

The weather office has advised people to avoid unnecessary travel during periods of intense rainfall and take adequate precautions against lightning, gusty winds and possible flooding in vulnerable areas. Authorities have also urged district administrations to remain prepared for any weather-related emergencies and ensure timely dissemination of warnings to the public.

Odisha seeks SC nod to stall Jagannath film

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The Odisha government on Tuesday moved the Supreme Court seeking to halt the release of the animated film *Mahaprabhu Jagannath*, despite the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) having granted it certification.

The plea was mentioned before a Bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant, where Odisha Advocate General Pitambar Acharya urged an urgent hearing, citing apprehensions of law and order problems if the film is released. He informed the court that the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) has also filed an application and separately requested the Centre to revoke the

CBFC certificate issued to the film.

The latest development comes two weeks after the apex court permitted the film's release on or after July 28, observing that it should not be screened during the Rath Yatra festivities. The court had noted that the CBFC had cleared the film after examining it in accordance with the statutory guidelines.

The controversy traces back to an order of the Orissa High Court, which had stayed the film's release over concerns that certain depictions of Lord Jagannath could hurt religious sentiments and potentially disturb public order.

The High Court had also observed that the producer allegedly failed to incorporate changes suggested by the

Gajapati Maharaja of Puri and officials of the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration following a special screening.

Petitioners have alleged that the film depicts fictional episodes and characterisations that are inconsistent with established religious scriptures and temple traditions. The film-makers, however, have defended the movie as a fictional work carrying an appropriate disclaimer and argued that it is protected under the constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression.

The matter remains pending before the Orissa High Court, while the Supreme Court is expected to consider the State's plea for an urgent hearing.

Odia teen crowned Miss Teen Universe India

Prasuci sets sights on global crown

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha's Prasuci Panda has brought laurels to the State by winning the Miss Teen Universe India 2026 title, earning the opportunity to represent the country at the Miss Teen Universe international pageant next year.

The young beauty queen received a rousing welcome on her return to her hometown of Brahmapur after being felicitated in Bhubaneswar on Monday .

Speaking to the media, Prasuci described the achievement as an emotional milestone and said representing India on the interna-



tional stage is both an honour and a great responsibility.

She said winning the national title marked only the beginning of her journey and pledged to work harder to make her parents, Odisha and the country proud. Recalling the national costume round, she said she was delighted to represent Odisha and expressed gratitude for the support she had received from people across the country.

Prasuci said it had always been her dream to represent India and promised to dedicate herself to bringing the Miss Teen Universe crown home.

Her parents expressed pride over their daughter's achievement, saying the family now draws its identity from her success. They thanked the people of Odisha, particularly those in Berhampur, for their encouragement and support throughout her journey.

They said Prasuci's path to success had involved years of hard work and perseverance and expressed confidence that she would continue to excel and bring further glory to the nation.

Prasuci was crowned Miss Teen Universe India 2026 on July 20. With the national title, she has now qualified to represent India at the prestigious Miss Teen Universe international competition next year, one of the world's leading beauty pageants for teenagers.

In city

Woman found dead in house; murder suspected

Accused husband consumes poison, hospitalised

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

A woman was found dead under suspicious circumstances at her rented house in Sahu Colony under the Mancheswar police station on Monday, with police suspecting that she was murdered.

The deceased was identified as Monika Jena, whose body was found lying in a pool of blood in the house. Following the discovery, the Mancheswar police launched an investigation and a scientific team visited the spot to collect forensic evidence.

Preliminary investigation revealed that Monika's neck appeared to have been strangled with a towel. Investigators also found a deep cut injury on the vein of her left wrist and suspect that poison may have been administered. The exact cause of death will be ascertained after the post-mortem examination, police said.

According to Monika's

family, she had married Pradeep Jena, who works in Chennai, around nine years ago. Her parents alleged that the couple frequently quarrelled over dowry demands and that the matter had previously been reported to the police.

The family further claimed that Pradeep had taken away their six-year-old son nearly two months ago. Monika had shifted to the rented house in Sahu Colony only last month. Her mother alleged that Pradeep killed her daughter on Saturday afternoon before locking the house and fleeing.

Meanwhile, the accused husband was admitted to a hospital after allegedly consuming poison. His condition was stated to be critical.

Assistant Commissioner of Police (Zone V) Biswaranjan Senapati said the accused would be arrested and produced before the court after he is discharged from the hospital. Police are awaiting his statement while continuing the investigation to establish the exact sequence of events and the motive behind the suspected murder.

In city

Youth allegedly kills father over family feud

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

A family dispute turned tragic after a man was allegedly beaten to death by his son at Chakeisiani under the Mancheswar police in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday.

Police have detained the accused son and launched an investigation into the incident.

According to police, the father and son had entered into an argument at their residence, which later escalated into a violent clash. During the altercation, the son allegedly attacked his father with a stone, killing him on the spot.

Preliminary investigation suggested that the accused was neither under the influence of alcohol nor suffering from any mental illness, police officials said. They suspect the incident was a fallout of a family dispute. The deceased's body was sent to the Capital Hospital for postmortem examination to ascertain the exact cause of death.

Police are questioning the accused and recording statements of family members and neighbours to reconstruct the sequence of events leading to the murder. Forensic teams have also collected evidence from the crime scene. Further legal action would be taken based on the post-mortem report and findings of the ongoing investigation, police said.

CM felicitates Indian Idol winner Jyotirmayee

Rs 5 lakh reward announced

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi felicitated Indian Idol Season 16 winner Jyotirmayee Nayak at his official residence on Tuesday and announced a cash reward of Rs 5 lakh in recognition of her remarkable achievement.

During the meeting, Jyotirmayee presented her Indian Idol 16 trophy to the Chief Minister and spoke about the perseverance, discipline and hard work that shaped her journey to becoming the winner of the popular national singing reality show.

Congratulating the singer, Majhi said Jyotirmayee has brought immense pride to Odisha by winning the prestigious title through her exceptional talent and dedication, with the blessings of Lord Jagannath. He described her as a source of inspiration for aspiring singers and the younger generation.

The Chief Minister also lauded Jyotirmayee's humanitarian efforts, noting that she has been using music therapy to comfort cancer patients in hospitals across Odisha. Calling her a 'youth icon', he said her initiative demonstrates how music can be a powerful tool for healing and has the potential to inspire similar efforts in the healthcare sector.

He expressed confidence that the com-



mitment and service-mindedness of young achievers like Jyotirmayee would strengthen the vision of a prosperous Odisha and a developed India. Majhi also thanked the people of the State for their overwhelming support throughout her Indian Idol journey, saying her national triumph has brought further recognition to Odisha's rich musical talent.

Jyotirmayee was accompanied by her parents, Chakradhar Nayak and Gouri Nayak, during the felicitation ceremony.

OUAT hosts lecture on AI-driven agriculture

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Artificial intelligence is poised to reshape the future of agriculture by boosting productivity, improving decision-making and making farming more sustainable, experts said at a lecture series organised by the Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) on Tuesday.

The lecture on "Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture" was held at OUAT Biju Patnaik Hall, bringing together scientists, faculty members, researchers, students and officials to deliberate on the growing role of AI in modern farming.

Delivering the keynote address, IIT Bhubaneswar Senior Project Advisor Prof SN Panda, and OUAT Ombudsperson, highlighted AI applications such as precision farming, crop disease detection, yield prediction, smart farm management and data-driven decision-making.

He said the adoption of AI technologies could significantly improve farm productivity while making agricul-

ture more efficient, profitable and sustainable.

Presiding over the programme, OUAT Vice-Chancellor Prof Pravat Kumar Roul said the integration of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies would create new opportunities for agricultural development and enhance farmers' livelihoods in Odisha. He reaffirmed the university's commitment to promoting AI in agricultural education, research and extension activities.

Earlier, PGF-cum-DRI Dean Prof Chandramani Khanda welcomed the participants and underlined AI's potential to transform agriculture through improved productivity, efficient resource management, accurate decision-making and higher farm incomes. He stressed the need to embrace digital technologies to address the challenges facing the agricultural sector.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by OUAT Centre for Post Graduate Studies Department of Computer Science and Application Assistant Professor Dr RR Patra.

Odisha's silent crisis

Why higher edu needs a revolution of ideas, institutions. leadership

State does not become prosperous merely because it possesses abundant natural resources. It becomes prosperous when it transforms those resources into knowledge, innovation and human capital. By this measure, Odisha remains one of India's greatest developmental paradoxes. Rich in minerals, forests, water resources and industrial investment, the state has powered India's economic growth for decades. Yet it has struggled to build a higher education ecosystem capable of producing globally competitive scholars, scientists, innovators and public intellectuals. Unless this structural weakness is addressed, Odisha risks remaining a resource economy while other states continue to lead the knowledge economy.

Since 2000, Odisha has experienced rapid industrialisation. Mining, steel, aluminium, power generation and port-led development have expanded significantly. Public sector enterprises such as NALCO, MCL, RSP, NTPC, HAL, IOCL and Paradip Port have contributed enormously to the state's economy. Successive governments have expanded access to schooling and created new universities. However, higher education has not received the same strategic attention. Many institutions continue to face challenges related to infrastructure, faculty strength, research cul-



VIKRAM KESARI JENA

ture and academic quality.

The issue is not merely the number of institutions. The larger concern is the absence of institutions that consistently attract outstanding faculty, nurture original scholarship and compete with India's finest centres of learning. Odisha still lacks public colleges with the national academic reputation associated with institutions such as the Delhi School of Economics, Lady Shri Ram College, St. Stephen's College, Presidency University, Loyola College or Madras Christian College. Excellence cannot be created through notifications. It is built through decades of investment in people, research and academic culture.

The Model Degree College initiative expanded access to higher education in educationally underserved districts. That objec-

tive was important. Yet access alone cannot substitute for academic excellence. A college becomes transformative only when it develops vibrant classrooms, modern laboratories, distinguished faculty, active research, strong libraries and an intellectual culture that encourages debate, creativity and independent thinking. Without these foundations, infrastructure alone cannot produce excellence.

One of the greatest weaknesses of Odisha's higher education system is the limited emphasis on research. Universities should be centres where new knowledge is created, not merely places where textbooks are repeated. Scientific discovery, public policy innovation, historical research, technological development and social science scholarship require sustained institutional support. Publications, patents, interdisciplinary collaboration and global partnerships remain uneven across many institutions. This gap weakens Odisha's contribution to India's research ecosystem.

Faculty quality is equally important. Odisha has many committed teachers who continue to serve despite institutional constraints. However, universities also face persistent challenges in attracting and retaining a critical mass of nationally and internationally recognised scholars. Faculty vacancies, limited doctoral ecosystems, inadequate

research funding and bureaucratic procedures affect academic performance. Transparent recruitment based on merit, competitive research grants and continuous faculty development are essential for building world-class universities.

The consequences are visible among students. Every year, thousands of Odisha's brightest young minds leave the state to pursue higher education in Delhi,

interdisciplinary learning and evidence-based reasoning.

Odisha now stands at a historic crossroads. Artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, climate science, biotechnology and advanced manufacturing are redefining global economies. The state cannot participate meaningfully in this transformation without universities capable of producing frontier research. Every major

public university should establish centres for artificial intelligence, data science, climate resilience, mining technology, public policy, indigenous knowledge systems and entrepreneurship. Research should directly address Odisha's developmental challenges while contributing to global scholarship.

Regional equity must also become a priority. Students from the KBK and MSK regions deserve access to institutions equal in quality to those available in metropolitan centres. New multidisciplinary universities with international standards should be established in Koraput and Keonjhar, integrating engineering, medicine, agriculture, social sciences, humanities, law and emerging technologies. These institu-

tions would reduce educational inequality while creating regional centres of innovation.

Universities must reconnect with society. Research should inform public policy, strengthen local governance, improve agriculture, preserve languages, support tribal communities, advance environmental sustainability and encourage entrepreneurship. The purpose of higher education is not merely to award degrees but to solve public problems and improve society.

Public sector enterprises operating in Odisha should become long-term partners in academic transformation. Instead of fragmented corporate social responsibility initiatives, they should support endowed professorial chairs, doctoral fellowships, innovation laboratories, technology incubators and interdisciplinary research centres. States that invest consistently in knowledge institutions ultimately generate stronger economic growth than those dependent only on natural resources.

Governance reforms are equally necessary. Universities require greater academic autonomy accompanied by transparent accountability. Decision-making should prioritise academic excellence, research productivity, student learning and institutional integrity. Administrative efficiency should support scholarship rather

ACADEMIC NOTES

Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune and Chennai. They migrate not because Odisha lacks talent but because they seek stronger academic ecosystems, better mentorship, advanced laboratories and wider research opportunities. This migration represents a continuing loss of intellectual capital.

Critical thinking remains another neglected dimension. Education should cultivate the ability to question evidence, analyse complex problems and generate original solutions. Universities that discourage inquiry produce graduates who reproduce information but struggle to innovate. In a world shaped by artificial intelligence, biotechnology and digital transformation, memorisation alone is no longer sufficient. Universities must nurture curiosity,

public university should establish centres for artificial intelligence, data science, climate resilience, mining technology, public policy, indigenous knowledge systems and entrepreneurship. Research should directly address Odisha's developmental challenges while contributing to global scholarship.

Regional equity must also become a priority. Students from the KBK and MSK regions deserve access to institutions equal in quality to those available in metropolitan centres. New multidisciplinary universities with international standards should be established in Koraput and Keonjhar, integrating engineering, medicine, agriculture, social sciences, humanities, law and emerging technologies. These institu-

than constrain it. Academic leadership must be selected for vision, integrity and intellectual achievement.

Odisha possesses talented students, abundant resources, industrial capacity, rich cultural heritage and strategic geographical advantages. What is required now is determination, institutional imagination and sustained political commitment. Educational excellence cannot be achieved through isolated schemes or short-term announcements. It demands long-term investment, fearless academic leadership and a culture that rewards originality over routine.

The future of Odisha will not be determined by the quantity of minerals extracted but by the quality of ideas generated within its classrooms and laboratories. The state needs an educational revolution that places universities at the centre of development, strengthens research culture, encourages critical thinking, protects institutional autonomy and nurtures ethical leadership. Only then can Odisha move beyond being a supplier of raw materials to becoming a producer of knowledge, innovation and national leadership. The next twenty-five years should become the era in which Odisha finally built institutions capable of matching its extraordinary potential and shaping India's future with confidence, creativity and conviction.

ACF Soumya death

Court sends ex-DFO to jail after rejecting bail

PNS ■ Paralakhemundi

Former Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Sangram Keshari Behera was remanded to judicial custody on Tuesday after a court rejected his bail plea in connection with the 2021 death of Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) Soumya Ranjan Mahapatra in Gajapati district.

Behera had surrendered before the SDJM Court in Paralakhemundi on Monday after remaining out of reach for a prolonged period to evade arrest. Following his surrender, he filed a regular bail application, which was rejected by the court. He was subsequently sent to the



Paralakhemundi sub-jail.

The case relates to the mysterious death of ACF Soumya Ranjan, who sustained severe burn injuries and died on July 13, 2021, under suspicious circumstances while posted in Paralakhemundi. The incident had sparked statewide outrage and demands for a comprehensive investigation.

The investigation was initially carried out by the local

police before being transferred to the Crime Branch, which later filed a charge-sheet against the accused.

Earlier, Behera, along with Soumya Ranjan's wife Bidyabharati and cook Manmath Kumbh, had approached the Orissa High Court seeking anticipatory bail. However, the High Court rejected their petitions, clearing the way for their arrest.

With the rejection of his anticipatory bail plea, Behera surrendered before the trial court. His subsequent regular bail application was also dismissed, resulting in his remand to judicial custody as the trial in the high-profile case progresses.

Government counsel Rajesh Kumar Mishra opposed the bail plea, stating that Behera had been evading a non-bailable warrant (NBW) for nearly a year. He argued that the former DFO should remain in custody and sought a direction from the court for a speedy trial.

Soumya Ranjan's father, Abhiram Mahapatra, reiterated his demand for justice, alleging that despite repeated appeals to the previous government, neither the police nor the Crime Branch had acted effectively. Expressing faith in the judicial process, he said he remained hopeful that justice would ultimately be delivered.

In Puri

32 students fall ill after mid-day meal at school

PNS ■ Puri

Thirty-two students of Aragada Nodal Upper Primary School in Delanga block of Puri district were taken ill after consuming the mid-day meal on Monday, triggering concerns over food safety and hygiene in government-run schools.

The students reportedly complained of uneasiness shortly after having the meal and were rushed to the Community Health Centre (CHC) at Delanga. While most of them were treated and kept under observation, five students were shifted to the Puri District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) after developing



symptoms such as vomiting, dizziness, diarrhoea and mild fever.

Preliminary reports indicated that a lizard was found in the cooked food, though officials are yet to confirm whether it caused the students' illness. The Health Department and local administration have launched an investigation into the incident. Food samples will be collected and sent for laboratory examination to ascertain whether contamination occurred and whether prescribed food safety and hygiene protocols were followed.

School in-charge headmaster Ashok Kumar Pradhan said the meal was being served only after the mandatory tasting by teachers, as required under government guidelines. However, he claimed the lizard fell into the food after the tasting process.

"We noticed the lizard immediately and stopped serving the meal. We informed the Additional Block Education Officer and shifted the children to the hospital without delay," Pradhan said.

He added that 27 students kept under observation at

Delanga CHC were discharged after remaining stable overnight. The five students referred to the Puri DHH also recovered after receiving treatment. "The children are now healthy. Two had vomited while being shifted in the ambulance, one complained of dizziness, another had mild fever and one suffered from diarrhoea. They are all fine now," the headmaster said.

The incident has once again raised questions over the monitoring and implementation of the mid-day meal programme in government schools. Officials said appropriate action would be taken after the investigation report is received.

In Mayurbhanj

Woman, differently-abled daughter found dead

PNS ■ Baripada

A woman and her differently-abled daughter were found dead under suspicious circumstances in Dibyasinghpur village under the Udala police station in Mayurbhanj district on Tuesday, triggering shock and concern among local residents.

According to preliminary reports, the highly decomposed body of the woman was recovered from her house, suggesting that she may have died several days ago. During a search of the surrounding area, police found the body of her differently-abled daughter in a canal located in front of the house.

The circumstances surrounding the deaths remain unclear. The discovery of the bodies left villagers stunned, with many gathering near the house as police began their investigation.

A police team rushed to the spot after receiving information and launched a probe. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination, and officials said the exact cause of death would be determined only after the autopsy reports are received.

Police are questioning local residents and collecting evidence from the scene to reconstruct the sequence of events. Further investigation is underway.

In Jharsuguda

Brokers plotting govt land, targeting unsuspecting buyers

Lack of surveys, evictions fuels encroachments

RAJKUMAR SHARMA ■ Jharsuguda

Allegations of large-scale encroachment and illegal sale of government land by land brokers have surfaced in Jharsuguda district, with claims that over 100 acres of public land are under unauthorised occupation.

According to local sources, brokers are allegedly plotting government land and selling it to unsuspecting buyers for huge profits. Critics claim that despite the growing number of complaints, neither the Revenue Department nor the district administration has carried out effective surveys or eviction drives, allowing encroachments to increase steadily.

Sources further alleged that several localities, including Beheramal, Nuapada, Kapumal areas behind the Collectorate and OMP, Debadih, Sarbahal, BTM, Itabhata, Saletikra and Lahandabad, are among the affected areas where government land has reportedly been occupied.

The allegations also suggest that buyers searching for residential plots are being sold government land at high prices. Meanwhile, Revenue Minister Suresh Pujari has reiterated that no individual has

the right to occupy government land and warned that all encroached land would be reclaimed, with legal action initiated against those found guilty.

