedule of travel and interviews since his win. "I had a glass of wine, took a couple of sleeping pills and had more sleep last night than I've had the last four nights. It's nice," Fox said. "I'm sure jetlag's going to get me and I feel like I'm going to be pulled in every direction possible over the next 10 days or so we're home. It's definitely nice to be home. I've got the golf clubs. We'll see how it goes over the next couple of days. I'd like to catch up and play with some mates. I've had a look at the forecast and it doesn't look real good over the next little while. I don't want to play golf in the rain if I have to. But I'd like to get out on the course." Fox hopes to be able to thank New Zealanders and others for their support.

"The support's been unbelievable, to be honest; I can't thank people enough," he said. Two-time US PGA Championship-winner Justin Thomas "reached out and said, remember all the little things because they're great to draw back on when you really need it."

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, **Mr. D.S. Rajoriya**, S/o Late Shri Sundarlal, R/o B/747, Anand Nagar, Near Giraj Park, Bahodapur, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh-474012, along with my wife, **Mrs. Geeta Rajoriya**, hereby declare that our son, **Mr. Arvind Rajoriya** and his wife **Mrs. Komal Chopra** have for a long time failed to take care of us, repeatedly misbehaved with us, and neglected his family. Therefore, we have severed all family, social and financial relations with **Mr. Arvind Rajoriya** and his wife, **Mrs. Komal Chopra**, and their daughter, **Ms. Yamuna Rajoriya**, debarrd them from our self-acquired movable and immovable properties, to the extent permissible under law.

Any person dealing or transacting with the above-named persons in our name or on our behalf shall do so entirely at his/her own risk and responsibility, and we shall not be liable for any such act or transaction.

Public Notice

The general public is informed that earlier my name was Prachi Batra, daughter of Somnath Arora. That was recorded in all my educational documents but now my name has been changed to Sheetal Batra daughter of Somnath Arora. So in future I should be known and recognized by this name only. Address;Tulsi Developers, Shakuntala Kanade Park, flat no.1104,Undri (Pune)

Glasgow 2026 gives CWG a fresh start

APARAJITA UPADHYAY ■ Glasgow

The OVO Hydro burst into a kaleidoscope of music, colour and Scottish pageantry on Thursday as the 23rd Commonwealth Games opened with an energetic indoor spectacle, celebrating Glasgow's heritage while signalling a fresh, more sustainable future for the Commonwealth movement.

King Charles III read aloud the message he had placed into the King's Baton at Buckingham Palace in March last year, which had since travelled through all 74 Commonwealth member nations during a 500-day global relay.

"It is my pleasure to declare the Games Open," King Charles III said before speaking on the theme of gathering and connecting for a common future with hope.

The British Monarch said the Baton had carried an additional message urging efforts to rid oceans and waterways of plastic pollution, "which can impact on human health."

"For these Games, the Relay has carried another message â



to help remove the plastic pollution that harms our oceans and waterways, and can impact on human health.

"Addressing plastic pollution

complements the immense global efforts required to protect thirty per cent of the world's ocean by 2030.

"Caring for the ocean's natural capital ensures our communities and businesses can continue to thrive and vital global food resources can be enhanced through the establishment of marine reserves and no-take zones, to



restore threatened marine ecosystems and diminished fish stocks."

The ceremony blended traditional Gaelic heritage with contemporary pop, rap, and electronic performance, drawing heavily on the creative identity of a city recognised as a UNESCO City of Music.

Moving away from expansive open-air stadium shows, organisers staged the opening ceremony entirely within the 14,300-capacity indoor bowl, a first in Commonwealth Games history.

In another first, athletes from the 74 nations paraded into the arena at the very beginning of the show

rather than at the the end. The Indian contingent was led by Olympic medalists Mirabai Chanu and Lovlina Borgohain.

With the male athletes dressed in navy blue suits and the female participants in sarees and blazers, the Indian contingent entered to a huge cheer from the audience.