The issue is not confined to the Jharsuguda Assembly constituency alone. Allegations have also surfaced from the Brajrajnagar constituency, where brokers are reportedly occupying government land, developing plots and selling them to buyers through illegal transactions.

Despite Revenue Minister Pujari's directive that all encroached government land should be reclaimed and legal action initiated against offenders, residents

Over 400 young lifters

compete at Kalinga Stadium

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The 2nd Odisha Under-12 and Under-14 Weightlifting Championship got underway at Kalinga Stadium here, bringing together more than 400 young lifters from across the state in a showcase of emerging talent.

The four-day championship, being held from July 24 to July 27, provides a competitive platform for budding weightlifters to display their strength, technique and determination while gaining valuable exposure. Boys and girls from various districts are competing across multiple weight categories in the Under-12 and Under-14 divisions, reflecting the growing popularity of the sport among young athletes in Odisha.

The championship is expected to play a key role in identifying promising talent and strengthening grassroots development of weightlifting in the state. Coaches, trainers

and sports officials are closely assessing the performances of the participants, many of whom aspire to represent Odisha at national and international competitions in the future.

Kalinga Stadium, which has hosted several prestigious national and international sporting events, continues to reinforce Odisha's reputation as a leading sports destination by staging competitions aimed at nurturing young talent.

"We are very optimistic about the future of weightlifting in Odisha. Olympian Ravi Kumar is a shining example of what young talent from the state can achieve. Through this championship, we aim to identify and nurture the next generation of weightlifters, with children in the Under-12 and Under-14 categories getting an early opportunity to showcase their talent," said Abhijit Pal, General Secretary of the Odisha Olympic Association.

Now, patriotic movies, biopics to be screened in prisons

During national day celebrations

KAHNU NANDA ■ Jagatsinghpur

The Directorate of Prisons and Correctional Services under the control of the Odisha Police has decided to screen patriotic movies and biopics of freedom fighters as well as documentaries of the freedom struggle at prisons across the State on national day celebrations, such as Independence Day, Republic Day and Gandhi Jayanti.

In this context, the Additional Inspector General (AIG) of prisons has written a letter to all range DIGs, Superintendents of Prisons and heads of Circle Jails across the State to launch the endeavour with immediate effect with a few safeguards.

The patriotic film and documentary which will be exhibited in prisons will be approved by the concerned jail superintendent. Films portraying crime, sex, violence, suspense and horror will be

avoided and the film shall be obtained from authorised lawful official sources, the AIG letter says.

The letter dated July 24, 2026 dispatched to jail authorities reveals that based on Jagatsinghpur MLA Amarendra Das's representation on July 13 to the Chief Minister requesting him to take a decision on screening of patriotic movies in jails on national day celebrations, the Chief Minister Office asked Director General Prisons to decide on the request of MLA Das.

Notably, activist and president of Alaka Ashrama Working Committee Gouranga Charana Hota had petitioned to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi in June 2026 through MLA Das seeking to screen patriotic films in jails on national day celebrations. The petition had urged that if patriotic movies and documentaries were shown in jails, the inmates and prisoners would be influenced towards patriotism and self-discipline.

Cremation or communicating with outer world

This N'rangpur village crosses flooded river, come monsoon!

As tribal habitation yet to get bridge, burial ground

MANOHAR MOHANTY ■ Nabarangpur

In a grim reminder of the persistent infrastructure deficit in tribal hinterland, villagers in Nabarangpur district continue to risk their lives every monsoon by carrying the bodies of their deceased relatives across a swollen river to perform the last rites.

The ordeal unfolds in a village Amamunda under Jharigaon block where the absence of both a permanent bridge and a local cremation ground has left residents with no option but to walk nearly 1.5 km through knee-deep river water while carrying corpses on their shoulders.



A recent funeral brought the issue into sharp focus. Following the death of a woman in the village, grieving family members and villagers waded through the fast-flowing river, holding the bier high above the water to prevent it from being swept away before reaching the cremation site.

"We are forced to risk our

lives every time someone dies during the monsoon. There is no bridge and no crematorium. We have repeatedly appealed to the authorities, but nothing has changed," a villager said.

The lack of connectivity affects far more than funeral processions. During the rainy season, schoolchildren

struggle to cross the river to attend classes, while transporting sick or pregnant persons to healthcare facilities becomes an emergency in itself.

Residents alleged that despite repeated representations to public representatives and the district administration, their long-standing demand for a permanent bridge and a village crematorium has remained unfulfilled.

The incident has once again highlighted the stark gap in basic infrastructure in remote tribal areas, where even performing the final rites of loved ones becomes a dangerous journey.

The villagers have urged the State Government to immediately sanction a bridge and establish a cremation facility to spare them from risking their lives in times of grief.

Rehab to injured in D'nal factory

NHRC flags concerns over ambiguity

Directs DM, SP to file report in 4 wks

RAJESH BEHERA ■ Kendrapada

The National Human Rights Commission on Tuesday directed the Dhenkanal District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police to submit a fresh report within four weeks clarifying whether the three workers injured in an April 2025 industrial accident have received any monetary compensation.

According to the NHRC proceedings dated July 28, 2026, documentary evidence was submitted confirming that the families of the two workers who died in the mishap were paid Rs 20 lakh each as ex-gratia compensation,

along with Rs 1 lakh each for funeral and cremation expenses. The reports also stated that the company had borne all medical expenses of the three injured workers.

However, the Commission noted that the reports were silent on whether any additional financial relief or monetary compensation had been extended to the injured.

"While treatment costs were covered by the company, there is no clear information regarding any other compensation paid to the injured victims," the NHRC observed.

The Commission has now asked the Dhenkanal DM and the SP to file a specific report detailing the monetary relief, if any, provided to the injured workers, along with supporting documents.

The matter came before the NHRC following a complaint filed on April 19, 2025 by Kendrapada-based rights defender, Sagar Kumar Jena.

Citing media reports, Jena alleged that the accident occurred on April 18, 2025 inside an industrial unit in Dhenkanal due to non-compliance with mandatory safety norms. Two workers died and three others sustained serious injuries in the incident. The NHRC also noted that a charge sheet has already been filed in Balimi Police Station bearing Case No. 94/2025 against the accused persons.

The DM and the SP of Dhenkanal have been asked to submit the additional report to the Commission by September 4, 2026, after which the matter will be taken up for further consideration.

Major rivers in spate; B'swar dist in flood grip

Waterlogging reported in Sadar, Nilgiri, Remuna, Basta, Jaleswar, Bhograi blocks; road communication snapped

PNS ■ Baleswar



Baleswar district witnessed widespread waterlogging and flood-like conditions after a low pressure-induced spell of incessant rain lashed the region for more than 24 hours, causing severe hardship to residents and disrupting normal life.

Almost all parts of Baleswar town remained inundated as rainwater mixed with overflowing drain water entered residential areas.

Strong currents on several roads made commuting difficult and hazardous, with the

worst impact being felt in low-lying localities. Residents reported damage to houses and household belongings as floodwater entered their homes.

The worst-affected areas in the town included Bhaskarganj, Angargadia Nuasahi, Gudipada, Chidia Polo, Azimabad, and the Congress Office area, all of which witnessed flood-like conditions.

Colony, where floodwaters had entered residential neighbourhoods.

Reports from Soro indicated that the continuous downpour has caused a steady rise in the water level of the Kansabansa river, raising concerns among people living along its banks.

Low-lying areas remained waterlogged, while several rural roads were cut off, disrupting transportation and access to markets. Waterlogging in agricultural fields has also heightened fears among farmers over possible crop damage.

Similar reports of severe waterlogging were received from Nilgiri, Remuna, Basta, Jaleswar and Bhograi blocks, where rainwater entered residential areas and submerged several roads.

According to the Meteorological Department, Baleswar Sadar recorded 204 mm of rainfall during the last 24

hours. Nilgiri and Remuna blocks received 239 mm and 222 mm of rainfall, respectively, during the same period.

Meanwhile, the water levels of all major rivers flowing through the district are on the rise. The Jalka river is flowing above its danger level (DL) of 6.5 metres, while the Budhabalanga river has crossed its warning level (WL) of 7.21 metres and continues to rise.

Officials said the river is likely to swell further and may touch its danger level of 8.13 metres as it is receiving excess discharge from the Kala and Sunei dams.

The district administration is closely monitoring the river levels and has advised residents of vulnerable riverside villages to remain alert and immediately inform the authorities of any emergency. Locals fear the situation could deteriorate further if the heavy rainfall continues.

Sadar Bazaar flooding exposes monsoon gaps

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A video circulating on social media on Tuesday captures the state of Delhi's monsoon preparedness more vividly than any Government report can. It shows a parent carrying a schoolchild on their shoulders through waist-deep water in Sadar Bazaar, one of the Capital's largest wholesale markets, wading through murky, garbage-filled water that covers everything below the knee. AAP Delhi unit president Saurabh Bharadwaj posted it on X with a pointed message: "After Gen Z, now Gen Alpha too will remain indebted to the BJP."

Heavy rain lashed Delhi on Tuesday, triggering widespread waterlogging, flooded markets, traffic gridlock across the city, and a fresh political confrontation between the ruling BJP and the Opposition AAP over who bears responsibility for a city that floods with reliable predictability every monsoon.

In Rajendra Nagar, a major coaching hub, water submerged the area entirely, with cars, motorcycles, and auto-rickshaws partially underwater. The images revived sharp memories of the July 2024 incident in which three civil services aspirants drowned after rainwater entered the basement of a coaching centre in the same neighbourhood. The coaching cluster has not been moved. The water came back.

In Sadar Bazaar, knee-deep water filled the narrow lanes. Murky water and floating garbage forced residents, shopkeepers, and schoolchildren to wade through the same stretches. Water entered several shops, disrupting business. Sadar Bazaar Traders' Association president Paramjit Singh Pamma said the market



People wade through a waterlogged road amid heavy rainfall, in Sadar Bazaar area in New Delhi on Tuesday

remained waterlogged until evening, with several shops forced to shut and rainwater damaging goods stored inside. He said the timing could not be worse, with Janmashtami, Raksha Bandhan, and Independence Day approaching and the festive season inventory already in the markets.

Connaught Place and the adjoining Janpath market were also badly affected. According to the New Delhi Traders' Association, G Block, A Block, and parts of the Outer Circle remained flooded and affected commercial activity until around 1 pm. The area had only recently reopened fully after a week of restrictions during the CJP protest at Jantar Mantar.

PWD Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh responded to the criticism by posting a video of traffic moving on Minto Bridge. "Rain is pouring relentlessly, but life on Minto Bridge is moving along at the same pace. The very effort is to ensure that monsoon remains just a season, not a trouble," he said. Minto Bridge, which had been among Delhi's most notorious waterlogging spots in previous years, remained functional. The government

had previously cited a new additional drain at the underpass as the reason.

But the wider city told a different story. Traffic crawled across multiple arteries. A major snarl was reported on NH-09 near the Ghazipur border with UP. Congestion was recorded at ITO, Azadpur, Malviya Nagar, Prahladpur, and Kalindi Kunj. Waterlogging was reported from Tolstoy Marg, Bharat Mandapam Road, Hanuman Road, Malviya Nagar, and Mathura Road near ITO, where office-goers stood at bus stops amid knee-deep water.

More than 100 complaints related to waterlogging, fallen trees, and power outages were received by MCD, NDMC, and PWD. The India Meteorological Department issued a red alert for thunderstorms, lightning, and heavy rainfall over the next few hours and forecast intense spells of rain through the day.

Schools were affected too. The Principal and Vice Principal Association of Delhi Government Schools said students of the morning shift had already arrived before conditions worsened, while attendance in the afternoon shift, which begins at 1 pm, stood at around 50 percent.

Heavy rain batters Delhi, sparks 136 complaints

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Heavy monsoon rain lashed Delhi on Tuesday afternoon, triggering at least 136 complaints of waterlogging, uprooted trees and power outages across the national capital, with civic agencies rushing teams to restore normalcy. The MCD said its central control room received 36 complaints between 2 pm and 6 pm, including reports of 20 waterlogging and 16 fallen tree complaints from several parts of the city.

The complaints came from areas under the MCD, the Public Works Department (PWD) and the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), including Paschim Vihar West, Okhla Phase II, Vasant Kunj, Laxmi Nagar, Safdarjung Enclave,

Daryaganj, Mayapuri, Punjabi Bagh and several localities in Rohini and Dwarka.

The MCD also received five complaints regarding dangerous buildings across the national Capital. According to the civic body, field staff, sanitary inspectors and other supervisory officials were immediately deployed to clear waterlogged stretches, remove fallen trees and ensure smooth traffic movement.

A PWD official said the department received around 60 complaints of waterlogging, most of which were resolved within an hour. Another 15 complaints related to fallen trees were also received and clearance work was underway, the official said.

In the NDMC area, the civic body said it received 38 rain-related complaints, compris-



NDMC workers carry out drainage work on a waterlogged road amid rain at Connaught Place in New Delhi on Tuesday

ing 19 cases of waterlogging, six tree falls and 13 power outages, all of which were attended to on priority.

According to an official statement, NDMC Vice Chairperson Kuljeet Singh Chahal inspected vulnerable locations, beginning with Africa Avenue, along with

senior officials from the civil, roads, drainage, horticulture and electrical departments to review the situation on the ground.

The complaints were received from Gole Market, Shahjahan Road, Krishna Menon Marg, Golf Links, Janpath, Connaught Place,

Lodhi Colony, Sarojini Nagar, South Avenue, INA and adjoining areas. The India Meteorological Department recorded 68.8 mm of rainfall at Lodhi Road and 57.6 mm at Safdarjung. Further, Palam received 27.8 mm, Ridge area received 40.6 mm, and Ayanagar received 51.5 mm between 8.30 am and 5.30 pm.

NDMC said emergency response teams were activated after the IMD issued a red alert forecasting heavy to very heavy rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and gusty winds. He said ensuring smooth traffic movement and uninterrupted civic services remained the civic body's priority, adding that he reviewed the functioning of pumping systems, drainage arrangements and field deployments during the inspection.

No legal power to halt Gymkhana eviction, Centre informs Delhi HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Centre informed the Delhi High Court that it has no legal power to restrain the Government from taking over the Delhi Gymkhana Club land here after the termination of the perpetual lease for the club and issuance of a show-cause notice for eviction by the Estate Officer.

In a response to a plea by Delhi Gymkhana Club member Vijay Khurana seeking a stay on the show-cause notice, the Government asserted that under the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, a civil court's jurisdiction over any suit or proceeding in respect of the eviction is barred and the grant of any injunction in respect of the Estate Officer's action is also prohibited.

Justice Avneesh Jhingra on Tuesday posted Khurana's lawsuit, as well as the lawsuit

by the Gymkhana staff, for hearing on September 3 after their senior counsel submitted that they received the reply late last night and would file a rejoinder.

As the plaintiff's senior counsel sought clarification on the continuation of the Centre's assurance regarding getting the hearing adjourned before the Estate Officer in the meantime, the court responded, "obviously".

In its reply, the Centre explained that the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act (PP Act) has its own adjudicatory and appellate machinery, and Khurana's application was liable to be dismissed for being misconceived, misplaced, barred by law, especially since the Estate Officer's competence to issue the show-cause notice (SCN) cannot be disputed.

"The proper remedy for the grievance sought to be litigated by injunction is participation in the hearing before



the Estate Officer itself, where all grounds, including the challenge to the validity of determination, may be raised and must be considered. The present Application, which seeks precisely such an injunction restraining the Estate Officer from proceeding with the SCN, falls squarely within the express prohibition (under the PP Act)," the reply said.

"The lease dated 28.02.1928 stands validly determined by notice dated 22.05.2026 under Clause 4 thereof, and Defendant No. 2's continued occupation

though lawful at inception has...ceased to be authorised within the meaning of Section 2(g) of the PP Act.

"It follows a fortiori that any injunction restraining the Estate Officer from proceeding under Section 4 pursuant to the SCN dated 29.06.2026 would impermissibly impact this statutory vested right of the Answering Defendant, and the present Application is liable to be dismissed on this ground alone," it added.

The Centre, in the response filed through standing counsel Ashish Dixit, also

clarified that it was not a case of "compulsory acquisition" because the perpetual lease itself "expressly and unambiguously" reserved its right to determine the agreement and re-enter the premises for a "public purpose".

Given that the perpetual lease deed was a bilateral instrument between the Centre and the Delhi Gymkhana Club Ltd, a member—who was neither a party nor privy to the agreement—cannot independently restrain the authorities from exercising their contractual rights. "It is not for the Applicant, a club member with no independent stake in the public project, to demand disclosure of security and defence considerations underlying the governmental decision at this interlocutory stage," the response asserted.

The Centre also said it was fully prepared to discharge its "compensation obligations" under the lease deed upon taking possession.

Soaked but smiling, DU's 2026 freshers begin a new journey



ABHINAV KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi

The rain had been falling since morning, the kind that turns the North Campus roads into shallow rivers and makes every umbrella pointless within minutes. But by nine o'clock, the gates of Hindu College, Miranda House, Ramjas, and Kirori Mal were already receiving them: eighteen-year-olds hauling backpacks, clutching folders of documents, wearing new shoes that were now soaked, and looking simultaneously terrified and delighted about what they had just walked into.

Delhi University opened its new academic session on Tuesday, July 28. Thousands of freshers arrived for orientation programmes across campuses on the first day of classes, and the rain, which drenched the Capital through the day, did nothing to reduce the turnout or the noise.

At the Hindu College gate, Pranabh Kumar from Jharkhand stood with a half-folded umbrella in one hand and his phone in the other, trying to capture the entrance he had been imagining for two years. "It is a little intimidating, but this has been worth the wait. I have heard so much about Hindu College and the North Campus. I am really excited to explore the campus and try all the famous food spots here," he said. He said the hostel, the canteen, the annual festival, and the chance to meet people from every corner of the country were what had drawn him here more than any specific academic programme.

At Ramjas, Swati, 18, who had travelled from Mumbai to begin her undergraduate studies, said she had already made a few friends during the orientation and had not expected the day to feel so immediately welcoming. "Everyone dreams of having a very happening college life, and what better place than Delhi University? I am so excited about this new chapter," she said. At Miranda House, first-year student Aditi Sharma from Jaipur said she had planned a very different first day. "I thought I would spend the day taking pictures around the campus. Instead we

were all trying to stay dry. But it actually helped us start conversations. Everyone is equally new here, so it felt easy to make friends," she said.

Outside Kirori Mal, a boy from Bihar sat on the steps with his admit card in a plastic folder, waiting for the orientation to begin. He had arrived that morning by train and come directly to the campus. "I told my parents I got into DU and my father didn't say much. He just booked my ticket," he said, smiling. "This is the first time I am leaving home."

Kirori Mal College Principal Dinesh Khattar said attendance at the department-wise orientation sessions was encouraging despite the persistent rain. "The turnout from first-year students was really good. Students stayed back to familiarise themselves with the campus even as it rained," he said. He added that regular classes for first-year students would begin on Wednesday, with a common orientation programme scheduled for August 1 evening, expected to be attended by the Lieutenant Governor.

Ramjas College Principal Ajay Kumar Arora also described the response as good, noting that the final batch would be formed once the admission process was completed.

That process was still running in parallel. Delhi University is conducting the second round of undergraduate admissions under CSAS. In this round, 24,814 candidates have received fresh seat allocations while 30,682 have secured upgrades. A total of 88,584 candidates remain active. Colleges can verify and approve applications until 11:59 pm on Tuesday, with the fee payment deadline set at 11:59 pm on Wednesday, July 29.

By afternoon, the rain had not stopped, but the nervousness had mostly dissolved into laughter, umbrellas shared between strangers, canteen queues, and the particular chaos of a first day when nobody knows where anything is, and everyone is asking everyone else for directions.

This is how it always begins at North Campus. And every year, somehow, it is exactly what they had hoped for.

Retired cop seek nod for Jantar Mantar protest over Chalo Sansad violence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Retired Delhi Police personnel have sought permission from the Delhi Police to hold a peaceful dharna at Jantar Mantar on July 31 in solidarity with police personnel injured during the 'Chalo Sansad' protest and to demand strict legal action against those allegedly involved in violence and vandalism.

The protest march was called on July 20 by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) seeking resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan as Union Education Minister over the NEET-UG question paper leak. Pradhan resigned on Saturday, and the month-long CJP protest was called off.

In a letter addressed to Delhi Police Commissioner Anurag Kumar, the Delhi Police Mahasangh (Delhi Police Retired Non-Gazetted/Gazetted Officers Association) sought permission to organise the one-day protest from 11 am to 5 pm at the designated protest site at Jantar Mantar. The association said the demonstration was intended to express solidarity and boost the morale of Delhi Police personnel who sustained injuries while performing duty during the protest.

According to Delhi Police, more than 200 police personnel allegedly sustained injuries during the "Chalo Sansad" protest, while over 65 protesters were also injured. Police had also said that more than 15 police vehicles were damaged during the clashes.

The association said it wanted to press for strict legal action against "habitual offenders, anti-social elements, gangsters and violent instigators" allegedly involved in assaulting police personnel and damaging public property during the protest.

The application stated that the gathering would remain within the designated protest zone at Jantar Mantar, no march would be taken out towards Parliament House or Central Vista, no temporary structures or tents would be erected, and organisers would fully cooperate with the police while complying with all directions issued under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS).

Lakshmi Yojana cleared, ₹2,500 monthly aid for 17 lakh women

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Cabinet on Tuesday approved the Delhi Lakshmi Yojana, a flagship welfare scheme that promises monthly financial assistance of ₹2,500 to eligible women. The Government is targeting to roll out the first instalment on Raksha Bandhan.

The scheme, approved at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, is expected to benefit more than 17 lakh women across the national Capital. The Delhi Government has earmarked ₹5,110 crore for the scheme in the 2026-27 Budget.

Announcing the decision after the Cabinet meeting, Gupta said the scheme fulfils a key promise made by her Government to strengthen the economic independence of women. She described the initiative as a step towards ensuring financial security and self-reliance for women in Delhi.

Under the scheme, women aged between 21 and 60 years with an annual family income of up to ₹2.5 lakh will be eligible for assistance. The scheme will initially remain in force for three years, with provision for continuation or modification thereafter.

The application process will be conducted entirely online through the Delhi Lakshmi Yojana portal,



which will open on August 1. The Government aims to release the first instalment to eligible beneficiaries on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan.

Beneficiaries will have two options for receiving the monthly assistance. Under the first option, ₹1,500 will be deposited in a recurring or fixed deposit account, while ₹1,000 will be credited to a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) Digital Rupee wallet. The amount in the digital wallet can only be spent on goods and services permitted by the Government. The second option allows beneficiaries to receive the entire ₹2,500 in a recurring or fixed deposit to encourage long-term savings.

The amount credited to the Digital Wallet can be spent only on permitted goods and services as specified under the Government's prescribed

Negative List. Under the second option, beneficiaries may choose to receive the entire ₹2,500 in an RD/FD. This option is intended to help women build long-term savings and Capital.

The CM said the entire application process will be conducted online through the Delhi Lakshmi Yojana Portal. The portal will open on August 1, allowing eligible women to submit their applications.

The Government has also put in place a district-level mechanism for verifying applications, approving beneficiaries, and grievance redressal. The Cabinet also approved a list of exclusions under the scheme. Women already receiving benefits under any other financial assistance scheme or pension, income taxpayers, GST return filers, Government employees, women with more than three living children, and

women with a criminal record will not be eligible.

The Chief Minister clarified that certain categories of women will not be eligible under the scheme. These include women already receiving benefits under any other financial assistance scheme or pension, income taxpayers, GST return filers, Government employees, women with more than three living children, families with annual electricity consumption exceeding 2,400 units, families with a member employed by the State Government, the Government of India, a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) or any Government organisation, families owning a four-wheeler, and women with a criminal record.

Besides providing financial assistance, the Government said the scheme will encourage beneficiaries to enroll children in schools, create AAPAR and ABHA IDs, ensure timely immunisation, register on the POSHAN Tracker, participate in environmental campaigns, and join self-help groups and skill development programmes.

The CM said the initiative would promote a culture of savings while supporting education, healthcare and skill development, adding that it is expected to play a key role in empowering women across Delhi.

Assembly Session from August 7-11

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Monsoon Session of the Delhi Assembly will be held from August 7 to August 11, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta announced on Tuesday.

The Chief Minister stated that serious and meaningful discussions regarding important issues related to Delhi's development and public welfare schemes would take



place during this session.

"The Monsoon Session of the Delhi Assembly will be held from August 7 to August 11. This decision was taken during a Cabinet meeting," Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said.

The CM added the Government is committed to making necessary decisions, prioritising the public interest above all else, and implementing them effectively.

India blames Pakistan for SAARC stagnation amid Maldives push

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

India on Tuesday underscored its commitment to meaningful regional collaboration in South Asia while pointing to the actions of one member state as the primary barrier to progress within the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The comments came in reply to Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu's recent appeal for the group's revival. Speaking at a regular media interaction, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal stated that New Delhi has long supported vigorous regional ties and continues to pursue them. He noted that people across South Asia understand which nation and which patterns of behaviour have obstructed SAARC's effectiveness, adding that genuine cooperation depends on mutual goodwill. Muizzu raised the issue



External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal

during the Maldives' Independence Day address on Sunday. He described SAARC as an important vehicle for regional stability and urged members to settle disagreements through talks. The Maldivian leader also indicated his country's readiness to help restart stalled meetings and, if required, to facilitate dialogue between parties. SAARC brings together Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Established in 1985, the organisation last held a summit in Kathmandu in 2014. Plans for a 2016 gathering in Islamabad collapsed after India declined to attend in the wake of a major terrorist assault on an army base in Uri that September. Bangladesh, Bhutan and Afghanistan similarly stayed away, and no summit has convened since. Over the past several years India has directed greater attention toward BIMSTEC, viewing the Bay of Bengal

grouping as a more practical and productive arena for multi-sectoral cooperation. Officials have indicated that limited movement under SAARC prompted this shift in emphasis. Bangladesh has voiced comparable interest in reactivating SAARC in recent months, sometimes linking it to complementary work with BIMSTEC. India has consistently maintained that any deeper engagement requires an environment free from cross-border terrorism and built on trust. The regional body represents roughly two billion people and a combined economy approaching five trillion dollars. While technical exchanges have occurred intermittently, the prolonged absence of leadership-level meetings has left the organisation largely dormant. Jaiswal's remarks reaffirmed India's openness to cooperation provided the necessary atmosphere of goodwill exists.

MHA approves ad hoc promotions to ease officer shortage in Ladakh

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ New Delhi

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has approved temporary promotions to address the officer shortage in Ladakh. Eligible officials will fill vacant Group 'B' Gazetted Administrative Service posts. Announced on July 27, 2026, this temporary measure aims to improve governance in the region. The MHA explained that while a permanent system for regular promotions is being developed, the Union Territory Administration can use temporary appointments to fill current vacancies. This short-term solution should quickly help departments facing staff shortages and give officials who have been waiting for promotions a chance to move forward. This approval came after Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena personally raised the issue with the Ministry. He pointed out that regular promotions have



been delayed because the necessary Recruitment Rules have not yet been announced. Because of this, many departments have had fewer officers, slowing decision-making and affecting public services. After the Ministry's approval, LG Saxena said the decision would strengthen governance in Ladakh and support the career goals of deserving officials. "It will help overcome the shortage of Gazetted officers, improve administrative efficiency and ensure uninterrupted delivery of public services," he said. He has asked the Chief Secretary to start the promo-

tion process immediately so the benefits reach people as soon as possible. Officials say the shortage has been especially noticeable in field administration, where gazetted officers are key to coordination, supervision, and the timely implementation of schemes. By letting eligible candidates take on these roles temporarily, the administration expects smoother operations, faster approvals, and better service for people in Leh, Kargil, and other remote areas. The MHA has stipulated that all such promotions must strictly adhere to the guidelines. The Ministry has

said that all promotions must follow the rules set out in the Department of Personnel and Training's Office Memorandum dated 3 April 2013, as updated. Candidates must meet the eligibility criteria to ensure a fair and transparent process. Once these temporary promotions are in place, they should bring new talent into important administrative roles, help keep governance running smoothly, speed up decisions, and improve public services in the Union Territory. The ultimate goal, the present measure offers a practical bridge that balances administrative exigencies with the career progression of officials who have been waiting for years. The step marks a significant intervention by the Centre in response to the ground realities of Ladakh's administrative setup. It reflects the priority being accorded to strengthening institutions in the strategically important Union Territory.

SC slams CBI, Delhi Police over silence in Indiabulls probe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday pulled up the CBI and Delhi Police's Economic Offence Wing (EoW) for being silent on allegations of dubious transactions involving Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited (IHFL), terming their conduct "shocking" and saying it appeared to be a "case of quid pro quo". In July 2024, the tainted company changed its name to Sammaan Capital Limited and changed the shareholding pattern. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana criticised the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for neither taking a final call on registering a regular case despite earlier directions nor filing a status report on the investigation carried out so far. "Owing to the negligence of CBI and EoW of Delhi Police in not even filing a status report and total failure to apprise this court about steps taken for registration of RC (Regular Case) for investigation, we would have summoned the heads of these agencies but for the persuasion of ASG SV Raju, who assures that needful will be

done and status report will be filed within two weeks," the bench said in its order. The bench had initially directed the presence of the CBI director and Delhi Police commissioner in the court but deferred the move after Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Raju assured the court that a comprehensive affidavit and a status report would be filed within two weeks. "This is a case which is very shocking to us. Investigating agencies are keeping silent on the status of investigation in the case. Definitely this is a case of quid pro quo. They are completely silent... file a status report," CJI Kant said. Appearing for petitioner NGO Citizens Whistle Blowers Forum, advocate Prashant Bhushan said the last affidavit filed by CBI in January had referred to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) finding instances of siphoning of funds. He pointed out that the EoW had registered certain FIRs and the CBI was considering clubbing five cases flagged by the ED with the Yes Bank investigation. Bhushan also informed the court that former Indiabulls promoter Sameer Gehlaut had moved to London and



argued that the matter warranted the constitution of a Special Investigation Team (SIT). The bench noted that no affidavit had been filed by the investigating agencies since January and asked the ASG what the probe agencies were doing in the case. Raju said the investigation was continuing and that the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) had taken up one case while the EoW was investigating four cases. "Please give me two weeks to file a comprehensive affidavit in the matter along with a status report," the ASG said, adding that it has been found that all loans extended by Sammaan Capital have been repaid in full, with interest. The CJI said, "What has

the CBI been doing from January to July? We don't want to hold an investigation against innocent persons. Let them have the courage to say that because money was returned, no offence was made out. What was EoW doing? Does it not have the guts to file a status report in the case? In this case, the conduct of CBI and EoW was highly questionable." Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Sammaan Capital, said Gehlaut has no shareholding in the company and has nothing to do with it. Senior advocates Mukul Rohatgi and Nalin Kohli, appearing along with Singhvi, also denied any wrongdoing. On December 17 last year, the top court directed the CBI Director to take a final call

within a week on the registration of regular cases and file a fresh compliance affidavit on the date fixed. Earlier, on November 19, the court had questioned the "reluctance" of the CBI and SEBI to probe the allegations of "dubious transactions" against IHFL. It ordered the agency director to hold a meeting with SEBI, the SFIO and the ED to look into the matter. It had also pulled up the Ministry of Corporate Affairs for the compounding of multiple offences committed by IHFL, and came down heavily on SEBI over the "double standards" adopted by the market regulator in different cases over its jurisdiction to probe into illegalities. The NGO has alleged large-scale irregularities in the affairs of IHFL, claiming that the company and its erstwhile promoters advanced dubious loans to entities owned by large corporate groups, which then allegedly routed the funds back into the accounts of companies owned by the promoters to increase their personal wealth. The NGO has challenged the February 2, 2024, order of the High Court refusing to order an investigation into the matter.

President Murmu's 300 gifts to be e-auctioned beginning from August 5

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

As many as 300 gifts, including a memento in honour of Operation Sindoor, received by President Droupadi Murmu will be e-auctioned from August 5. Launched on Tuesday to mark the occasion of the successful completion of four years of Murmu's presidency, this initiative reflects the enduring spirit of public service, inclusivity, and shared national responsibility, the Rashtrapati Bhavan said. Murmu (68) was sworn in as the 15th President on July 25, 2022, making her the country's first tribal head of state. "On completion of four years of her Presidency, President Droupadi Murmu launched the third edition of e-Upahar, featuring 300 curated presidential gifts for public auction. The auction will be open from 5 August to 5 September 2026. All proceeds from the auction will be used to support social causes," the Rashtrapati Bhavan said in a post on social media on Tuesday. These are far more than ceremonial gifts and they are expressions of affection, respect, and goodwill, reflecting India's extraordinary cultural diversity, artistic excellence, and the collective aspirations of its people, read a booklet on the e-auction of the presidential gift collection. "Every artefact carries a unique story of a place, a tradition, a community, or a memorable moment in the nation's journey," it said. One of the items on the auction is a "memento in honouring Operation Sindoor".



"This golden, hued memento symbolises national strength, pride, and unwavering resolve," it said. It stands as a living tribute to the Indian Air Force's valour and commitment to national defence, inspiring future generations with ideals of bravery, honour, and patriotism, the description reads. Another item on auction is "I03 LVM3 (formerly GSLV MK III) launch vehicle replica", symbolising India's space achievements, technological excellence and self-reliance. The Launch Vehicle Mark 3 (LVM3), earlier known as the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III (GSLV Mk III), is ISRO's most powerful heavy lift space launch vehicle. It can carry up to 4,000 kilograms into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit and up to 8,000 kilograms into low earth orbit. A painting of Mahayogi Guru Gorakhnath Ji, replica of Shri Tripureshwari Devi temple (in Tripura), Rajasthani miniature painting and a framed painting of Gautam Buddha are also among the selected gifts to be made available on auction.

West Bengal launches anti-corruption helplines

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari formally walked the talk against corruption, formally inaugurating on Tuesday an Artificial Intelligence-powered control room at State secretariat Nabanna with four dedicated toll-free numbers. This, in addition to his Government formally rolling out ₹5-lakh Chief Minister's Health Insurance Scheme for those who would fall short of eligibility for the centrally sponsored Ayushman Bharat insurance scheme. The helpline numbers would operate between 9 am and 6 pm from Monday to Saturday. The newly inaugurated helpline numbers — 155334 for cut money, 155335 for syndicate rai, 155337 for illegal road taxes, 155339 for illegal distilleries — would allow people to register complaints regarding any kind of corrupt acts, including extortion, and deficiency in service, from delay in imple-



West Bengal CM Suwendu Adhikari during a felicitation ceremony for 100 NEET toppers from the State in Howrah

menting infrastructural projects to denial of Government services. "From now on, all the complaints will directly reach me regarding cut money, syndicate rai, illegal tolls or illegal distilleries that often cause hooch tragedies," the Chief Minister, whose Home Department on Tuesday effected a massive reshuffling in the subaltern section of the police and executive administration, said. About 99 Block Development Officers, 31 Police Inspectors and 8 inspectors of women's police

stations were on Tuesday shuffled out, sources said. The helpline numbers are comparable to a similar initiative by the previous Mamata Banerjee Government, which had launched a Didi ke Bolo (tell it to Didi — as Banerjee was called) campaign in 2021 but arguably failed to achieve its desired ends. Apart from starting the helpline the Adhikari Government on Tuesday formally rolled out the Mukhyamantri Swasthya Bima Yojana (MMSBY) (Chief Minsiter's Health Insurance

Scheme), enabling the citizens to avail of a cashless health insurance package of up to ₹5 lakh — "but not those who qualify for Ayushman Bharat or have already enrolled in the previous Swasthya Saathi scheme," sources said. The package will be available to all members of the family that has less than a household income of Rs 8 lakh per annum, the Chief Minister said. The scheme would be valid throughout the country, Government sources said. However, those who were already enrolled in CGHS or ESI schemes would not be eligible for the MMSBY, sources said. Other people who have been excluded from the scheme are State or Central Government employees, pensioners under Government health frameworks, and 70-plus senior citizens covered directly under Ayushman Bharat. The scheme would require Aadhaar-based verification, sources said.

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday 'literally' took a masterclass to explain the difference between regret and forgiveness. The tutorial was delivered promptly by Omar shortly after the former Chief Minister and People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mehbooba Mufti, expressed regret over her recent remarks at Delhi's Jantar Mantar, which had triggered a political controversy.

Responding to the controversy, Mehbooba Mufti said she had attended the protest at the request of Kashmiri students studying outside Jammu and Kashmir. During an interaction with journalists at Jantar Mantar, Mufti used the word "bahana" (excuse) to refer to militancy, a remark that drew criticism. "I said that militancy becomes a bahana (an excuse). I did not use that word accidentally or in haste. I thought about it before saying it." However, she said the remark had subsequently been interpreted differently from what she intended. "That single word was blown completely out of proportion." Speaking to media persons on the sidelines of the Mega Job Fair 2026 at Amar Singh College, Srinagar, Omar Abdullah said there is a clear difference between expressing regret and seeking forgiveness.



Jammu and Kashmir CM Omar Abdullah during a job fair at Desh Bhagat University in Srinagar on Tuesday

She (Mehbooba Mufti) had not issued an unconditional apology over her controversial remarks, asserting that expressing regret with the word "if" cannot be termed a genuine apology. "When someone says 'if anyone was hurt,' it is not an apology. There is a difference between regret and forgiveness," Omar said. Omar also criticised PDP MLA Waheed Parra over his claim that the controversial video was AI-generated, saying the PDP chief herself had now admitted that the video was genuine. "For five days people were told it was AI. Today their own party president admitted she herself made those remarks. Those who misled the people should answer for it," he said. On the PDP's proposed August 5 protest seeking restoration of Article 370, Omar said the party itself was responsible for the

present political situation. "If they had not brought the BJP to power in Jammu and Kashmir, we would not have reached this stage. If they now realise their mistake and want to rectify it, that is their decision," Omar Abdullah said. Addressing a press conference in Srinagar during the day, Mehbooba also clarified she never claimed that the video was fake or AI-generated and made it clear that her statement had been misconstrued because of an incomplete expression made in haste while speaking to several journalists. She said she has dedicated nearly three decades of her life to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and has never sought personal gain through politics, adding that whatever she has earned is the trust and affection of the people. "If my words have hurt the sentiments of the people of

Jammu and Kashmir, I sincerely apologise. The people here consider me their own, and if they have been pained because of my remarks, I express my regret," she said. Mehbooba accused political opponents of attempting to exploit the controversy for political gains and alleged that her remarks were deliberately projected out of context to damage her credibility. She further said despite facing political and personal pressures over the years, including actions against members of her family after 2019, she has continued to raise issues concerning the rights and dignity of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Reiterating her stand, the PDP president said her political struggle has always remained focused on safeguarding the interests of Jammu and Kashmir and serving its people.