As the 74 batons were planted into a 200-square-metre living stage garden featuring native Scottish flora, spotlit pipers encircled the perimeter to lead a rendition of "Flower of Scotland," providing one of the evening's central traditional moments. (PTI)

Joseph declined selection for Pakistan Tests, says Sammy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Tarouba

West Indies head coach Darren Sammy has claimed that pacer Alzarri Joseph declined selection for the two Test home series against Pakistan beginning on Saturday. While announcing the squad for the series, Cricket West Indies said Joseph was unavailable due to personal reasons, Sammy divulged more details on the subject.

"Yeah, it is a big loss. Mr Joseph has declined selection. That's the reality of the situation," Sammy said at a press interaction ahead of the series opener.

"He was selected. I mean, he's now coming back from injury. And for reasons since, he has declined the selection. That is a decision that is way over my head. I leave that with the directors to come up with whatever solutions where contracted players get to decline selection," said the coach.

Joseph has played 42 Tests for the West Indies, picking 130 wickets. He has played across formats for the regional team.

Despite Joseph's



absence, Sammy remains confident of his side's bowling abilities. The attack includes Shamar Joseph, Kemar Roach, Jayden Seales and all-rounders Justin Greaves and Keemo Paul. Spin options include Jomel Warrican, rookie Joshua Bishop and captain Roston Chase. "What I could tell you (is that) we have a bowling line-up that we've seen that could take 20 wickets. That's the first start to winning Test matches," Sammy said when asked if West Indies had the firepower to take on Pakistan.

"We saw it in New Zealand. We saw it in the Australia series. We matched Australia with the ball. We matched New Zealand with the ball as

well. And the confidence and the work that the batters have put in, you could see it bearing fruit in the Test series against Sri Lanka. "You know, much more consistency is coming through.

So once we match these two batsmen scoring runs, we know we have the bowling line-up to take 20 wickets and help us win Test matches," Sammy said.

The second Test will be held in Port of Spain from August 2.

MARK ANDERSONAP ■ Las Vegas

Formula 1 parent company Liberty Media, which also promotes the Las Vegas Grand Prix, has agreed to a settlement of about \$3 million to end a class-action lawsuit brought by spectators regarding the inaugural 2023 race.

The opening-night practice session on November 16, 2023, was halted after nine minutes when Carlos Sainz Jr drove over a water

valve cover that severely damaged his Ferrari. Practice didn't resume until the early morning hours of November 17, ending at about 4 am local time. Fans were removed from the viewing areas before the 90-minute session took place. Those who had tickets for only that practice session

or bought three-night tickets are eligible for compensation under the settlement. Claims must be filed by August 27. Liberty Media and the Las Vegas Grand Prix did not admit fault under the settlement. A final approval hearing is scheduled for November 4 at US District Court of Nevada.

Formula 1 parent company agrees to \$3M Las Vegas GP settlement

नाम परिवर्तन

सर्व साधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरी नाबालिग पुत्री/बेटी का वर्तमान रिकॉर्ड में नाम 'रख्याति मालविया' अंकित है, जिसे परिवर्तित करके 'आशी मालविया' कर दिया गया है। भविष्य में मेरी पुत्री को केवल 'आशी मालविया' नाम से ही जाना, पहचाना एवं संबोधित किया जावे तथा उसके सभी शासकीय व गैर-शासकीय दस्तावेजों (जैसे आधार कार्ड, जन्म प्रमाण पत्र, स्कूल रिकॉर्ड आदि) में यही नाम दर्ज माना जावे।

आवेदक (पिता): अंकित मालवीय
निवासी: ग्राम दवाना, तहसील टीकरी, जिला बड़वानी, मध्य प्रदेश
दिनांक: [25/07/2026]

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, BHOPAL
(An Institute of National Importance under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Govt. of India)
Saket Nagar, Bhopal-462020, Madhya Pradesh, Tel.: 0755-2836079
Email : legalcell@aiimshhopal.edu.in www.aiimshhopal.edu.in

No.