Mobile disaster alerts reach all networks, remote areas: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

From avalanches in the Himalayas to industrial and man-made disasters in urban centres, India's mobile-based disaster alert system issues geo-targeted warnings in regional languages that reach users across all mobile networks, including those in remote and vulnerable areas, the Government informed the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. In a written response, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said that the



Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai

Cell Broadcast Alert System is used to provide timely warnings for disasters with very short lead time, including cyclones, tsunamis, heavy rainfall, light-

ning, flash floods, thunderstorms, hailstorms, avalanches, cloudbursts and industrial or man-made disasters, besides other events requiring immediate public alerting. Warning-generating agencies provide geo-targeted warnings, which are then disseminated to people in the affected areas. Rai said the system operates through the Integrated Alert System based on the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP), implemented by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).



States Focus



SIR: 1.5 LAKH VOTERS MARKED UNDER ASDD IN MEGHALAYA

Nearly 1.5 lakh of Meghalaya's total 23.49 lakh voters have been marked under the absent, shifted, dead and duplicate (ASDD) category during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, the Chief Electoral Officer BDR Tiwari's office said on Tuesday.

Those placed under the ASDD category account for 6.37 per cent of the State's total electorate. The list includes 74,851 deceased electors, 28,826 absent voters, 37,914 shifted electors, 5,899 duplicate entries and 2,166 cases where enumeration forms were refused, according to an SIR status report issued by the CEO's office.

The election authorities have urged electors to submit their completed enumeration forms to Booth Level Officers or through the online voter service portal. (PTI)



MPPSC CANDIDATES CAN NOW VIEW MAINS ANSWER SHEETS

To promote greater transparency, the Madhya Pradesh Public Service Commission (MPPSC) has announced that candidates will now be able to access their descriptive answer sheets from the State service main exams held between 2019 and 2024.

The exercise will begin with the answer sheets of the State service main examination 2019, and the inspection process for them will commence in November, according to an official release issued on Monday.

Candidates will subsequently be allowed to go through their answer sheets of the State service main examination conducted in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 in a phased manner. (PTI)

Maharashtra Cabinet approves new courts under NDPS, SC-ST Act

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

The Maharashtra Cabinet on Tuesday approved the establishment of new courts, including a special court in Pune for cases registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, and five new courts for Atrocity Act matters.

The decision, taken at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, followed a recommendation from the Bombay High Court which noted that a large number of NDPS cases were pending in Pune, an official release said.

Further, the cabinet gave its nod for creating a post of district and additional sessions judge and seven support staff for the new NDPS Act court and sanctioned ₹1.26 crore for its establishment and operations.

At present, around 30,000 NDPS cases are pending across Maharashtra, including 1,425 in Pune. Courtroom No 22 at the Pune District Court has been allocated for the new Special Court.



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis

The Cabinet also approved the establishment of a Junior Division Civil Court and Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) Court at Kurduwadi in Madha taluka of Solapur district. The new court will be provided with one judicial officer and 11 regular supporting staff posts. An expenditure of ₹1.18 crore for setting up the court was approved.

With the establishment of the new court, residents of Kurduwadi and surrounding areas will not need to travel long distances for civil and criminal cases, the release said.

A district and additional sessions court was also approved at Karjat in Ahilyanagar district, which

NCPI MPs attend NDA Parliamentary party meet

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

For the first time, a group of MPs who left the Trinamool Congress and joined the NCPI attended a meeting of the NDA parliamentary party on Tuesday with the attendance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and top Union ministers.

As many as 20 Lok Sabha MPs revolted against their party, TMC, and joined the little-known Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI). While they are sitting separately in Lok Sabha, away from the TMC MPs, Speaker Om Birla is yet to take a call

on giving NCPI recognition.

After joining the NCPI, the MPs expressed their allegiance to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance. A prominent face of the group, Sudip Bandyopadhyay, recently met the prime minister. The NDA parliamentary party meeting was held at the Parliament House complex.

"I participated in the NDA meeting. It was an enriching and informative meeting in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Today, we had a discussion on FTAs. It was a positive discussion," NCPI MP Sayoni Ghosh said.



MPs Saayoni Ghosh and June Malia after the NDA Parliamentary meeting, at the Parliament House in New Delhi on Tuesday

She also said that everyone should support the anti-paper leak bill, which will

come up for discussion this afternoon.

Another lawmaker, Kakoli

BJP alleges ₹400 crore veterinary doctor recruitment scam in Karnataka

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

Alleging a ₹400 crore scam in the veterinary doctors recruitment, BJP's Karnataka unit president BY Vijayendra on Tuesday asked: "How much share has gone to Chief Minister DK Shivakumar?"

The BJP leader also demanded a CBI investigation into the alleged mega scam in the recruitment of Veterinary Officers.

Speaking to reporters after participating in a protest by KPSC aspirants at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Tuesday, he said corruption was corruption, irrespective of during which tenure the recruitment took place.

Several BJP Leaders, including the Leader of the Opposition in the State Legislative Council Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, joined him in the protest.

Questioning why the State Government was reluctant to hand over the case to the CBI, Vijayendra asked, "What share of the alleged Rs 400-crore scam in the Veterinary Officers' recruitment had



BJP's Karnataka unit president BY Vijayendra

gone to the Chief Minister and the State Government? Why is the Congress Government playing with the future of the children?"

He urged the Government for reforms in the KPSC to put an end to corruption and demanded a comprehensive discussion on the issue in the Legislature. He said youth from across the State had gathered to protest over the alleged KPSC scam.

"This is a ₹400-crore scam. How can such a major scam be entrusted to an internal

committee for investigation? When the fence starts eating the crop, justice cannot be expected through an internal inquiry," he remarked.

Questioning the examination system adopted by the state, he asked why Karnataka was implementing a recruitment process that was not followed anywhere else in the country.

He alleged that the system had been designed to facilitate corruption and generate illegal gains.

Meanwhile, the Karnataka

Home Minister Priyank Kharge said on Tuesday that the cases related to the alleged irregularities in recruiting 400 veterinary officers have been handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

The KPSC has been in turmoil following Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot suspending KPSC Chairman Shivashankarappa S Sahukar on July 13 following allegations that he allegedly facilitated the illegal selection of his two daughters as Industrial Extension Officers.

Palaniswami slams Union minister's response on Mekedatu dam row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chennai

AIADMK Chief Edappadi K Palaniswami on Tuesday slammed Union Minister of State Raj Bhushan Chowdhary's reply in the Parliament on a dam proposed by the Karnataka Government across the Cauvery at Mekedatu, saying that the reply misinterpreted the Supreme Court's verdict.

Expressing deep shock over the statement, the AIADMK general secretary said in a statement here that inter-state rivers are national properties and that upper-riparian States cannot unilaterally alter water flows.

He urged the Central

Government and its ministers to act with greater responsibility with regard to issues concerning the sentiments of the people, particularly on the Mekedatu dam issue. The responses given on sensitive inter-state water issues must keep in mind the historical context, legal facts, and the sentiments of the affected people, he said.

The former chief minister highlighted page 342 of the 2018 Supreme Court verdict, which, according to him, clearly said, "no state located upstream of the river shall take any action that may affect the scheduled distribution of water to the States located downstream".



AIADMK Chief Edappadi K Palaniswami

YSRCP stages protests over DSC irregularities, TDP rejects charges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Amaravati

YSRCP workers and leaders on Tuesday staged protests across Andhra Pradesh, demanding the resignation of state Education Minister Nara Lokesh and a CBI inquiry into the alleged irregularities in the DSC-2025 teacher recruitment process.

However, the ruling TDP strongly condemned the YSRCP protests, alleging that the Opposition party was attempting to politicise the 'Mega DSC' recruitment process despite the Andhra Pradesh High Court upholding the recruitment drive.

The protests, organised by the opposition party's youth and student wings, were held at district and constituency headquarters across the State.

According to YSRCP, the recruitment exercise conducted under the banner of "Mega DSC" was marred by irregularities.

"The Mega DSC recruitment was heavily publicised, but it was marred by irregularities. The Education Minister should accept moral responsibility and resign. The Centre should



order a CBI inquiry into the recruitment process."

In a press release, the party alleged that student enrolment in Government schools has declined by more than 5.5 lakh over the past two years and dismissed the Government's claim that 1.1 lakh students had migrated from private to public schools as "misleading".

It further claimed that essential textbooks are yet to reach several schools despite the academic year commencing over a month ago and the Vidya Kanuka programme has not been implemented this year.

The YSRCP also alleged that over 22.6 lakh beneficiaries have been excluded from the Taliki Vandanam', which offers ₹15,000 per

annum per school-going

child. They also sought the implementation of full fee reimbursement, restoration of the Vasathi Deevana scheme and payment of the promised ₹3,000 monthly unemployment allowance to eligible youth.

The YSRCP leaders said the protests were aimed at safeguarding public education, Government schools and the interests of students while urging the Government to address the concerns raised by the Opposition.

Meanwhile, YSRCP leader RK Roja accused the TDP-led Government of "ignoring" the repeated demands for a CBI probe despite protests by unemployed DSC aspirants.

RSS condemns Mohandas' remarks on CJP protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The RSS on Tuesday condemned the controversial remarks made by right-wing political observer TG Mohandas on the recent students' agitation in New Delhi, saying they were his "personal thoughts" and deserved to be denounced.

In a statement, senior RSS functionary KB Sreekumar clarified that Mohandas was not an RSS office-bearer at any level.

"TG Mohandas's comments on the recent protest are his personal thoughts. He is not an RSS official at any level. RSS doesn't agree with his views, and they should be condemned in the highest possible manner," Sreekumar said.

The clarification came a day after Mohandas's remarks triggered widespread protests in Kerala and on social media, prompting the pro-CPI student outfit All India Students' Federation (AISF) to lodge a police complaint against him.

Mohandas allegedly said



TG Mohandas

in a YouTube video that the Delhi students' protest over the NEET paper leak "could lead to incidents of gang rape and that there would be no complaints against that since those attending the protest like rape and there are girls who enjoy being raped."

In the same video, he also allegedly said that, if he were in charge, he would impose a curfew, order the crowd to disperse, and then open fire if they refused, claiming that although some people would be killed or permanently injured, the situation would be brought under control within hours and the bodies shifted to hospitals.

16 Maoists surrender before Jharkhand Police

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ranchi

Sixteen Maoists, with six of them carrying a combined bounty of ₹39 lakh, surrendered before the Jharkhand Police here on Tuesday, a senior officer said.

Santosh Mahto alias Basudev Da alias Dilip, who was wanted in 128 cases and carrying a ₹15 lakh reward on his head, was among those who surrendered, he said.

"Of the 16 Maoists, six were carrying a total bounty of ₹39 lakh on their heads. Five women members were also part of the group. A regional committee member and a zonal committee member are among them," the officer said.

Two sub-zonal commit-



tee members and two area committee functionaries were among those who surrendered, he said.

The surrender of Santosh Mahto, a regional committee member of the banned CPI (Maoist), was one of the big achievements for the Jharkhand Police,

the officer said.

"Santosh was wanted in 128 cases registered at various police stations in several districts. He was accused of being involved in an IED blast in a forest under the border police stations of Manoharpur, Chotnagar and Jhariakela on March 1, injur-

ing a jawan of the Cobra battalion," the officer said.

Jharkhand DGP Tadasha Mishra termed the surrender of Maoists as another "big achievement for the State police".

"We are committed to eliminating extremism and crimes from the State. The Jharkhand Police are working towards their commitment to make the State clean," she said on the occasion.

Proscribed CPI (Maoist) zonal committee member Chandan Lohra, who was wanted in 78 cases and was carrying a bounty of ₹10 lakh, surrendered, he said.

The Maoists laid down six INSAS and two AK-47 rifles besides 38 magazines and 1,562 cartridges, the police added.

BJP MLAs welcomes Pradhan upon return to Odisha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhubaneswar

Senior BJP leader Dharmendra Pradhan was on Tuesday accorded a warm welcome by Odisha ministers and party MLAs at the Bhubaneswar airport upon his return to his home State for the first time after resigning as the Union education minister in the face of massive student and youth protests.

Five State ministers, 21 other BJP legislators, two former MLAs and senior party leaders welcomed the Sambalpur MP at the Biju Patnaik International Airport.

'Dharmendra Pradhan zindabad' slogan rent the air as his supporters lined either side of the road to



welcome their leader.

Pradhan stepped down as the Union education minister on July 25, taking moral responsibility for the irregularities in the conduct of the NEET-UG 2026 exam-

ination held on May 3.

Pradhan's supporters are projecting him as a "hero" as he is the first minister in the Narendra Modi Government who stepped down on "moral grounds".

Odisha BJP leaders, including Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and BJP State president Manmohan Samal, have praised Pradhan for taking an "exemplary step by resigning on moral grounds".

Rajnath unveils policy reforms for ICG

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday here unveiled two significant policy reforms for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) aimed at promoting gender parity in the induction and service conditions of officers, and streamlining the administrative procedures for granting ex gratia to the families of personnel reported missing at sea while on duty.

The first policy directive establishes a comprehensive, women-centric approach by ushering in a gender-neutral framework for the induction of officers into the ICG.

The highlights of the policy include induction of women candidates into both Short Service Appointments (SSA)



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during the unveiling of two policy reforms for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) in New Delhi

and Permanent Appointments (PA) at par with their male counterparts. SSA has also been opened for male candidates.

The policy ensures equal opportunities for career progression, commencing right from the ab-initio training

phase. The existing PA women officers shall also be considered for promotion to higher positions subject to fulfilment of eligibility conditions. The existing serving women officers on SSA will also be provided an option to convert their service to a PA,

subject to the fulfilment of stipulated conditions. This progressive step reflects the Government's commitment to Nari Shakti and equal opportunity in the nation's maritime security apparatus.

The second policy reform brings relief and administrative ease to the Next of Kin (NoK) of the personnel who unfortunately go missing at sea in the line of duty. The key highlights of the policy include the authority to declare an ICG personnel missing at sea while on duty as 'presumed dead' for the purpose of ex-gratia.

The reform significantly eases and accelerates the process for the grant of ex-gratia compensation and terminal benefits to the NoK.

This measure ensures that the families of brave person-

nel are not subjected to prolonged administrative delays during times of mental trauma.

Lauding the ICG for its exemplary service over the past five decades, Rajnath Singh exuded confidence that these forward-looking policies will further strengthen the morale and operational efficacy of the force as it marches toward its Swarnim Jayanti (Golden Jubilee) in 2027.

He reaffirmed Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Government's resolve to strengthen the ICG as a modern, capable and future-ready maritime force. Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, DG ICG Director General Paramesh Sivamani and other senior officials attended the event.

Change *dil ka angle*, not camera angle: Priyanka

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi needs to change his "*dil ka angle*" instead of camera angles if he wants to win over the Gen Z, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi told Parliament Tuesday in a sharp barb over his Instagram outreach to student protesters last week.

Priyanka Gandhi also launched a stinging attack on the Government over the lathi-charge on students, saying every 'lathi' blow on any boy or girl, hurt the Government's prestige more than the backs of the students. "Why was it necessary to fire tear gas shells at students, to rain lathis on them? Why was it necessary — to humiliate young girls by tearing their clothes, to have them beaten mercilessly? Why was it necessary to fire pellet guns and AK-47s at the country's youth? Are they terrorists," the Congress general secretary asked, participating in a discussion in Lok Sabha on 'The Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Bill 2026'.

"Today, these questions are being asked not just by the Congress party, but by the entire nation, and the responsibility to answer them lies with the Government. Why does this Government fear the country's youth? Who gave it the right to suppress their voices," she said. Priyanka Gandhi also dismissed the Government's announcement of setting up fast-track courts to deal with paper leaks, saying fast track courts already have a very poor record. "Blaming



the opposition in Parliament, playing hollow political games won't work. If the prime minister wants to win over the Gen Z, then making videos with different camera angles will not help. The prime minister needs to change his '*dil ka angle*', not the angle of cameras," she said. "This new generation is aware and has an immense capacity to recognize lies. To win their hearts, PM Modi will have to step onto the path of truth," Priyanka Gandhi said.

Under Modi's governance, grave "injustice and barbarity" has been done to the youth, she alleged.

"Accept this truth, take responsibility, take concrete steps, and consult experts and take all stakeholders along to prepare a new education system after deep consultations...PM Modi will have to take steps to create employment. Education and healthcare must expand in the country, so that children can dream of a bright future," she said.

In her 29-minute speech, Priyanka Gandhi also said students can be removed from the streets, but not their questions. "Every 'lathi' blow on any boy or girl,

hurt the Government's prestige more than the backs of the students. The youth of the country are demanding justice?not charity. They had come not to topple the Government, but to redeem their trust," she said.

Home Minister Amit Shah and Modi will have to answer who gave the order to attack the children with pellet guns, she asked and added that the question is being asked by the entire country.

Talking about her visit to RML hospital last week to meet a young woman injured in the protests and the interaction with her mother, Priyanka Gandhi asked Modi and Shah as to what was the need for suppressing an innocent little girl, humiliating girls and tearing their clothes, unleashing tear gas, pellet guns, and AK-47s on students.

Priyanka Gandhi said the demand of the protesting students was that action should be taken against those who leaked exam papers, reform of education system, education minister Dharmendra Pradhan should resign, and action should be taken against those who brutalized students, and an apology be issued.

No paper leak case in Punjab, Opposition lying: Cheema



Harpal Singh Cheema

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chandigarh

Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema on Tuesday rejected the Opposition's charge of a paper leak in the State, claiming that it is trying to spread lies against the AAP Government.

Addressing the media here, Cheema said there has been no paper leak in the past four years of the Bhagwant Mann Government.

Opposition parties have been attacking the Mann Government over the issue of a cheating racket detected recently in a pharmacy officer recruitment exam and are demanding the resignation of Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains and Health Minister Balbir Singh.

On July 19, Punjab Police dismantled a highly sophisticated, interstate cheating racket operating during the pharmacy officer examination. A total of seven key conspirators and 28 candidates were held. Police also recovered 27 battery-operated wireless cheating devices.

Cheema said, "There has not been a single case of paper leak in Punjab. Opposition parties are trying to mislead our youths."

Referring to the pharmacy officer exam, the minister said some youths in the exam were caught cheating using electronic means.

Students must be protected, not arsonists: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The BJP on Tuesday said the Supreme Court's interim order on petitions related to protests over the alleged NEET paper leak draws a clear distinction between genuine student protesters and those involved in violence, stressing that while "dissent is okay, danga (riot) is not".

The remarks came after the Supreme Court directed authorities not to take coercive action against protesters while continuing investigation in FIRs and to release those under 18 years of age, provided they have no criminal records. It also asked authorities to preserve electronic and digital evidence relating to the recent nationwide stir over the NEET paper leak.

"The allegations prima facie warrant consideration of a fair and independent probe, which must also address the concerns of families of over 200 injured police personnel," a bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant observed, while hearing a batch of petitions alleging police brutality during the demonstrations. BJP national spokesperson Shehzaad Poonawalla said the Supreme Court has dealt with the matter in a "mature" and "sensitive" manner.

"SC has weighed in very maturely and sensitively. It must be welcomed by all," he said in a post on social media.

"Students and arsonists or rioters are different. Students must be protected. Arsonists cannot. The court says this. Dissent is okay, danga (riot) is not. Students, okay; arsonists, not. Protests



BJP spokesperson Shehzaad Poonawalla

are okay; provocation is not," he said. Poonawalla asserted that the Government is already committed to ensuring that no cases are pursued against genuine protesters.

"But cases will continue for arsonists. There can be no blanket suraksha kawach (protection shield) for those who assault, molest, etc with established criminal antecedents," he added.

Citing CJI's observations, Poonawalla also said the court has noted that the allegations "prima facie warrant consideration of a fair and independent probe, which must also address the concerns of families of over 200-250 injured police personnel."

The bench, also including Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, directed all States where protests were held to preserve CCTV footage, drone recordings, body-camera footage, wireless communication records, PCR logs and other digital evidence pertaining to the protests. It also ordered that any digital data collected on protesters be preserved but not brought into the public domain.