Dated: 24/07/2026

CAVEAT NOTICE

That, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Bhopal had published GeM Bid No. GEM/2026/B/7676920 dated 25.06.2026 on the GeM portal for hiring a Facility Management Service agency for deployment of housekeeping personnel at AIIMS Bhopal. Further, as per the bid terms & conditions, the bid has been opened on 17.07.2026.

It is informed to whomsoever it may concern, who wishes to challenge the above said bid process in the Hon'ble High Court of Madhya Pradesh, Jabalpur, by way of filing any kind of petition, a copy of petition/application/pleading be sent to our Advocate Shri Sachin Jain at his official address at 662/1, Shaheed Smarak Road, Gol Bazar, Jabalpur (M.P.) – 482002 (M-9303330765).

In-charge SPSO

AIIMS Bhopal

FORM NO. 4 (See-sub-rule (2A) of rule 5)
Summon under sub-section 19 of the Act, read with sub rule (2A) of rule 5 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993.

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, JABALPUR
2nd & 3rd Floor, Sanchar Vikas Bhavan (BSNL Building), Near Head Post Office, Residency Road (M.P.) 482001.

Date :

CASE NO. OA. NO. 1488/2025

Bank of Maharashtra

Applicant

M/s N.K. Enterprises and others

Defendants

To,

1. M/s N.K. Enterprises
Through its Proprietor - Nagma Khan
R/o Patwari Halka No.7, Survey No.17/2, Mayur Bagh Nursery Ke Peeche, Sihasadhar Road, District-Indore (M.P.) - 452001
2. Nagma Khan D/o Shri Naqi Mohammad
R/o 78, Geeta Nagar Main, Indore, (M.P.)

Whereas, OA No. 1488/25 was listed before Hon'ble Presiding officer on 28-01-2026. Whereas the Hon'ble Tribunal Please to issue summons/notice on the said Application under 19(4) of the Act, (OA) filed against you for recovery of debts of Rs.49,70,321/- with expenses & future interest.

In accordance with sub section (4) of section 19 of the act, you, the defendants are directed as under:-

(i) To show cause within thirty days of the service of summons as to why relief prayed for should not be granted;

(ii) To disclose particulars of properties or assets other than properties and assets specified by the applicant under Serial No. 3A of the Original Application;

(iii) You are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets or such other assets and properties disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application, pending hearing and disposal of the application for attachment of properties;

(iv) You shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinary course of his business any of the assets over which security interest is created and/or other assets and properties specified or disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application without the prior approval of the Tribunal;

(v) You shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realized by sale of secured assets or other assets and properties in the ordinary course of business and deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank or financial institutions holding security interest over such assets.

You are also directed to the written statement with a copy thereof furnished to the applicant and to appear before Registrar on 11/12/2026 at 10:30 am failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal this 13th day of July 2026

Registrar

Debts Recovery Tribunal, Jabalpur

MADHYA PRADESH STATE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED
Paryatan Bhawan, Bhadbhada Road, Bhopal-462003
Tel. : +91-755-4027100, 2774340, 42, Website : mpstdc.com

NIT/SYSTEM No. 261/2026_STDC_523909_1

Bids are invited from reputed Architects/Architectural firms for "RFP for architectural consultancy services for the action plan and outline related to the development of Shri Ramchandra path Gaman at M.P."

Terms and Conditions can be downloaded from website <https://mptenders.gov.in>. For any other information contact **Mr. Amit Kumar Tiwari (Executive Engineer) Rewa Division, Mob. No. 9039435029** or E-mail at amitkumarilvelong@gmail.com Last Date and Time for Online Tender Purchase is **17.08.2026 Time 05:00 PM** M.P. Madhyam/127173/2026 **EXECUTIVE ENGINEER**

PAPER PUBLICATION

IN THE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, JABALPUR
(Jurisdiction Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh)
2nd & 3rd Floor, Sanchar Vikas Bhawan (BSNL Building), Near Head Post Office, Residency Road, South Civil Lines, Jabalpur (M.P.): 482001 (Summons under Sub-Section (4) of Section 19 of the Act, read with Sub-Rules 2A, of rule of 5 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993.
ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 1436 OF 2025
INDIAN BANK (ERSTWHILE ALLAHABAD BANK) APPLICANT
Versus
M/s. SHRI SAI RICE MILL & ANR. RESPONDENTS

1. M/s. Shri Sai Rice Mill through its Proprietor Shri Saurabh Verma S/o Shri Ramesh Verma, Add: Ward No. 4, Bus Stand Road, Gandhi Chowk, Sidhi, M.P.- 486661

2. Shri Saurabh Verma S/o Shri Ramesh Verma, R/o: Ward No. 4, Bus Stand Road, Nisha Enterprises, Gandhi Chowk, Sidhi, M.P.- 486661

Whereas, **Original Application No. 1436 of 2025** was listed before the Hon'ble Presiding Officer on 25/01/2026

Whereas the Hon'ble Tribunal is please to issue summons / Notice on the said Application under Section 19 (4) of the Act, OA filed against you for recovery of debts of **Rs. 29,23,193.00 (Rupees Twenty Nine Lacs Twenty Three Thousand One Hundred and Ninety Three Only)**, Plus interest at Contractual rates, penal interest & charges.

In accordance with the sub-section 4 of section 19 of the Act, you defendants are directed as under:-

i) To show cause within 30 days (thirty) of service of summons as to why relief prayed for should not be granted.

ii) **To disclose particulars of properties or assets other than the properties and assets specified by the applicant under Serial No. 3A of Original Application.**

iii) You are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets or such other assets and properties under Serial No. 3A of the original application, pending hearing and disposal of the application for attachment of properties.

iv) You shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinary course of business any of the assets under which security interest is created and / or other assets and properties specified or disclosed under serial no. 3A of the original application without the prior approval of the tribunal.

v) You shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realised by sale of secured assets or OTHER ASSETS AND PROPERTIES in the ordinary course of business and deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with bank holding security interest over such assets.

vi) You are also directed to file the written statement with the copy thereof furnished to the applicant and to appear before the Hon'ble Tribunal at Jabalpur on **10/12/26 at 10.30 A.M.** failing which the application shall be heard and decided in your absence.

Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal, on this 13th day of July, 2026.

Seal

Authorised Officer
DRT, Jabalpur

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, BHOPAL
Water Work Department
4th floor, BMC Head Office, Tulsi Nagar, Bhopal

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER
Online tenders are being invited for the following works. The bidder can obtained detailed information and tender documents on website <http://mptenders.gov.in>.
Corrigendum for this NIT shall not be issued separately in newspapers. Corrigendum regarding correction can be seen on the website <http://mptenders.gov.in>

S. No.	NIT No.	Tender ID.	Details of Work	Cost of Tender Document	Earnest Money (EMD)	Bid Submission End Date
1.	02/Store W.W.D./2026-27 First call	2026 UAD_523430_1	Empanelment of firms for providing and laying of pipeline of various type, electrical work, road restoration work building maintenance work, fabrication work, other works on rate contract Basis under WWD.	4,00,00,000/-	2,00,000/-	21.08.2026

Executive Engineer (WWD)
Municipal Corporation,
Bhopal

T.N. 495/026/027

Canara Bank. Specialised ARM Branch,
Plot no. 4, PSP Area, Near AIIMS, Saket Nagar Bhopal Tel.: 8989014648

E-AUCTION (SALE NOTICE)