Assam flood situation improves with receding water levels, no fresh deaths

TONY DAS
■ Guwahati

Assam's flood situation improved with no fresh fatalities reported, the number of affected people decreasing to 4.45 lakh and water levels receding in several districts, officials said on Tuesday. A central team visited Sivasagar, one of the worst-hit districts in the current wave of floods, and reviewed the situation in the eastern parts of the state, they said.

The toll is currently at 68 with no fresh deaths recorded and no person was reported missing, an official bulletin said. The officials said Sivasagar, Golaghat, Charaideo, Jorhat, Nagaon and Kamrup (Metropolitan) continued to be impacted by the floods, but the number of people hit by the deluge decreased to 4.45 lakh. Charaideo remained the worst-hit district, where 1.88 lakh people remained affected, followed by Sivasagar (1.44 lakh) and Jorhat (74,458).

Till Sunday, the number of affected people was over 5.24 lakh across five districts. Altogether 90 relief camps remained opera-



Assam CM Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma chaired a review meeting with Ministers, MLAs, District Commissioners and senior officials to review the prevailing flood situation and the ongoing relief and rehabilitation measure

tional, sheltering 28,695 displaced people. Additionally, 94 relief distribution centres were also functional, the bulletin said. The Dhanisiri (S) river was flowing above the danger level at

Numaligarh in Golaghat district. Multiple agencies, including the NDRF, SDRF and civil defence personnel, are carrying out the rescue and relief operations. A total crop area of 37,139.52 hectares was still

submerged, while damage to houses, roads and other infrastructure was reported from various parts of the affected districts, the officials said.

Chief Minister thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his "personal attention" to the Assam flood, which has claimed 68 lives so far while over 4.45 lakh people continue to reel under the deluge. He said the state Government has been able to reach all affected villages and was working on a war footing to provide relief to the flood-hit population.

PM Modi on Tuesday held a meeting with Union Ministers and BJP MPs belonging to Assam at the Parliament House complex to review the state's flood situation and later said on X the Centre was working closely with the Assam Government in providing relief to the affected people. A five-member central team led by MHA Joint Secretary M Ramachandrudu visited Sivasagar on Monday to review Upper Assam's flood situation with state ministers Keshab Mahanta and Bimal Borah, and local officials

accompanying them. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, in a social media post, said power restoration work was going on in a phased manner.

"Since this morning, the number of families without power has declined by another 25 per cent. As floodwaters continue to recede, power supply is being restored across more affected areas. I will continue to share regular updates and keep you posted until power is restored to every affected household," he said in the post late on Monday evening.

Sarma also said that with water receding, disinfection and fogging drives across villages have been started to prevent the outbreak of any disease. Water Resources Minister Susanta Borgohain said steps were being taken to bury livestock and animals killed in the deluge. "The recent floods in Assam have sadly claimed the lives of many livestock. To prevent water contamination and the spread of diseases, the deceased animals are being buried and disposed of scientifically," he said.

Mehbooba Mufti announces protests on August 5 for restoration of Article 370

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Srinagar

People's Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday announced that her party would hold peaceful protests at district headquarters across Jammu and Kashmir on August 5 to press for the restoration of Article 370 and "resolution of the Kashmir issue".

The Centre revoked J&K's special status by abrogating Article 370 of the Constitution on August 5, 2019.

"All our people, who are sitting here, will hold peaceful protests in their districts on August 5 for the restoration of Article 370, 35A, and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue," Mehbooba Mufti said at a press conference at the party headquarters here on the occasion of the PDP's 27th foundation day.

The announcement comes close on the heels of National Conference president Farooq Abdullah, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, ministers, MLAs and party workers holding a protest in the national capital on July 20, demanding the immediate restoration of statehood to the Union Territory.

Mehbooba Mufti, the former chief minister, said that August 5 was the day "everything was stripped from us". She said the party, on its foundation day, has passed a resolution including on "resolution of Kashmir issue". "The party hereby resolves to reaf-



firm its belief in 'peace with dignity' as the only sustainable path towards lasting peace, through dialogue, reconciliation, confidence-building and meaningful democratic engagement among all stakeholders," the resolution read.

She said PDP is committed to "peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue", alongside the restoration of Article 370, Article 35A, "our identity, and statehood".

"PDP remains committed to this cause. We will continue our struggle, and God willing, we will achieve it," she said.

Mehbooba Mufti said her father and PDP founder Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's vision cannot move forward

unless Jammu and the Kashmir valley walk together, understand each other's pain and sorrow and work jointly for each other's progress.

"We will endeavour to walk hand-in-hand, just as the people of Kargil and Leh in Ladakh move forward together," she said.

She also called for restoration of trade and connectivity, saying J&K has been constrained like a flower in a pot, even as it can become a vital bridge between Central Asia and South Asia.

"Whether across the Line of Control (LoC) or other regional borders, we will strive to reopen these routes for movement and trade.

"The Muzaffarabad and Rawalakot trade routes opened in 2005 following our efforts were unfortunately closed. We appeal to the Central Government to reopen them for trade, and also to open the Sharda Peeth corridor for our Kashmiri Pandit brothers and sisters," she said.

The PDP president called for the release of political prisoners and undertrials, and withdrawal of the Army from areas where militancy has reduced.

"In areas where militancy has reduced, as the Government of India itself frequently claims, we urge the Central Government to relocate the army back to barracks. This is not a new demand; we have voiced it previously and are reiterating it today," she said.

Parliament panel summons Meta, X, Google over regulation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A Parliamentary panel has summoned representatives of major social media platforms, including Instagram, along with officials of the ministries of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and Home Affairs, on August 3 to discuss regulation of social media and digital platforms.

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, who chairs the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology, said the panel has called representatives of Meta (Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp), Google, X (formerly Twitter) and Snapchat on August 3 to explain how they protect the privacy of women, children, farmers, rural residents, labourers and the general public, and ensure public order.

The meeting comes days after social media, particularly Instagram, was extensively used by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) to publicise and mobilise participants for its student protest at Jantar Mantar. The demonstrations, which were held over the NEET-UG paper leak and other issues, drew widespread attention online, with videos, reels and live updates from the protest sites being shared across social media platforms.

According to the notice issued on Tuesday, the agenda includes a "briefing by the representatives of (i) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY); (ii) Ministry of Home Affairs; and (iii) Social and Digital Media Platforms — Snapchat, Google, X (formerly Twitter), Meta (Facebook and Instagram) on the subject 'Social and digital platforms and their regulation'."



BJP MP Nishikant Dubey

21 crore screened, 6 lakh treated for Hepatitis: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

More than 21 crore people have been screened for viral hepatitis and over six lakh patients have received free treatment under the National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme (NVHCP), the Union Health Ministry said on Tuesday.

Marking World Hepatitis Day and eight years of the programme, Union Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel called for a "Hepatitis-Mukt Bharat" and urged the Centre, states and other stakeholders to intensify efforts to eliminate viral hepatitis by 2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Patel said India is among the few countries providing free treatment for Hepatitis C and free management of Hepatitis B — a serious liver infection caused by a virus.

She said the cost of medicines has been reduced to less than a dollar and quality diagnostics are being made increasingly accessible to facilitate early diagnosis and timely treatment.

Highlighting the pro-



Union Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel

gramme's expansion, Patel said screening and treatment services are now available through the country's network of over 1.85 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, taking hepatitis care closer to communities.

She said the Hepatitis B vaccine, introduced under the Universal Immunisation Programme in 2011, has achieved more than 92 per cent birth-dose coverage.

The minister, however, said only around 65 per cent of pregnant women are currently being screened for Hepatitis B and urged states and Union Territories to achieve 100 per cent screening to ensure timely administration of the Hepatitis B birth dose and Hepatitis B

Immunoglobulin (HBIG) for newborns of infected mothers.

Calling Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C "silent killers", Patel stressed the need to vaccinate health care workers, strengthen interventions among high-risk groups and create greater public awareness about free testing and treatment services available at Government health facilities.

Union Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava said the programme has established 1,153 treatment centres, surpassing the target of one treatment centre in every district, including more than 70 specialised centres providing advanced care.

Editor's
TAKE

The human firewall against AI exploitation

Across India, thousands of workers are refusing to turn their labour into free training material for AI models. Their fight is about protecting their rights

Artificial intelligence is now omnipresent. In every walk of life, AI has made an intervention. Though it has several advantages, it also has a downside. It may well replace humans in various industries. And the irony is that it needs the help of those very workers it would replace. Every AI model must be trained first, and this has to be done by those who are presently doing that work. Every sophisticated AI model learns from billions of pieces of human-created content and from the painstaking work of countless annotators, translators, coders, writers and reviewers. Without this invisible workforce, AI simply cannot improve. It is therefore significant that many Indian workers are beginning to resist attempts to use their labour to train AI systems that may ultimately replace them. The concern is understandable. A content moderator who labels harmful posts, a language expert who translates documents, or a software engineer who corrects AI-generated code is not merely completing a task. They are transferring valuable expertise to machines. Once an AI system masters that knowledge, the demand for the same human skills may gradually diminish. Workers are effectively helping to build their own competitors. India occupies a unique position in this debate. It has become one of the world's largest suppliers of AI training labour, employing hundreds of thousands in data annotation, linguistic validation, customer support, quality assurance and digital content moderation. Yet most of these workers have little say over how their contributions are used.

Knowledge is a form of intellectual capital. If companies profit enormously from AI systems built upon human expertise, there is a compelling argument that the individuals supplying that expertise deserve transparency, fair compensation and meaningful consent. Otherwise, AI risks becoming another example of technological progress that concentrates wealth while socialising its costs.

Can such practices be legally stopped? The answer is complex. Existing Indian labour laws do not specifically regulate AI training. Copyright law protects original creative works but not necessarily the knowledge or judgement workers apply during routine employment. Contract law generally favours employers where employees have already agreed to broad usage rights. However, India's Digital Personal Data Protection framework and evolving discussions around AI governance could provide opportunities to strengthen worker protections. First, India needs clear legislation requiring companies to disclose when employees' work is being used to train AI models.

Transparency should become a legal obligation rather than a corporate choice. Second, workers should have the right to informed consent wherever feasible, especially when their specialised expertise is being incorporated into commercial AI systems beyond the scope of their original employment. Third, labour laws should be updated to recognise AI-assisted workplaces. Finally, India should establish an independent AI ethics and labour commission to balance innovation with workers' rights. Technological progress should never come at the cost of human dignity.

Balen Shah@100: A new reckoning

The euphoria that swept Balen Shah into office is gradually giving way to the harder realities of governance. With his first 100 days now behind him, the next phase will be crucial in shaping the future of Nepal's democratic experiment



ASHOK K MEHTA

The new British Prime Minister Andy Burnham has two things in common with Nepalese Prime Minister Balen Shah: both have risen from Mayor to PM; and both want a new political and economic model. While Burnham has an experienced and capable team to do so, Shah has neither. Still, Balen has completed his honeymoon period of 100 days with a mixed record, even as his Adidas keeds have begun to pinch. While the Balen craze seems to be on the decline, it is not clear who is calling the shots: Party Chairman Rabi Lamichhane, Shah or the PMO. By some reports, it is the PMO led by Balen's political adviser, Kumar Ben, and his team.

Lamichhane is no Nitin Nabin, BJP's titular head of the party. Lamichhane is a former deputy prime minister and home minister but carries the baggage of unresolved court cases which do not allow him to hold any Cabinet office. Though he has the numbers in the party and government, it was the Balen craze that swept the elections. Obviously, there is an unspoken conflict between two young and ambitious politicians, which has spurred internal party strife, registering a decline in the Rashtriya Swatantra Party's popularity. The sound of the bell (party symbol and rallying call) is getting muffled.

Yet, according to one confidential source, Balen consults Rabi frequently and their successful spouses, Sabina and Nikita, are good friends, though Sabina Kafle naturally captures the limelight. Balen realises Rabi has stolen a march due to the tumultuous party convention in Chitwan last month and the red-carpet welcome in India. Balen's focus on domestic affairs and decision not to travel abroad on any foreign visit have lost him mileage, which prompted his confidant Ben to meet NSA Ajit Doval, PM Modi's principal adviser on the neighbourhood, especially Nepal, and discuss a possible Balen visit before he travels to the UNGA in New York in September.

A standing invitation to India for Balen was given by Modi soon after his triumphant victory, but scheduling in September may be a problem due to the BRICS summit fixed for September, unless he is a special invitee. Rabi is due to go to China, where he has sought a meeting with Communist Party Chairman Xi Jinping. At present, Rabi is the unquestioned leader who has managed differences with Balen.

Cracks within other political formations are natural after the Gen Z upheaval last year. GoP Nepali Congress was the first to introspect: after all, it had won a two-thirds majority in 1959, registering Nepal's first short-lived tryst with multi-party democracy. King Mahendra dismissed



NEPAL IS INDIA'S CROWN JEWEL IN SOUTH ASIA, LOCATED AT THE HEAD OF BHARAT MATA. THE BLOOD BONDING WITH NEPAL THROUGH GORKHA RECRUITMENT IS LIKELY TO BE REVIEWED FOLLOWING A BIG RALLY COMMENCING ON JULY 29, FROM THE GORKHA HEARTLAND IN LAMJUNG. THIS STRATEGIC NIRVANA OF BILATERAL RELATIONS

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

the first elected Prime Minister, BP Koirala, which upset India even as its Army Chief, Gen KS Thimayya, was on a tiger shoot at Chitwan, Nepal, at that very time.

NC has never been fully united - parties within a party, at least three factions - and has split earlier and is on the verge of another split under the same patronage of five-time PM Sher Bahadur Deuba, who is abroad but will return shortly to face charges of corruption. The original NC, led by stalwarts Purna Bahadur Khadka and Shekhar Koirala, has challenged, through a review petition, the decision of the Election Commission and Supreme Court to award the flag and party symbol to rebel youth leader Gagan Thapa, who held a special party convention to be elected as NC party president. From the single-largest party with 87 seats in the last election, it has crumbled to its lowest-ever tally of 38 seats, still the second-largest party thanks to the mixed electoral system. Thapa has decided to break with Left parties in the Provincial Councils, where RSP has no representation.

Surprisingly, four-time PM KP Oli, who was the trigger of the Gen Z revolt last year, is still leader of CPN-UML, his health holding despite multiple kidney transplants, proving power is the biggest aphrodisiac. China, which is again recreating political space, is attempting to bring together all Left parties, including four-time PM Prachanda and former President Bidya Bhandari, spouse of legendary Left leader Madan Bhandari, into a grand Left alliance. It may end up in a surfeit of former PMs with few stormtroopers. Prachanda and Oli have allied to form governments in five of seven provinces.

Once kingmakers, the Terai-based parties and monarchists have been decimated by the RSP tsunami, but former Raja Gyanendra still

hopes the monarchy, which is on the rise on social media, will return. Home Minister Sudan Gurung has announced a review of the 2000 Palace Massacre enquiry, when present President Ramchandra Poudel was Home Minister and Prince Gyanendra was in Pokhara. Former Indian ambassador KV Rajan and Atul K Thakur's book, Kathmandu Chronicles, has covered the horrendous event in stark detail.

India enjoyed a fleeting sweet spot in Nepal with back-to-back visits by Lamichhane and Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal, who said his visit to India could be termed 'special', probably referring to India's claim of "special and unique bilateral relations". For 250 years now, Nepal has followed 'balanced diplomatic relations' between India and China in pursuit of the dictum enunciated by the founder of modern Nepal, King Prithvi Narayan Shah. In reality, this balance was always tilted towards India due to strategic geography and religious and cultural factors.

Advantage India has been diminished by the entry of a third power, the US, which two decades ago said it would follow India's lead in South Asia. That is no longer the case. US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Samir Paul Kapoor, made a stand-alone visit to Nepal in April 2026, notably not meeting Balen Shah. He warned against Chinese 'debt-trap diplomacy' and asserted that no single power should dominate South Asia — a clear setback for India.

Nepal is India's crown jewel in South Asia, located at the head of Bharat Mata. The blood bonding with Nepal through Gorkha recruitment is likely to be reviewed following a big rally commencing on July 29, from the Gorkha heartland in Lamjung. This strategic nirvana of bilateral relations

PIC TALK



Workers carry harvested jute stalks for retting by submerging them in water to facilitate fibre extraction in Nadia district, West Bengal. PHOTO: PTI

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

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RESTORING TRUST AND CREDIBILITY IN INDIA'S EXAMINATION SYSTEM

Apropos of 'A Digital Fix for a Crisis of Trust', published on 28 July. For years, exam paper leaks have been a huge blot on a system that needs structural reforms. Question papers have found their way into a few hands, and the advent of the digital age has made this easier. One paper or even one mark can make or break a student's future.

There have been other committees, but with UIDAI founder-chairman Nandan Nilekani at the helm, this one brings credibility. It will have to introduce safeguards at every stage of the examination process — setting question papers, checking and finally declaring results.

In almost a decade of existence, the NTA has not covered itself in glory; there have been too many failures. It should not work merely as a contracting agency

but have permanent professionals with expertise in question design, psychometrics, cybersecurity and logistics. Nor should the NTA conduct every specialised examination. A hybrid approach could allow the NTA to conduct examinations for certain all-India seats, while states conduct their own examinations, ensuring that one leak does not affect all seats.

Technology should be used at every stage. Questions should be set by distributed teams, independently reviewed, calibrated and stored in encrypted modules. No individual should have access to the complete paper.

The ultimate goal should be that every candidate leaves the examination centre confident that merit and effort, not manipulation, will decide their future.

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

Why true satisfaction begins with God



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

2ND OPINION

There is a logical reason for it. We, souls, are parts of God (The Bhagavad-Gita 15.7). Then, it stands to reason that we can be satisfied only when God is in the loop. A simile of a toddler and his mother will shed light on this matter. Nothing pacifies the child until he is united with his mother. Similarly, God must always be involved in our life in order for us to feel satisfied; otherwise, it is not possible.

Let us examine the veracity of this statement. We have been given gross senses and subtle faculties, which are the mind, intelligence and 'ahankar' (fake ego). Starting with the senses, they always seek sense objects. The tongue seeks tasty food. Does it ever get satisfied? It does not. One must follow God's instructions in this regard. What has God instructed? One should eat what is right



for us, and neither too much nor too little (6.16 and 17). How about seeing? Where do we go wrong in this regard while seeking satisfaction? We see wrong content, strictly prohibited by God, because it goes against 'dharma' (highest principles). Thus, we become our own enemy (6.5 & 6).

Similar pleasures are sensuous. They never satisfy. Otherwise, why would anyone indulge in illicit relationships, with big punishments waiting? God has given a safe option, which is to enjoy within dharma, as permitted by the social norm of marriage (7.11). Similar restraint is required in choices made by us in talking, hearing, etc.

Now turning to the mind, does it not hurt us time and again by being uncontrolled? It does, in the form of

depression, etc., and must be controlled to enable us to feel satisfied. Lord Krishna has instructed us to practise mind control by being detached (6.35). And this is possible only with God's active help, as is our experience also. Let us take objects of the mind. We all want lots of wealth, don't we? Does money by itself ensure proper maintenance? God has to ensure it, and He does for His devotees. How else do sannyasis exist, and quite well too! The only real power is that of empowerment by God; all others are temporary and are taken away sooner rather than later. The same is the fate of fame; it lasts as long as good, pious acts last.

Intelligence of the material kind can only help one earn a living. Real intelligence lies in being wise. For this, one must be connected to God — the Omniscient. He guides, and one succeeds 100 per cent (10.11). The remaining faculty of 'ahankar' is entirely harmful unless one gives it up and takes active shelter of God, as Arjuna did (18.73). Contrarily, what happened to Ravana and his over-bloated ahankara?