Appendix-IV-A [See provisio to rule 8(6) & 9]
SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF MOVABLE & IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES
E-auction Sale Notice For Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rules 8(6) & 9 of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) & Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged / charged to the secured creditor, the Possession of which has been taken by the authorised officer the **Canara Bank (secured creditor)** will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS, AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" & WHAT EVER THERE IS" on date mentioned below for recovery of bank dues to the **Canara Bank (secured creditor)**

Name and address of the Borrower & Guarantors	Description of Property	Demand Notice Dt. Possession Dt. Outstanding Amt.	Reserve Price EMD Amt. Bid Increment Amt.
Borrower/ Mortgagor: Mr. Param Jeet Singh S/o Mr. Govind Singh, P No.16/A Sainik Colony Bairagarh Bhopal MP 462030	All that part and parcel of property consisting of Flat no.302 on 3rd floor, Kamlaidevi Complex Plot no.339, Jharneshwar Griha Nirman Sahkari Samiti Maryadit Vill Bhairapur Hoshangabad Road built up area measuring 496.82 sq.ft. Boundaries- East: Flat no.301, West: Road, North: House of Mr Om Prakash Chouhan on Plot no.340, South: Vacant Plot Physical Possession PROPERTY ID: CNR89513092502 COORDINATES: 23.146723, 77.478519	12/08/2024 11/10/2024 as on 23/07/2026 ₹ 22,41,757.37 + Intt. & other charges	₹ 8,31,000/- ₹ 83,100/- ₹ 10000/-

Last date for submission of online bids is on or before 12/08/2026 upto 5.00 p.m.
Date and Time of e-auction : 13/08/2026, 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM (With unlimited extension of 5 minutes duration each)

1) The intending bidders shall deposit above mentioned Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) being 10% of the Reserve Price in E- Wallet of M/s PSB Alliance Private Limited (baanknet.com) portal directly or by generating the Challan therein to deposit the EMD through RTGS/NEFT in the account details as mentioned in the said challan. on above mentioned date of bid submission.
2) The successful bidder shall deposit 25% of the sale price (inclusive of EMD already paid), immediately on the sale being knocked down in his/her favour and the balance within 15 days from the date of confirmation of sale. If the successful bidder fails to pay the sale price as stated above, the deposit made by him shall be forfeited.
3) All charges for conveyance, stamp duty/GST registration charges etc., as applicable and any taxes, revenue/dues to any local authority etc shall be borne by the successful bidder only
For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer web portal : <http://BAANKNET.com> or may contact - Chief Manager, SPLSD ARM Bhopal, Canara Bank, Plot no. 4, PSP Area, Near AIIMS, Saket Nagar Bhopal. **Contact no. 8989014648, 8057766078, 9691096410, 9123403299 (BHOPAL), 7905027805 (JABALPUR AND BILASPUR), 7683068902 (RAIPUR), 9140476074 (GWALIOR), 9830130770 (INDORE), 8073562754 (BHOPAL)** during office hours on any working day.
Date: 23/07/2026, Place: Bhopal
AUTHORISED OFFICER, CANARA BANK



India, Pakistan get direct quarterfinal entry in Asian Games cricket draw

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Defending champions India and Pakistan have been given direct entry into quarterfinals of both the men's and women's cricket competition of this year's Asian Games.

The Indian women's team will open its campaign against Japan, while the men's opponents will be decided after the preliminary stage. The women will be up against either Bangladesh or China in the semifinals.

The men's cricket competition will start on September 24 and conclude on October 1. The men's team might face



Pakistan in the semifinals.

The women's event will be held from September 17 to 22. The potential of a clash with Pakistan is not ruled out in the women's final. The men's competition features 10 teams. The preliminary stage will feature Afghanistan, Japan, and Nepal in Group A and Hong Kong China, Malaysia and Oman in Group B. Both competitions will be played in

the T20 format at the Korogi Athletic Park in Aichi prefecture. Shreyas Iyer will captain the Indian men's team, while Harmanpreet Kaur will captain the Indian women.

Cricket is part of the Asiad schedule for a fourth time, having earlier featured in 2010 Guangzhou, 2014 Incheon, and 2023 Hangzhou Games.



WC medal, LA Olympics hockey star Manpreet's last 2 goals



SAUMJOJYOTI S CHOUDHURY ■ New Delhi

Talismanic Manpreet Singh has achieved plenty in his hockey journey, but the veteran midfielder still rues one missing trophy from his cabinet — a medal in the World Cup — a feat he wants to attain in the upcoming mega-event before drawing curtains to his illustrious career after the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. To his credit, former captain Manpreet has two Olympic medals — back-to-back bronze in Tokyo and Paris — two Asian Games gold (2014 Incheon and 2022 Hangzhou) and a bronze (2018 Jakarta), besides multiple other titles.

But one goal the 34-year-old star midfielder is still chasing is an Indian podium finish at the World Cup after 51 long years. India's last medal at the World Cup was a gold at the 1975 edition.

And Manpreet is confident of breaking that jinx in the upcoming edition to be jointly hosted by The Netherlands and Belgium from August 15 to 30. "An athlete never stops, personally I want to represent my country for the longest time and win as many medals as possible," Manpreet told PTI.

"We won back-to-back medals in Olympics, but a World Cup medal is still missing and I want to achieve that and fill that gap because the only World Cup medal we won was back in 1975.

"I am pretty confident this time and I have belief in the team. The mindset we showed during last two Olympics to win medals, we have to approach the same way and we will go with the same mindset to win medal." Manpreet very well knows he is standing at the fan end of his career, but he is backing his fitness to continue till the Los Angeles Olympics.

"As an athlete my personal goal is to play till LA 2028, maintain my fitness and give my 100 per cent, never to give up." (PTI)

India U20 men to face Singapore in 2 friendlies



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

The Indian U20 football team will play two international friendly matches against Singapore behind closed doors here, on August 3 and 6 as part of its preparations for the 2027 AFC U20 Asian Cup Qualifiers. The two matches will be played at the Centre for Sports Excellence here, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said in a release on Friday.

India and Singapore have met twice earlier in official U20 men's competitions, in the AFC Youth Championship. India won both matches; a 4-1 victory in 1966 was followed by a penalty shootout triumph in the quarterfinals during their title-winning campaign in 1974.

The two sides also played a pair of U19 international friendlies in Goa in 2017, with India winning the first 7-2 before Singapore claiming the second 1-0.

Comeback from injury was very difficult: Mayank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Harare

India pacer Mayank Yadav has described the two-year injury-enforced absence from international cricket as the most difficult phase of his young career, admitting that battling repeated setbacks at the age of 22-23 tested him mentally.

Playing his first game for India since October 2024, against Zimbabwe at the Harare Sports Club on Thursday, the injury-prone speedster cranked up serious pace from the get-go. He said the dream of representing the country kept him going during the difficult rehabilitation period.

"It was very difficult. The two-



year gap was very challenging for me as a person... I was only 22-23 years old at that time, so that always affected me that I had to go through so much at such a young age," Mayank said at the post-match press conference after helping India win the opening T20I comfortably.

Student protest is revolt against suppression, says Manjrekar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Former India cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar has become the latest Indian sporting voice to back the ongoing students' protest against exam paper leaks, calling it a "revolt against feeling of suppression in a democracy".

In a strongly-worded post on X, Manjrekar said use of force to stop the agitation will not yield results. "This isn't just about NEET paper leaks. It's a revolt against feeling generally suppressed in a democracy & the mainstream media's brainwashing," he said.

"As a father of two, I know first hand: suppressing & brainwash-



ing today's youth will never work," he added.

His comments come a day after the iconic Sachin Tendulkar, India's Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill, and Olympic gold-winning former shooter Abhinav Bindra called for long-lasting solutions to the problems faced by students.