Therefore, if we are really keen on having satisfaction, we have to take shelter of God and remain there. The senses will be satisfied, the mind will be peaceful, intelligence will become wisdom and ahankara a dear friend. Ask me, who is enjoying a very satisfactory life in the shelter of my Lord.

The writer is a spiritual teacher

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Can Parliament become 'Mangal Milan'?

The NDA's choice to call its gathering *Mangal Milan* — an auspicious union — raises a deeper question: why can't Parliament itself embody that spirit? Today's scenario is marked by adjournments, walkouts and partisan shouting, reducing debate to spectacle rather than dialogue. A *Mangal Milan* Parliament would mean sessions where diverse voices meet in harmony, guided by respect and accountability. Instead of obstruction, the Opposition could offer constructive criticism; instead of grandstanding, the ruling benches could prioritise problem-solving.

To achieve this, all stakeholders must act responsibly. Government benches should lead with transparency and respect for dissent. Opposition parties must replace disruption with reasoned alternatives, while presiding officers need to enforce rules firmly and curb disorder. Members of Parliament must commit to punctuality, preparedness and civility. The media and civil society should highlight substantive debate rather than sensational chaos, while citizens must demand discipline and encourage cooperative politics. Presently, Parliament resembles a fractured arena. A *Mangal Milan* Parliament, in contrast, would be a crucible of unity, where disagreement sharpens policy rather than divides society, and dialogue becomes the nation's auspicious meeting ground.

O PRASADA RAO | HYDERABAD

Sporting glory deserves the spotlight

These are proud moments for India, with the country winning ten medals, including two gold, five silver and three bronze, so far at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. However, the NEET uproar has grabbed the headlines, pushing our Commonwealth heroes to the back pages. Sports lovers are on cloud nine.

The winning performances of gold medalists Mirabai Chanu (weightlifting) and Sharmila Dhankar (para-athletics); silver medalists Rishikanta Singh (weightlifting), Raja Muthupandi (weightlifting), Sarvesh Kushare (athletics), Valluri Ajaya Babu (weightlifting) and Gyaneshwari Yadav (weightlifting); and bronze medalists Jhandu Kumar (para-powerlifting), Bindyarani Devi (weightlifting) and Shilpa Shyla (para-athletics) have further raised hopes of increasing India's medal tally.

The other victories, including Esha Singh's achievement at the ISSF World Cup and the Indian men's entry into the World Junior Squash team event, are also significant achievements. At a time when sporting excellence is bringing pride to the country, these athletes deserve greater recognition and visibility. Their dedication, discipline and success on the international stage should inspire the nation. Such sporting laurels surely deserve prominent headlines.

VINOD JOHRI | DELHI

A wider vision for education

The Experts Committee chaired by K. Radhakrishnan submitted a report in October 2024 titled Reformation of National Common Entrance Testing, covering over 100 recommendations on improving examination security and restoring the credibility of national entrance examinations.

In essence, the Radhakrishnan report was an operational reform blueprint. It seeks to make examinations secure, transparent and professionally managed. It does not fundamentally revisit India's education philosophy, curriculum, skills agenda or research ecosystem. That broader strategic task is precisely where the Nilekani committee could make a lasting contribution. The Nilekani committee must, therefore, be entrusted with a far wider mandate. India does not merely need leak-proof examinations; it needs an inspirational education policy aligned with the demands of the coming decade. Artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing and climate science are rapidly redefining the nature of work. The question today ought to be less about how students should be tested and more about what they should be taught and what capabilities they must acquire. If the Radhakrishnan report secures the credibility of examinations, the Nilekani committee should define the onward purpose of education itself.

R NARAYANAN | NAVI MUMBAI

Why Chhattisgarh is betting on trust-based governance

Ease of doing business is often measured by rankings, but its real test lies in the confidence it gives investors. With the enactment of the Chhattisgarh Ease of Doing Business Act, 2026, the state has gone beyond administrative reforms to make time-bound approvals and government accountability a matter of law



VISHNU DEO SAI

Vidhan Sabha on July 16, Chhattisgarh has chosen to make ease of doing business a legal commitment, not an administrative promise. For investors, entrepreneurs and enterprises, this matters because certainty must be written into systems, timelines and accountability structures.

This Act is built on a simple belief: honest enterprise should not be held back by avoidable approvals, repeated renewals or overlapping permissions. Investors value opportunity, but they value predictability just as much. Entrepreneurs value speed, but they also need a government system that responds with clarity. Our reform gives them both: fewer unnecessary steps and a stronger guarantee that the State will act within a defined framework. We did not design this law for rankings. We designed it for outcomes.

For decades, regulatory systems often treated every industry in the same way, irrespective of scale, activity or risk. A small start-up and a large industrial project could face near-identical scrutiny, even when the nature of what needed to be checked was entirely different. In many cases, businesses had to seek more than one approval for the same activity. Such systems did not make governance stronger. They only spread scrutiny thin, delayed genuine economic activity and reduced the time that government could spend on areas where oversight was genuinely required.

The Chhattisgarh Ease of Doing Business Act replaces this approach with a risk-proportionate system. Low-risk enterprises can proceed through self-certification, without physical inspection. Medium-risk enterprises can obtain certification through empanelled third-party experts. High-risk enterprises will continue to be subjected to thorough technical due diligence because trust-based governance cannot mean ignoring risk.

But even in such cases, scrutiny will operate under a defined clock. If a certificate is not issued within the timeline prescribed under the Chhattisgarh Lok Sewa Guarantee Act, the approval will be deemed to have been granted. Any delay beyond three days will be escalated directly to the Executive Committee. We have chosen to enforce certainty through law, not leave it to discretion.

The principle behind this design is clear. Government oversight should be strongest where risk is highest and lightest where risk is low. This is not deregulation. It is better regulation. If an enterprise carries limited risk, the system should not force it through unnecessary layers of approval. If an enterprise requires technical assessment, the State must retain that scrutiny, but it must also hold itself accountable for doing the work within time. The Act therefore reduces compliance where it is excessive, while preserving transparency and safeguards where they are needed.

We have also created an institutional structure capable of delivering this reform. The Executive Council, chaired by me, will set policy direction, amend the schedule where required and exercise final authority over Executive Committee decisions. The Executive Committee, chaired by the Chief Secretary, will oversee implementation and act as the appellate body for district-level decisions. The District Empowered Committee, chaired by the Collector, will review district-level authorities so that delays are identified early and resolved before they become a barrier for businesses. Reform cannot rest only on intent; it needs institutions that can monitor, correct and enforce.

Trust must also be earned continuously. That is why the Act includes safeguards for both businesses and the public system. It overrides conflicting provisions in other state laws so that a business is not caught between contradictory requirements. It holds officers

When a state gives legal backing to trust-based governance for businesses, it is not merely improving a process. It is changing the relationship between government and enterprise. With the Chhattisgarh Ease of Doing Business Act, 2026, passed by our



THE CHHATTISGARH EASE OF DOING BUSINESS ACT ENVISAGES A PROPORTIONATE SYSTEM. LOW-RISK ENTERPRISES CAN PROCEED THROUGH SELF-CERTIFICATION, WITHOUT PHYSICAL INSPECTION. MEDIUM-RISK ENTERPRISES CAN OBTAIN CERTIFICATION THROUGH EMPANELLED THIRD-PARTY EXPERTS. HIGH-RISK ENTERPRISES WILL CONTINUE TO BE SUBJECTED TO THOROUGH TECHNICAL DUE DILIGENCE BECAUSE TRUST-BASED GOVERNANCE CANNOT MEAN IGNORING RISK

The writer is the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh

accountable for delays through Section 14 and the provisions of the Lok Sewa Guarantee Act. It allows the State to revoke an approval where necessary, but only after a show-cause notice, a hearing and recorded reasons. At the same time, bona fide actions taken in good faith are explicitly protected. This balance is important. We are stepping back from unnecessary gatekeeping, but not from responsibility.

The scale of the reform is significant. The Act consolidates 43 services across nine state Acts and eight departments, covering urban administration, industries, culture, home affairs, water resources and public works. Earlier, reform often meant amending one law or one service at a time. That approach could deliver progress, but only incrementally. Chhattisgarh has now created an omnibus legal architecture that can absorb future reforms without requiring repeated legislative change. This makes the system more adaptable and gives investors greater confidence that reform will not remain trapped in isolated departmental changes.

The biggest beneficiaries will be our more than 15 lakh Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. MSMEs are the backbone of Chhattisgarh's economy. They create livelihoods, support local supply chains and take opportunities beyond large industrial centres. For them, compliance time is not an abstract burden. It is time taken away from production, employment, customers and expansion. Every hour saved from avoidable approval or renewal processes is an hour that can be invested in growth. When government reduces unnecessary friction, small businesses gain the space to focus on building, hiring and serving markets.

This reform also reflects a larger national direction. It responds to the Prime Minister's call for a nationwide deregulation drive, for it is central to India's Viksit Bharat ambition. Chhattisgarh has chosen the more ambitious path: a comprehensive omnibus law, rather than a narrower service-by-service amendment. In doing so, we are aligning state-level governance with the national objective of building a more competitive, more responsive and more enterprise-friendly India.

In every interaction with investors, one message consistently emerges: businesses value certainty as much as opportunity. Capital moves towards governments that are consistent, where approvals are time-bound and institutions are accountable. Incentives matter, but they are not enough.

As India advances towards Viksit Bharat 2047, states will increasingly compete on the quality of governance they offer. A state that can provide clarity, speed and accountability will become a more natural destination for investment and entrepreneurship.

With this Act, Chhattisgarh has set that standard for itself. We have chosen trust over red tape, partnership over procedure and accountability over discretion. Our message to entrepreneurs across India and investors around the world is direct: Chhattisgarh is ready to work with you through a governance system that respects your time, protects public interest and supports growth. Come and experience a state confident in its potential and ready to build the next chapter of India's growth story together.

India's thin state: Too few, too well paid



RUPAK CHATTOPADHYAY

ists the country desperately needs.

This combination has created a chronic deficit in state capacity that increasingly limits India's economic ambitions. India's public sector employs only about 3.3 per cent of the country's workforce, even after including central and state governments, local bodies and public sector undertakings. In absolute numbers, this amounts to around 17-18 million employees, making it the second-largest public workforce in Asia after China. Yet, relative to the country's workforce of more than 550 million people, India has the thinnest state among major Asian economies. The contrast is striking.

Around 23 per cent of China's workforce is employed by the public sector. South Korea employs roughly 10.7 per cent, Indonesia about 8.9 per cent, while both Japan and Vietnam are close to 8 per cent. Contrary to popular perception, the stereotypical "bloated sarkari system" simply does not exist when viewed through an international lens. This shortage becomes most visible at the point where government actually meets the citizen. India has only around 150 police personnel per 100,000 population, well below the United Nations benchmark of 222. The judiciary has barely 21 judges per million people, compared with 50 to well over 100 in most developed countries. Vacancies in government schools, primary health centres and rural development departments remain a persistent feature across states. Policies are ultimately implemented not by cabinet ministers or senior civil servants but by frontline workers. A district collector cannot compensate for an absent nurse, an unfilled teaching post or a missing agricultural extension officer. Administrative excellence at the top cannot substitute for the absence of people on the ground.

India's implementation deficit is as much a staffing problem as a governance problem. Yet this shortage exists alongside another anomaly: India pays its public employees extraordinarily well relative to the rest of the economy. World Bank studies show that public-sector wages exceed those in the formal private sector by 62 to 102 per cent, while the premium over India's informal workforce ranges from 164 to 259 per cent. Development economist Karthik Muralidharan estimates that nearly 95 per cent of government jobs pay around five times the median Indian wage.

India spends roughly 8 per cent of GDP on public-sector wages, comparable to many OECD countries. But while advanced economies use similar expenditure to support a much larger workforce, India spends it on far fewer employees. The result is fewer teachers, doctors, police personnel and technical experts. East Asia offers a contrast. Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and China built capable states that coordinated investment, developed infrastructure, nurtured human capital and supported strategic industries. India's post-1991 reforms dismantled many controls associated with the licence-permit raj but did not build an equally capable developmental state.

China has a deeply layered administrative system supported by specialised planning agencies and technical institutions. India increasingly relies on contracting out services while maintaining a relatively thin administrative backbone. The weakness extends to foreign policy. India's diplomatic cadre comprises only around 950 Indian Foreign Service officers across nearly 200 missions worldwide, while China employs several thousand career diplomats. For a country seeking global leadership and a larger strategic role, such limited capacity creates unavoidable constraints.

The Ministry of External Affairs inevitably concentrates its attention on a handful of relationships - primarily China, Pakistan and the United States - because it simply lacks the manpower to devote sustained attention elsewhere. Training officers in specialised areas such as climate negotiations, technology governance or artificial intelligence often leaves desks understaffed. India's global ambitions are therefore increasingly running ahead of its institutional capacity to support them. Ultimately, this is also an employment issue.

Expanding public-sector recruitment will not solve India's entire jobs challenge, but filling existing shortages in education, healthcare, policing, justice and agricultural extension would create productive employment while significantly improving public service delivery. These are not artificial jobs; they are positions that government norms already recognise as necessary but remain vacant. The long-standing assumption that India's public sector is too large has become increasingly detached from empirical reality.

The country does not need a smaller state. It needs a more capable one. The next phase of India's development will depend as much on strengthening institutions as on expanding markets. Economic growth, industrial policy, infrastructure development and effective governance all require a state with adequate numbers of skilled professionals at every level - from policy specialists in New Delhi to teachers in village schools and nurses in primary health centres.

The lesson from East Asia is therefore straightforward. Prosperity was built not by abandoning the state but by building one that was competent, specialised and capable of working alongside markets. India's challenge today is not to shrink government further, but to expand its capacity intelligently. That means addressing both sides of the equation simultaneously: strengthening expertise at the top while rebuilding the frontline workforce that delivers public services. Without that balance, India risks remaining a country with ambitious policies but insufficient administrative muscle to turn them into reality.



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Beyond policy: Putting mothers at the heart of child care



SUMANTA KAR

that actually brings it to life, is the mother. In our country, we have a long and beautiful tradition where the family is the foundation of everything.

For a child who has lost that foundation, the world becomes a loud and terrifying place. You cannot fix that with a dormitory or a rotating shift of staff. You fix it with a person who stays. In these cases, a foster mother who provides a strong and caring presence is the only thing that can truly make a difference in their lives.

A mother is a representative of stable relationships. She provides a protective setting where a child does not just exist but has a real opportunity for holistic development. It is through her that a child learns to trust again. This is not just about basic caregiving. It is about the security, love, and stability that every

human being needs to survive. One of the most incredible things to witness is how a mother builds resilience in her children through her own inner power. She does not just shield them from the world. She prepares them for it. She plays the role of a teacher, a friend, and a mentor all at once. By building a close and individual relationship with each of her children, she creates a caring family environment where they feel safe enough to take risks.

She is the one who encourages participation and confidence, helping a child find their own voice. She acts as a guide to ensure they have every opportunity to thrive rather than just get by. She is always ready to go the extra mile, often sacrificing her own comfort for the well-being of her children. There is simply no substitute for a mother. For children who have faced the hardship of being alone, the role of motherhood becomes even more crucial. They do not just need a roof. They need a parent who is ready to sit by the bed at three in the morning or celebrate a small victory at school.

What makes this bond so powerful is that she is not just fulfilling a duty. She is enjoying the journey of motherhood herself. This mutual joy is what transforms a house into a home. It is in the quiet moments like shared meals, evening talks, bedtime stories and a steady presence that a child's trauma begins to soften and their potential begins to bloom. Let us recognise that for a vulnerable child, a mother is not just a part of their life.



A mother can transform a childhood memory into a happy memory, transforming children into self-reliant individuals and ensuring they grow up with the strong bonds to become their strongest selves. If we want to raise a generation of healthy and confident citizens, we must ensure that the mother remains the heartbeat of our care systems.

If we cannot provide a child with a hand to hold and a heart to lean on, are we really giving them a future or are we just providing a place to stay?

If we really want to honour mothers and give her the rightful place we should remember that the greatest gift society can offer a vulnerable child is not merely protection but belonging.

Policies, funding and institutions are indispensable, yet they achieve their true purpose only when they create space for loving human relationships. A child who has experienced loss does not simply need food, education and healthcare. They need someone who knows their fears, celebrates their milestones, comforts them after failure and believes in their potential even when they cannot believe in themselves.

That unwavering presence is what a mother, whether biological, adoptive or foster, uniquely provides. The strength of a nation is ultimately measured not by the size of its institutions but by the quality of care it extends to its most vulnerable citizens. By nurturing children with love, stability and emotional security, mothers help shape resilient, compassionate and self-reliant individuals who go on to strengthen society in return.

Investing in motherhood within child care is therefore not an act of charity; it is an investment in the country's future. If we aspire to build a compassionate and confident India, we must place mothers at the centre of every child welfare system, ensuring that every child grows up not merely with a roof overhead, but with a hand to hold, a heart to trust and a family to call their own.

The writer is the Chief Executive Officer of SOS Children's Villages India



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**Kolkata court sends 16
NEET protesters to jail**

A city court on Tuesday remanded 16 people arrested in connection with violence during a NEET paper leak protest by the Left students' organisations to judicial custody till July 30.

Several journalists were injured when some people attacked them during the march from Sealdah station to Esplanade in central Kolkata.

Refusing their bail prayers, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court here remanded the 16 accused, against whom provisions of the newly legislated stringent Goonda Act have been applied, until July 30.

Following Friday's unruly scenes during the rally, Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari had stated that those who indulged in violence during the march had no connection to the NEET paper leak protest and were suspected to be anti-national elements. The state Government claimed that at least 70 people identified in connection with the violence were neither students nor members of the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP), and had no direct link with the movement against the alleged NEET paper leak.

The state's counsel, seeking their remand, argued before the court that releasing the accused persons on bail would severely hamper the investigation. (PTI)

Court orders mental health test in Assembly breach case

A Delhi court has directed the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS) to constitute a medical board to examine whether Sarabjeet Singh, an accused in the Delhi Assembly security breach case, is of unsound mind and incapable of entering his defence.

The order came after the counsel for the accused submitted that Singh was suffering from bipolar disorder and sought directions for the constitution of a medical board.

Additional Sessions Judge Ankur Jain was hearing the plea filed by the accused under the Mental Healthcare Act and ordered that he be produced before the Director of IBHS whenever required.

Singh, 37, allegedly crashed his car through a gate of the Assembly complex and injured a security guard on duty on April 6, 2026. He was sent to judicial custody after police interrogation on April 5. Allowing his plea, the court, in the order dated July 27, directed the Director of IHBAS to constitute a board comprising specialists as required under the Mental Healthcare Act to examine whether the inmate was of unsound mind and incapable of entering his defence. The court noted that the previous medical documents relied upon by the defence had been verified by the investigating officer. The prosecution also said it had no objection to the constitution of the medical board.

The court directed that a copy of the order be sent to the IHBAS director for compliance and asked the investigating officer to ensure that the medical board was constituted and the accused examined. The matter has been listed for further proceedings on August 11. Singh is believed to be a "follower of the Kisan Andolan (farmers' agitation)". He has shared several posts on social media platforms expressing support for farmer leaders who lost their lives during the 2020-21 agitation. (PTI)



Delhi HC asks ECI to limit SIR burden on teachers

Underscoring the need to balance the students' right to education with the ongoing SIR of electoral rolls, the Delhi High Court on Tuesday asked the Election Commission of India (ECI) to be "sensitive" to the condition of Government school teachers requisitioned for the exercise and ensure that they are not overburdened.

A bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia said the Special Intensive Revision was undoubtedly "important" but expressed displeasure at the "threatening" tenor of an ECI order to principals not to obstruct election-related work.

The bench also directed the authorities to keep in mind that undue stress is not caused to the teachers who have been called upon to act as booth level officers (BLOs) and enumeration staff after working for long hours in school.

"What we all want from you is to be a bit sensitive to their situation. We are not curtailing your right. We are conscious of the human condition which these teachers are undergoing. Asking any teacher to work for eleven hours. Teaching staff, mostly, it is women. They have children, their families. You have to humanise their conditions. What language you have applied while issuing this order. Are you creating fear or what?" the bench told the ECI. "We do not undermine the exercise being undertaken by the ECI. The issue is how to strike a balance with Section 27 of the Right to Education Act. It appears that you are least bothered about the Right to Education Act. The kind of language that you have used in this. The whole tenor of the letter is threatening," it added. (PTI)



SC urged to set up SIT to fix police liability for attack on protesters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday was vehemently urged to set up an SIT headed by a former judge of the court to fix responsibility up to higher echelons of police departments of various states for alleged excesses on students during the nationwide protests against the NEET paper leak.

Stressing the need for a fair and independent probe, the top court, while issuing a slew of interim directions, restrained states from taking any coercive action against protesters in the recent student-led agitation and directed them to release those under 18 on the condition that none should have any criminal antecedents.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana heard a battery of lawyers including Solicitor General Tushar Mehta for the Centre and the Delhi Police.

Senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi, Gopal Sankaranarayanan, Shyam Divan, Vrinda Grover and Prashant Bhushan appeared



for petitioners who were alleging police brutalities on the protesters.

For a change, it was the CJI, who started narrating specific cases of alleged police atrocities. "One case is the use of pellet guns which harmed a young boy, then use of electric batons which led to life-threatening injuries, then there is the issue of injuring video persons also.

"Then a police officer was assaulted while he was in civil dress... a woman was slapped also by a police officer and some cases of molestation also at the hands of police," the CJI said. He said there was no need for elaborate arguments. It was a peaceful protest by students raising

demands, and it is constitutionally protected, he added.

"The ones who want to prevent it indulge in excess use of force. Then some complaints about police officer families. They say that others with an agenda entered the protest and tried to become co-hosts. So, why should there not be an independent probe into all of it," the CJI said. Sankaranarayanan then proceeded to argue the case and said the matter concerns the protests that have taken place across the country.

"The incidents are not limited to Delhi or Jantar Mantar alone. They include protests and related incidents in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Agra in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and

several other States," he said.

There are multiple incidents arising out of these protests and various petitions raise allegations of police excesses, including lathi-charge, use of pellet guns, brutality against students and other actions by the police, he said.

"Legally, there needs to be an order under Section 144 etc. There was nothing for Jantar Mantar. Such cases came during the Ramlila Maidan protest also. Then there were guidelines laid down for how to prevent it," he said.

The court said the allegations raised in the petitions required a "thorough, independent, fair and transparent" inquiry and observed that responsibility must be fixed if any excesses were committed. "There has to be a completely independent probe. Whoever has committed excess, law will take its course. Probe is meaningless if no responsibility is fixed," the CJI said.

The court described the protests as "peaceful demonstrations" by students and said it is needed to address the kind of force used against the protesters.

Ghost student scam: Court sentences TN school officials



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ranipet

A court here sentenced the correspondent and headmistress of a Government-aided school to four years of rigorous imprisonment for fabricating records to create 187 "ghost" students and siphon off Government funds. An official release from DVAC on Tuesday said those convicted were Karunagara Sanjeev Doss, correspondent, and Alice Thabitha Vijay Kumari, Headmistress of Vitva Ratna Villa Government Aided Primary School. They were also fined ₹35,000 and ₹40,000, respectively.

The scam was unearthed on August 27, 2012, following a joint surprise inspection by the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC), Vellore detachment, alongside inspection cell officers.

Investigations revealed that while the school's actual student strength was signif-

icantly lower, official registries were manipulated to reflect an inflated strength of 259 pupils.

By padding the rolls with 187 non-existent students, the duo illegally secured sanction for six excess teaching posts.

They wrongfully drew Government benefits, including ₹4,67,121 toward salaries for the unneeded staff and ₹2,762 meant for noon meal allocations, causing a total financial loss of over ₹4.69 lakh to the state exchequer.

Following a detailed investigation, the DVAC filed a chargesheet before the court in Ranipet.

Delivering the verdict on July 27, 2026, the court held both accused guilty of criminal misconduct and misappropriation of public funds, sentencing them to four years of hard labour to reinforce strict accountability in State-aided educational institutions.

Delhi court allows woman to lead defence in cheque bounce case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Underlining that a "single opportunity" does not constitute a "sufficient opportunity" under the law, a Delhi court has set aside a magistrate's order that closed a woman's right to lead defence evidence in a cheque bounce case.

Additional Sessions Judge Shefali Barnala Tandon also said that the Constitution guarantees a fair trial, which includes a reasonable opportunity of defence for the accused.

In an order dated July 22, the court said, "Law is well settled that a fair trial is the foundation of justice and without affording an accused the opportunity to present a defence, the trial is rendered a mere formality rather than a judicial process."

It noted that the revision petition was filed against the magisterial court order of August 2025, closing the opportunity of the accused or revisionist, Manju Devi, to lead defence evidence in a



complaint filed by one Sunita Devi under the Negotiable Instruments (NI) Act provision.

According to the revisionist, the complainant's evidence was closed in March 2025, and the matter was adjourned to July 30 for her to file a list of witnesses and an application to examine herself. On that date, however, the magistrate observed that no steps had been taken by the accused and immediately closed her right to lead defence evidence.

Setting aside the order, the court said it is apparent that the revisionist was denied

her basic right to defend herself. It said, "Article 21 (protection of life and personal liberty) of the Constitution guarantees a fair trial which includes a reasonable opportunity for the accused to defend himself/herself. A single opportunity does not constitute 'Sufficient Opportunity' under the law."

The court also referred to Section 346 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) corresponding to the erstwhile Section 309 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), dealing with the "power to postpone or adjourn proceedings."

Adults have right to choose their life partners, says Calcutta HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

The Calcutta High Court has directed West Bengal police to provide adequate security and ensure a seamless inter-faith marriage in Howrah on Wednesday, observing that "adult citizens of this country have the right to choose their life partners".

The observation by the court came while hearing a plea by a woman and a man of different faiths who sought police protection to solemnise the marriage, with their counsel claiming they faced opposition from locals over their decision.

The Superintendent of Police of Howrah (Rural) Amit Verma said on Tuesday that adequate steps were being taken in compliance with the high court's order. Acting on the petition, Justice Saugata Bhattacharyya on Monday directed the police to provide adequate protection to the petitioners during their marriage, which



is to be solemnised on Wednesday.

"This court does not find any hindrance even if it is a case of inter-faith marriage since the petitioners are adult citizens of this country and they have the right to choose their life partners," Justice Bhattacharyya observed. The court directed the police to ensure that no untoward incident takes place during the wedding.

Justice Bhattacharyya directed the inspector in-charge of Uluberia police station in Howrah to file a compliance report within seven days after the marriage is solemnised and posted

hearing in the matter on August 10. Representing the petitioners, senior advocate Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya told the court that a furore in the locality over their decision led the man and woman to fear that they may be prevented from solemnising the marriage.

Representing the state, Additional Advocate General Rajdeep Mazumder presented in the court a communication of the inspector in-charge of Uluberia police station, disclosing that certain steps have been taken by the authorities to maintain peace in the locality.

Final report of AAIB in Ahmedabad plane crash to be filed in October, SC told

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday was apprised by the Government that the draft final report of the probe conducted by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) into the June 2025 Air India flight AI-171 crash in Ahmedabad will be filed before it in the first week of October in a sealed cover.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and V

Mohana also took note of the submissions of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the Federation of Indian Pilots can provide its inputs to the AAIB which, in turn, can peruse and deal with them if found necessary during the investigation.

During a brief hearing, the solicitor general told the bench that four simulation tests have been conducted as sought in an application by one of the petitioners. The law officer said that the final draft report will be filed before the bench in a sealed



cover. The court was hearing petitions filed by an NGO, a law student and the father of the deceased pilot, seeking an independent, court-monitored investigation into the crash. The bench has now

posted the pleas for further hearing on October 13.

Recently, the AAIB filed an affidavit in the top court saying that the draft final report of the probe into the crash in Ahmedabad, which

killed 260 people, is expected to be ready in October.

The AAIB had said there is an "absolute statutory prohibition" on disclosing cockpit voice recordings and airborne image recordings from the June 12, 2025, Ahmedabad plane crash to any external committee or the public.

It had said that sharing such material would violate Rule 17(1) and Rule 17(5) read with Schedule C of the Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) Rules, 2025.

Prior to this, bench had asked the Centre to file a brief

report on the "procedural protocol" followed so far, after it was informed that the investigation into the crash by the AAIB is at its lag end.

Air India's Boeing 787-8 flight AI171, en route to London's Gatwick airport, was operated by pilot-in-command Captain Sumeet Sabharwal and co-pilot Captain Clive Kunder.

The crash took place after the plane took off from Gujarat's Ahmedabad. Former Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani was among the victims.

HC seeks Maharashtra's stand on PM's clay idol appeal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

The Bombay High Court has asked the Maharashtra Government to clarify its stand on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent appeal urging devotees to use eco-friendly clay idols during the upcoming Ganesh festival.

A bench of Justices Ajay Gadkari and Kamal Khata questioned the state while hearing a bunch of petitions against the use of Plaster of Paris (PoP) idols, granting Advocate General Milind Sathe time till Wednesday to clarify the Government's stand.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) had prohibited Plaster of Paris (PoP) idols in its 2020 guidelines. The court cited PM



Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat' address aired on Sunday, in which he urged people to use eco-friendly clay idols, and asked the Government about its response to the same.

Last year, after the CPCB stated that its guidelines were advisory in nature, the court allowed the immersion of PoP idols over six feet in natural water bodies as per the state Government's 2025 policy.

INTERVIEW / BUILDING ENGINEERS OF TOMORROW

BEYOND PLACEMENTS & CODE

Professor Manna, what is the biggest shift in what industries expect from engineering graduates today?

Engineering fundamentals have remained largely constant, but the tools and skills used to apply them have changed rapidly. From an era without computers or robotics, we have moved to IoT, parallel computing, GPUs and AI, which are reshaping even fundamental sciences. Having worked in industry before joining IIT Kharagpur in 1985, I have seen hiring expectations change too. Employers once recruited graduates for what they knew and trained them further; today, they value how quickly they can learn and adapt. The India Skills Report 2025 places engineering employability at 71.5 per cent, but a transcript alone is rarely enough. Recruiters look for articulation, integrity, adaptability, projects, and internships. Yet fundamentals remain non-negotiable: an engineer must still know the core principles of the discipline.

Why is cross-disciplinary innovation critical for students seeking high-impact careers today?

My own discipline settled this question long ago. Metallurgy became materials science by absorbing physics, chemistry and mechanical engineering, and is now incorporating machine learning for materials discovery and design. As National Coordinator of IMPRINT, I saw India's engineering challenges mapped across ten domains, none of which could be addressed within a single department. IMPRINT-II reinforced this: proposals working at disciplinary interfaces and showing potential for application received backing. An affordable diagnostic device needs biology, electronics and data science; an electric power-train brings together materials, power electronics and software. NEP 2020 now supports this approach through flexible credits and cross-stream learning. A student's major provides depth, but future careers will depend on connecting that expertise across disciplines to create feasible, sustainable solutions.

How does BIT Mesra's investment in advanced AI infrastructure enhance students' global competitiveness and career readiness?

We have committed ₹100 crore from our own resources to establish an NVIDIA-powered Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence, operational by December 2026 with eight NVIDIA DGX B200 systems. It will serve nearly 12,000 students and 660 faculty members, while remaining accessible to researchers,

startups, strategic departments, industry and other collaborators. My international research experience has shown that talent alone cannot produce globally competitive research; access to advanced facilities matters equally. Today, simulation and modelling are as critical as experimentation across fields from drug discovery and VLSI to climate science and manufacturing. Such computing infrastructure remains limited in Jharkhand and eastern India. Aligned with the IndiaAI and India Semiconductor Missions, the Centre forms part of BIT Mesra's wider, sustained investment in research infrastructure and institutional partnerships.

How can academia encourage young engineers to choose research and innovation over immediate high-paying corporate careers?

I chose research in 1985, a career that has given me problems worth solving and the opportunity to mentor more than thirty doctoral scholars. Research and corporate careers appear unequal partly because placements receive greater visibility. Yet a doctorate today can lead to national missions in space, semiconductors and AI, industrial R&D centres and deep-tech startups. The funding environment has also changed: the Anusandhan National Research Foundation has a ₹50,000-crore funding envelope for 2023-28, while the expanded Prime

Minister's Research Fellowship offers up to ₹80,000 monthly and a ₹2-lakh annual research grant. Academia must expose students to research early and celebrate fellowships alongside placements. Money matters, but creating knowledge, solving difficult problems and contributing to society offer rewards that cannot be measured by salary alone.

With the national focus heavily shifting toward self-reliance and innovation, how can technical institutions structurally evolve to train students to become risk-taking 'job providers' rather than just 'job seekers'?

A university built only for placement is a pipeline; one built for enterprise must give ideas the structure and space to survive. The national foundation exists through Startup India, the Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell and Atal Innovation Mission, but institutions must build the local ecosystem. BIT has done so for decades, establishing the country's first Science and Technological Entrepreneurs Park on campus. Its student-run Entrepreneurship Development Cell has operated since 2007, while the Institute Innovation Center at STEP supports early ventures. This Foundation Day, distinguished alumnus Madan Mohan Mohanka of Tega Industries, from the 1964 batch, committed ₹5 crore towards a Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Beyond the sum, students see that those who once occupied their classrooms can become job creators themselves.

What irreplaceable human skills must students develop to future-proof their careers in the age of generative AI?

Generative AI has commoditised the middle of intellectual work: drafting, routine

analysis and the first version of almost everything. The two ends remain human-framing the right problem and judging whether an answer works in the real world. A model may propose a new alloy composition in seconds, but determining whether it can and should be made requires fundamentals, judgment and experimentation. The World Economic Forum expects 92 million roles to be displaced and 170 million created by 2030, with analytical thinking, resilience, flexibility and creative thinking among the most valued skills. Problem formulation, verification, ethical reasoning and adaptability will therefore matter greatly. You cannot audit a machine's output without mastering the fundamentals yourself, and I do not foresee AI making human judgment, intervention or leadership redundant.

How should institutions make mental health and emotional resilience a core part of student development?

Behind every statistic on academic pressure is a young person, often away from home for the first time and carrying a family's hopes. Institutions must recognise distress before it becomes a crisis. New UGC guidelines now require dedicated mental health centres, qualified counsellors and systems for early detection, but regulation only sets the floor. Prevention requires manageable academic structures, trained faculty and an environment where seeking help carries no stigma. At BIT, every student has a faculty adviser and meets them regularly to discuss academic progress, careers and well-being. Sports, NSS, NCC and over thirty student clubs, supported by more than ₹1 crore, provide outlets beyond academics. An institution must be accountable not only for how its students perform, but also for how well they are supported.

What advice would you give engineering students to remain relevant, adaptable and resilient in a changing job market?

BIT encourages students to pursue a burgeoning professional career, not merely a job. After four decades of teaching, my advice is simple: master the fundamentals, learn how to learn, build deep competence alongside broad curiosity, and choose problems over titles.

My journey from an alloy factory in Hyderabad to laboratories in Germany, Britain and Singapore was carried forward by problems honestly solved, never designations. Use time wisely to build knowledge and character while protecting your health, friendships and integrity. Stay physically active and prepare to adapt to a changing job market. BIT also enables aspiring entrepreneurs to become job creators rather than job seekers.

“A university built only for placement is a pipeline; one built for enterprise must give ideas the structure and space to survive,” states Prof Indranil Manna, Vice Chancellor of BIT Mesra. Having navigated both industry floors and elite academic corridors, the distinguished academic pioneer outlines a bold vision for India's technical education. In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, Prof Manna discusses shifting corporate demands, the necessity of cross-disciplinary research, surviving the generative AI wave, and why tomorrow's engineers must prioritise solving fundamental problems over chasing corporate titles.

From preparation to performance in 90 days

PROF ABINASH PANDA

Chairperson - PGDM (HRM), Management Development Institute (MDI) Gurgaon

For every CAT aspirant, the final 90 days before the examination can feel both exciting and overwhelming. By this stage, the syllabus may still seem incomplete, mock scores may not always be encouraging and the pressure to perform starts building. It is easy to believe that success now depends on studying for longer hours or covering every remaining topic. In reality, the last three months are not about doing more; they are about doing the right things consistently. This phase is where preparation shifts from acquiring knowledge to refining strategy, improving execution and building confidence.

The first step is to understand your current level of preparation. Take a full-length mock test and evaluate your performance honestly. A mock test should



not be viewed only as a scorecard; it is a mirror that reflects your strengths, weaknesses and test-taking habits. Ask yourself which section consistently gives you confidence, which topics continue to affect your score and whether you are losing marks because of conceptual gaps, poor time management or avoidable mistakes. Every aspirant starts from a different point, so there is no

single preparation strategy that works for everyone. Focus on building on your strengths while systematically improving weaker areas. During the final 90 days, mock tests should become an integral part of your preparation. Start by taking one mock every week and gradually increase the frequency as the examination approaches. However, simply writing more mock tests will not improve your performance. The real learning begins once the test is over.

Spend time analysing every mock carefully. Understand why you got certain questions wrong, identify the questions you should have attempted and recognise where you lost valuable time. Often, the biggest improvements

come from correcting repeated mistakes rather than learning entirely new concepts. Maintaining a notebook of recurring errors, formulas and shortcuts can also make revision more effective. One of the biggest misconceptions about CAT preparation is that success demands ten or twelve hours of study every day. While dedication is important, consistency is far more valuable than intensity. Create a realistic weekly plan that includes concept revision, sectional practice, mock tests and their analysis.

As the examination draws closer, many candidates sacrifice sleep, exercise and personal time to maximise preparation. This often has the opposite effect. Regular sleep, short breaks and physical activity help improve focus, memory and overall performance.

As CAT approaches, avoid beginning completely new topics. Instead, revise what you already know, strengthen familiar concepts and continue learning from your mock tests. The goal is not to know everything; it is to perform your best with what you have prepared.

The final 90 days before CAT 2026 are not about studying harder; they are about preparing smarter. Ultimately, CAT is a test of discipline, planning, adaptability and execution.

Empowering Generation Z through NEP 2020



PROF (DR) RACHITA RANA

Director, Institute of Information Technology & Management (IITM), Janakpuri

The landscape of the higher education system of India is being impacted by competition, disruption, expectations of stakeholders ie parents, industry, institutions, gen Z themselves. This Generation is digitally native, globally connected, socially conscious. Today's learners seek more than degrees; they seek purpose, flexibility, inclusivity, plus opportunities that prepare them for an uncertain yet exciting future. Responding to these aspirations requires institutions to move beyond conventional models of education towards systems that are equitable, inclusive, future-ready.

The urgency of this transformation is reflected in India's steadily expanding higher education landscape. As highlighted in the Economic Survey 2025-26, based on the latest AISHE 2022-23 data, India's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) has risen to 29.5 per cent, with total enrolment reaching approximately 4.46 crore students. Expansion alone, however, is not enough. The true measure of success lies in ensuring that every learner, irrespective of socio-economic background, gender, geography, language or physical ability, has equitable access to high-quality, inclusive higher education.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognises this challenge, reimagining higher education as an ecosystem that nurtures human potential rather than merely producing degree holders. As the policy rightly states, "The purpose of the education system is to develop good human beings capable of rational thought, action, possessing compassion, empathy, courage, resilience."