Shreyas Iyer's look to continue revival, seal T20I series against Zimbabwe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Harare

On recovery path with their maiden win under new captain Shreyas Iyer, India will look to sustain the winning momentum for an unassailable lead against Zimbabwe when the two teams face off in the second T20I here on Saturday.

After being swept away by Ireland (0-2) and England (0-4), three-time T20 World Cup winners India produced a far better show in their series-opener here on Thursday, beating Zimbabwe



by seven wickets to take a 1-0 lead.

Young batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's 19-ball 50 and Mayank Yadav's fiery 4-0-18-2 set up an important win for India in the opening match here, against an opponent which has thrived in home conditions of late.

India chased down a modest 126 with more than six overs and seven wickets to spare, riding on Sooryavanshi's fifty, a quickfire 35 from Ishan Kishan and a measured 28 not out from skipper Iyer.

Abhishek Sharma, who began his T20I journey here at the Harare Sports Club and struck his maiden hundred in the format in the second game itself two years ago, would be keen to make amends after falling cheaply in the opening game.

Sooryavanshi set the record for being the youngest to score a T20I half-century. The young batter would have been relieved getting the monkey off his back, especially when he was specifically targeted with short balls on England tour.

India's F1 push: Sports Ministry grants NSF status to motor-sport body FMSCI



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Sports Ministry has provisionally granted the status of National Sports Federation (NSF) to the Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India (FMSCI), a significant upgrade for the body that is coordinating with the government to bring Formula 1 back to the country.

The FMSCI had applied for recognition on June 11 this year and the approval of its request means that it would now be eligible for financial grants from the

ministry. "...the request of Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India (FMSCI) for provisional recognition as National Sports Federation (NSF) has been considered and it has been decided to grant provisional recognition to FMSCI as an NSF with effect from the date of issue of this letter," the Ministry order dated July 23 stated.

FMSCI has been in regular talks with the ministry on not just the issue of recognition but to also chart the way forward for FI's India comeback.

Viswanathan Anand becomes FIDE interim president

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand has taken over the interim presidency of world chess body FIDE after its incumbent president Arkady Dvorkovich stepped aside following his inclusion in the European Union's list of sanctioned individuals related to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

Dvorkovich, who hails from Russia, has decided to challenge EU's decision "by all means". The EU action could lead freezing of his accounts and travel bans. Anand has been the Deputy President of FIDE since 2022.

"The FIDE Council accepts and



ratifies the decision of Mr Arkady Dvorkovich to suspend the exercise of his rights, duties and prerogatives as President of the FIDE," the world body said in a statement.

In his statement, Dvorkovich said the EU's decision was unfair.

Judoka Tulika Maan suspended, withdrawn from CWG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Birmingham Commonwealth Games silver medal-winning judoka Tulika Maan has been withdrawn from the ongoing Glasgow edition after being handed a provisional suspension by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) for three whereabouts failures in the last 12 months.

Maan had won silver in the +78kg category in the 2022 edition and she was a strong medal prospect in Glasgow as well. She now stares at a two-year ban.

"She has committed three whereabouts failures in a 12-month period and NADA has sent notice to her. So, she will be withdrawn from the team," a judo coach told PTI on conditions of anonymity. The 27-year-old from Delhi is the second judoka to have been withdrawn from Glasgow CWG.

On Thursday, Arun Kumar, who com-



petes in the men's -73kg category, was pulled out of the Games after failing an out-of-competition dope test.

He was handed a provisional suspension by the NADA for testing positive for an anabolic steroid.

CRICKET AUSTRALIA OPEN TO HOSTING ASHES TEST IN INDIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Melbourne

After deciding to take the Big Bash League opener to Chennai later this year, Cricket Australia is now considering the idea of having an Ashes Test in India at some point in future.

CA chief executive Todd Greenberg, however, ruled out any immediate plan. Australia is preparing to the host the Big Bash Opener in Chennai in December. "Our relationship with the ECB (England and Wales Cricket Board) but also the BCCI is very strong, and clearly there are opportunities in India to put more content into certain areas," Greenberg told BBC's Stumped podcast.

Greenberg also noted that a packed cricket calendar might come in the way of a proposal that would require immense logistical coordination.

Aston Villa sign Garnacho on loan after Rogers sale

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

Argentina winger Alejandro Garnacho went to Aston Villa on loan from Chelsea on Thursday, joining a Champions League team from one that has no European action this season.

Garnacho made the move just days after Morgan Rogers went from Villa Park to Chelsea for a record transfer fee for an English player.

The 22-year-old Garnacho, who was a Spain youth international, was not picked for Argentina's World Cup squad. His eight games for Argentina include the title-winning team at the 2024 Copa America when he was a Manchester United player.

Garnacho's one season at Chelsea after a 40 million pounds (\$53 million) transfer saw coaches Enzo Maresca and Liam Rosenior fired as the 2025 Club World Cup winner placed 10th in the Premier League.

Villa enters its fifth season



under coach Unai Emery after a fourth-place finish in the Premier League and winning the Europa League title.

Also Thursday, Austria midfielder Xaver Schlager signed for Nottingham Forest on a two-year deal as a free agent after his contract expired at Leipzig.

The 28-year-old Schlager started all four of Austria's games at the World Cup, and reunites with Austrian coach Oliver Glasner whom he played for at Wolfsburg.

Colombia backs coach Nestor with contract extension

JOSE MANUEL VALLADARES ■ Bogota (Colombia)

Nestor Lorenzo will continue as Colombia soccer coach after the national team conceded only one goal in five games at the recent World Cup. The length of his contract extension with the Colombian Football Federation was not disclosed.

Lorenzo, a 60-year-old Argentine, was initially hired in 2022 on a four-year contract.

The federation's executive committee confirmed the extension on Thursday after a meeting in Bogota.

Under Lorenzo, Colombia has 31 wins, 12 draws, and eight losses, scoring a healthy 96 goals overall and conceding 44.

Time to recharge'Colombia topped its group at the World Cup with wins over Uzbekistan (3-1) and Congo (1-0), and a 0-0 draw against Portugal. After defeating Ghana 1-0 in the round of 32, Colombia was eliminated in the last 16 by Switzerland, falling 4-3 in a penalty shootout following a goalless 120 minutes.

"Now is the time to recharge and



continue developing this project," Lorenzo told 365scores. "We will keep building a stronger national team, maintaining our attacking style and pursuing clear objectives."

Penalty painReflecting on the World Cup, Lorenzo praised the defensive performance of his squad while lamenting the penalty shootout against Switzerland.

"The penalties against Switzerland were the most painful moment because our World Cup dream came to an end," Lorenzo said. "The team took the initiative in every match; we played with an ambitious, attacking mindset. We created more scoring chances than any of the opponents we faced." (AP)

Jurgen Klopp expected to be named new Germany coach after WC failure

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Frankfurt (Germany)

Jurgen Klopp was expected to be named Germany's new coach Friday, tasked with bouncing back from another disastrous World Cup.

The German soccer federation was expected to announce at a news conference Friday morning that it has agreed a contract with Klopp for his first coaching job since he left Liverpool in 2024. German media reported his deal will run through the 2028 European Championship and 2030 World Cup.

The former Liverpool manager has been the preferred candidate ever since Julian Nagelsmann resigned following Germany's shock loss on penalties to Paraguay in the World Cup round of 32 on June 29.

Germany has not won a knockout game at any men's World Cup since it won the title in 2014.

Klopp held talks with Germany officials in New York while working there as a TV expert at the World Cup, and the federation said on July 11 they reached an agreement on "essential key points" of a contract.