In today's rapidly changing world, this vision has become more relevant than ever. Education must not only impart knowledge but also cultivate empathy, ethical leadership, critical thinking, social responsibility. For Generation Z, education extends far beyond the physical classroom. Learning is increasingly digital, collaborative, personalised, global.

The emergence of India's digital education ecosystem represents one of the most significant reforms in recent years. Platforms such as SWAYAM, DIKSHA, the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), APAAR are enabling learners to access quality courses, accumulate academic credits across institutions, experiencing greater flexibility in their educational journeys.

Technology has transformed access to lectures, digital libraries, virtual laboratories, online internships, collaborative research, thereby democratising learning opportunities for millions of students. Yet, technology by itself cannot guarantee inclusion. Digital architecture must be accompanied by digital equity. Reliable internet connectivity, affordable devices, digital literacy, accessible learning platforms remain unevenly distributed across the country. Assessment practices are also witnessing a significant transformation. Traditional memory-based examinations are gradually making way for competency-based evaluation, experiential learning, project-based assessments, continuous feedback mechanisms. Universities must therefore prepare students not merely for their first job but for lifelong employability in a rapidly evolving knowledge economy. Equity plus inclusion must therefore become institutional values rather than policy obligations. Ultimately, higher education is not just about producing graduates; it is about nurturing thoughtful citizens capable of leading societies with wisdom, compassion, integrity. For Generation Z, inclusion is no longer an aspiration; it is an expectation.

How debate shapes future-ready talent

ANJALI TIWARY

Founder and CEO, Indian Debating League

At 9:40 on a Monday morning in Gurugram, a young strategy analyst opens three market-entry reports her AI copilot generated overnight. Forty pages each. Fluent, structured, confident. At least one is subtly wrong. Her job is to work out which, and to defend that judgment before a client by noon.

This is the modern workplace in miniature. Today, generation is nearly free, and the binding constraint has moved up the stack: from access to assimilation, from producing answers to deciding between them. When machines write the first draft, human value concentrates in the skills of the second read which is evaluation, synthesis, and judgment under pressure.

First, assimilation under overload. A debater receives a motion and limited preparation time, and must compress hours of research into a seven-minute case. This is triage, not accumulation: identifying the two or three arguments that decide the round and discarding the rest.

Second, outside-in thinking - the practice of approaching a problem from



another person's perspective rather than your own assumptions. Debaters are routinely assigned the side they did not choose and often do not believe. To win, they must reconstruct the strongest version of the opposing worldview, steel-manning, not caricature.

Third, decision-making when your team includes AI. When your colleague is a system that produces a plausible output without accountability, the human role migrates from generator to a decision maker: allocating burden of proof, testing internal consistency, detecting confidence error. Every rebuttal speech is an exercise in asking, "This sounds persuasive-but does

it survive scrutiny?"

Fourth, "judgment itself", the capacity to decide with incomplete information while being actively challenged. A point of information mid-speech is a live stress test: respond, concede, or refute, in seconds, in public.

The analyst in Gurugram will not be displaced by the machine that wrote her reports. If she is displaced at all, it will be by someone who learned - probably at sixteen, on a school stage, with a stopwatch running - how to decide which report to trust.



FROM THE WORLD

NEPAL

Curfew continues in border districts

Curfew remained in force for the second consecutive day on Tuesday in parts of Nepal's India-bordering Sunsari district as tension persisted following communal violence that left one person dead and several others injured.

The District Administration Office (DAO), Sunsari, said curfew and prohibitory orders would remain in effect from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm on Tuesday in several areas. According to a notice issued by the DAO, restrictions have been imposed across the entire Harinagar and Devgunj rural municipalities, while curfew is in force in five market areas of Harinagar, Bhutaha, Kaptangunj, Ghuski and Devangunj.

The administration has prohibited rallies, demonstrations, public meetings, sit-ins and gatherings of more than four people in the affected areas. (PTI)

LIBYA

Protests spark blackout fears

A group of protesters stormed a key energy complex in western Libya amid anti-Government demonstrations over ongoing power outages, with officials warning Tuesday that the incident could trigger a nationwide

The General Electricity Company warned in a statement Tuesday that a group of people on Monday stormed Mellitah Oil & Gas complex located around 90 kilometres west of Tripoli and closed the gas lines use to operate power plants to generate electricity. That could cause a complete blackout in multiple areas and ultimately a collapse of the electricity network.

Demonstrators across western Libya, including in Zawiya, Tripoli and Misrata, have been protesting for several days over hours-long power outages affecting those cities, demanding better power services and for the Government of Unity led by PM Abdul Hamid to step down. (AP)

7.1-magnitude earthquake shakes southern Japan

MARI YAMAGUCHI ■ Tokyo

An earthquake registering a magnitude of 7.1 shook Kumamoto on Japan's southern main island of Kyushu late Tuesday afternoon, causing damage and injuries, officials said.

A tsunami advisory was temporarily issued but was lifted within two hours, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

The agency said the tsunami advisory covered the nearby Ariake and Yatsushiro Seas on the western coasts of Kumamoto, Nagasaki, Fukuoka and Saga prefectures about 900 kilometres southwest of Tokyo.

The US Geological Survey



Damaged AEON Mall after an earthquake in Kashima, Japan

AP

initially said the earthquake had a magnitude of 7.1, but revised it later to 6.8.

Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, in a message posted on X, said her

Government has set up a task force to gather information, assess possible damage and prepare for rescue operations if needed.

Takaichi later told

reporters that there have been reports of a number of injuries and damages to roads, bridges and buildings, as well as blackouts and fire, though details are still

unclear. Takaichi warned people cooking to be careful with fire and with shards of broken glass.

Kyodo News agency said a hospital in Yatsushiro city accepted about 40 people with injuries from the quake. A train was derailed and fell on one side at the Yatsushiro station, and stone walls were damaged at the Kumamoto castle, Kyodo said.

Japan's Fire and Disaster Management Agency said there were no reports of damage to major public facilities and infrastructure, though authorities were still assessing the extent of damage.

Local fire departments received many emergency calls reporting fires and

damage to homes. "We are putting people's lives as the top priority," Takaichi said, urging residents in the strongly shaken areas to use caution in light of possible aftershocks.

Shinji Kiyomoto, JMA's Earthquake and Tsunami Countermeasures planning officer, told a news conference that the shallow earthquake was triggering active seismic activity in the area, urging residents to especially be cautious over the next two to three days.

He said, however, that no tsunami was observed from the inland quake. Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority said no abnormalities were found at three nearby nuclear power plants. (AP)

Ritual restored at Sri Lanka's historic Hindu festival under tight security



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

A key ritual that was cancelled over an underworld threat returned to Sri Lanka's centuries-old annual religious pageant at an ancient Hindu temple in the coastal town of Devinuwara on Tuesday amid an unprecedented security deployment, police said.

Around 1,500 personnel, including members of the elite Special Task Force (STF), were deployed to secure the Kavadi ritual in the Esala perahera (pageant) at the Uthpalawanna Sri Vishnu temple.

The traditional dance ritual was reinstated after being called off on Sunday following intelligence inputs of a possible armed or drone attack on the pageant linked to the ongoing rivalry between fugitive drug kingpins Shehan Sathsara and Kanjipani Imran, both believed to be operating from overseas.

Police said they carried out security checks on participants in the Kavadi ritual on Tuesday and seized crystal methamphetamine, locally known as "ice", and cannabis from some individuals.

Misri concludes China visit after talks on bilateral ties

KJM VARMA ■ Beijing

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on Tuesday wrapped up his visit to Beijing after two days of extensive discussions with several Chinese officials on the entire spectrum of India-China relations.

The visit by Misri, who was previously India's Ambassador to China, came as the two countries have stepped up bilateral engagement. Earlier in the day, he met Li Wentang, Vice President of the ruling Communist Party's Central Party School in Beijing and discussed opportunities for future cooperation and exchanges. During the meeting, Misri was briefed



Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri

about the school's historical significance, intellectual contributions and academic programmes, according to a social media post by the Indian embassy here.

He concluded his China visit after meeting with Li, official sources said. On Monday, Misri met other Chinese leaders, including Vice Foreign Minister Hua

Chunying, with whom he discussed the entire gamut of the bilateral relations.

The foreign secretary also met Sun Haiyan, Vice Minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Hong Liang, Deputy Secretary General of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Hong was previously the Director General of the boundary department of the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

Misri's visit followed the meeting between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the

sidelines of meetings related to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Manila on July 21.

India and China rolled out a series of measures over the last year to rebuild their relationship after it witnessed a major downturn following the deadly Galwan Valley clashes in 2020 and the subsequent military face-off that lasted for over four years.

In the last few months, India and China initiated a series of measures to reset their ties, including the resumption of the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra followed by issuance of visas and resumption of flight services between the two countries.

Ebola cases in Congo top 3,200, nearing record of the country's worst outbreak

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Bunia

Confirmed cases in Congo's ongoing Ebola outbreak have reached 3,262, its Ministry of Health said in an overnight update, nearly the same as the 2018-2020 outbreak that is the largest ever recorded in the country.

Data from the Congolese health ministry showed that 1,437 patients have died out of the 3,262 cases, in what officials have said is the fastest Ebola outbreak on record, concentrated in the eastern Ituri province.

The 2018-2020 outbreak that was recorded in Congo and neighbouring Uganda lasted roughly two years, with more than 3,400 reported cases, including over 2,200 deaths, according to the US Centers for Disease Control. Only the 2014-2016 outbreak across West Africa, considered the worst in history, had

a higher toll with 28,000 cases and more than 11,000 deaths.

The speed of transmission in the current outbreak comes amid concerns from residents that many communities in the affected provinces are either unreachable or have been abandoned by responders in recent days over safety concerns amid attacks from angry residents and rebels.

"The fact that, in just 10 weeks, we have reached nearly the same number of cases recorded over an almost two-year outbreak is alarming and should stop us in our tracks," Onesphore Bangenza, Mercy Corps response team lead in Bunia, Ituri's capital, said Tuesday.

"There is no doubt that the virus is moving faster than we can contain it," Bangenza added. The ongoing outbreak, which was declared on May 15, is unlike most previous Ebola outbreaks because



the Bundibugyo virus responsible for it has no approved vaccines or treatments. Efforts to slow the transmission have been challenged by rebel violence in eastern Congo

as well as health workers striking to protest the nonpayment of their wages.

The outbreak continues to spread faster than health officials

can track despite an expanding response. A key challenge is that patient zero has yet to be identified in the outbreak while displacement from armed conflict and illegal mining in the region have made it difficult to trace thousands who have come in contact with infected individuals.

Despite distrust between communities and health workers mostly seen at the early stages of the outbreak, signs of progress have emerged.

"We can never again wage war against the Ebola teams. We have lost members of our families.

As a community, we have a vested interest in fighting Ebola to return to normal life," said Fabrice Mumbesa, a resident of Mongbwalu, a mining town at the center of the outbreak where residents previously burned down several treatment centers. (AP)

Sharif's PML-N wins 9 out of 13 seats in first phase of PoK polls amid rigging allegations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) won nine out of 13 seats in the first phase of elections held in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, the Election Commission said on Tuesday.

There were allegations of massive rigging in the first phase of the polls held on Monday, in which the Pakistan's People Party (PPP) won the remaining seats.

The elections for 45 contesting seats in the so-called legislative assembly in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir are happening in three phases between July 27 and August 10.

India maintains that the entire Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh are integral and inalienable parts of it. New Delhi also asserts that Pakistan has been in "illegal and forcible occupation" of parts of these Union Territories. According to preliminary results issued by



the Election Commission on Tuesday, the PML-N led by the Sharif brothers - Nawaz and Shehbaz — emerged as the winner in nine constituencies while the PPP led by the Bhuttos secured four seats.

Both parties are coalition partners at the federal level. Meanwhile, Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf has boycotted the polls.

India helps construct school building in remote municipality in western Nepal

SHIRISH B PRADHAN ■ Kathmandu

Foundation stone for the construction of a school building, to be built with financial assistance from India, was laid in the Sudur Paschim province of Nepal.

The Government of India has pledged Nepalese Rupees 75 million for the construction of the Gokuleswor Secondary School, Shailyashikhar Municipality-9, Darchula district of Sudur Paschim Province.

The foundation stone was jointly laid on Monday by Basist Nandan, first secretary, Indian Embassy at Kathmandu and Bijay Singh Dhami, Mayor of



Shailyashikhar Municipality, said a press release from the Indian Embassy.

This High Impact Community Development Project (HICDP) will be implemented through the Shailyashikhar Municipality,

Darchula district, it said.

Mayor Dhami appreciated India for the assistance and expressed confidence that the new infrastructure would help enhance the learning environment for students and educators in the municipality area.

India and Nepal are engaged in wide-ranging and multi-sectoral cooperation, the release said, adding, the implementation of HICDPs reflects the continued support of the Government of India in strengthening the efforts of the Government of Nepal in promoting growth and development, apart from augmenting infrastructure in priority sectors. (PTI)

48 survivors, 14 missing after Vietnam ship sinks near South China sea

ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL ■ Hanoi

The number of survivors of a cargo ship that sank Saturday off a Chinese-occupied shoal in the South China Sea rose to 48 by Tuesday as search and rescue crews hunted for more people who went down with the vessel.

A multinational search for 14 people who remain missing was still underway Tuesday afternoon involving Vietnamese, Philippine and Chinese rescuers.

Vietnamese authorities announced Monday that three more of the 62 people onboard had been saved but did not provide details of the rescue. The Vietnamese



cargo vessel Khoi Nguyen 18 sank late Saturday near Fiery Cross Reef, a Chinese-built island and military outpost in the hotly contested Spratly Islands.

The vessel went down while operating in bad weather in the East Sea, the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry said, adding that all 48 rescued people had been transferred to Vietnamese authorities, who were providing medical care before taking them back to the mainland.

Khoi Nguyen is a general cargo ship built in 2017, according to vessel tracking platforms. It was last detected in March near Vietnam on

its automated identification system, or AIS, according to ship tracking platform MarineTraffic.

Under a United Nations maritime safety treaty signed by Vietnam, large cargo ships are required to keep AIS transponders switched on at all times to broadcast the vessel's identity, position and course.

Vietnam said it mobilised rescue operations immediately while coordinating closely with Chinese rescue ships, helicopters and other vessels in the area also joined the search.

The Philippine Coast Guard, which deployed a patrol vessel and an aircraft

after receiving a request from Vietnam, said the operation was being carried out under international maritime agreements and bilateral cooperation with Vietnam.

China has become increasingly aggressive in asserting its claims in virtually the entire South China Sea, through which about \$5 trillion in global trade transits each year.

The sea passage also is believed to sit atop vast undersea deposits of oil and gas. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan also have overlapping claims in the strategic waterway along with China and the Philippines. (AP)

UN chief makes rare Cyprus visit to help ease decades-old ethnic division

MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS ■ Nicosia

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on a rare visit to Cyprus said Tuesday he was demonstrating his commitment to resolving the island nation's decades-old ethnic division, even as expectations remain low for a speedy breakthrough leading to a peace accord.

"I will do everything I can to support the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in this very important moment," Guterres said after talks with Greek Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides.

The UN chief also met with Turkish Cypriot leader Tufan Erhuman and was scheduled to hold joint meetings with both later Tuesday and Wednesday.

The first visit by a UN chief in 16 years came during renewed efforts to resume formal peace talks after a nearly decade-long hiatus. The last major push, which Guterres mediated in 2017, collapsed in recriminations over who and what was to blame for the impasse.

A Cyprus peace deal would help unlock the eastern Mediterranean's potential as a provider of natural gas for Europe and beyond while easing tensions in a turbulent region with competing interests over energy, territory and influence.

Numerous rounds of UN-mediated talks have shared the same fate since 1974,



Antonio Guterres

when the island was divided following a Turkish invasion prompted by an Athens-backed coup with the stated goal of union with Greece.

Turkish Cypriots declared independence in the island's northern third in 1983 but it's only recognised by Türkiye, which maintains more than 35,000 troops there.

Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004, but only the internationally recognised south enjoys full benefits. A few months before his UN term expires, Guterres wants to convene a wider meeting to involve top diplomats from Cyprus' guarantors — Greece, Türkiye and Britain — to declare a formal start to peace talks. It is hoped a declaration would offer momentum to the process so that Guterres' successor could see it through. Guterres told Christodoulides he's fully aware a Cyprus deal would have "not only a very positive impact for Cyprus, but will be extremely useful in the context of a very difficult situation of the region." (AP)

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Hindustan Unilever shares dive 7%



Shares of FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) on Tuesday tanked 7 per cent after the firm reported a 3.17 per cent year-on-year decline in consolidated net profit for the June quarter of FY27. The stock tumbled 6.97 per cent to settle at ₹2,023.15 on the BSE. During the day, it dived 7.16 per cent to hit the 52-week low of ₹2,019. At the NSE, the stock dropped 6.98 per cent to end at ₹2,022.70. The company's market valuation declined by ₹35,619.79 crore to ₹4,75,357.56 crore. The stock was the biggest laggard among the Sensex and Nifty firms. Hindustan Unilever Ltd on Tuesday reported a 3.17 per cent year-on-year decline in consolidated net profit to ₹2,680 crore for the June quarter of FY27, mainly on account of exceptional items and higher taxes. The company had reported a net profit of ₹2,768 crore in the April-June quarter a year ago, according to a regulatory filing by HUL.

(PTI)

Industrial production rises by 7.3% in June: Govt data



Industrial output rose by 7.3 per cent in June compared to 5.1 per cent in the preceding month, mainly on the back of improved manufacturing sector performance and strong growth of the electricity and gas supply sector. This is the third monthly Index of Industrial Production (IIP) data based on the new series. "In June 2026, Index of Industrial Production recorded a 7.3 per cent year-on-year growth, supported by 7.8 per cent growth in Manufacturing sector and strong growth of 10.6 per cent in Electricity & Gas Supply sector," the National Statistics Office said in a release on Tuesday. The IIP growth rate for the month of June 2026 is 7.3 per cent against 5.1 per cent (Quick Estimate released in June) in the month of May 2026, it stated. The revised estimate of IIP for the month of May is 5 per cent. The production of Mining & Quarrying rose by 1 per cent, Manufacturing by 7.8 per cent, Electricity & Gas Supply and Water Supply by 10.6 per cent, and Sewerage & Waste Management by 6.1 per cent in June 2026 compared to the year-ago period. Within the manufacturing sector, 19 out of 23 industry groups have recorded positive growth in June 2026 over June 2025. The top three positive contributors for the month of June 2026 are – manufacture of electrical equipment (34%), manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (17.5%), and manufacture of food products (10.8%).

(PTI)

Macroeconomic fundamentals strong: Union minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Macroeconomic fundamentals of the Indian economy remain strong, supported by robust domestic demand, healthy corporate balance sheets and sustained fiscal discipline amid global challenges, Union Minister Pankaj Chaudhary told Parliament on Tuesday.

Further, according to the RBI's Financial Stability Report (June 2026), the domestic financial system remains resilient, underpinned by strong bank and non-bank balance sheets, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

"As a major player in global markets, India's economy is also linked with international trends, which impact its exchange rate movements.

Since the start of the West Asia conflict, the Indian Rupee (INR) has depreciated against the US Dollar (USD) by 5.8 per cent in FY27 (from February 27 up to July 22, 2026)," he said.

At present, the macroeconomic fundamentals of the Indian economy remain strong, he said, adding real GDP has consistently grown at over 7 per cent during the last three years.

Economic growth continues to be supported by robust domestic demand, healthy corporate balance sheets and prudent fiscal management, he said.

The high-frequency indicators for the first quarter of 2026-27 also point to sustained momentum in economic activity and domestic demand, indicating the continued resilience of the Indian economy, he said.

The Index of Industrial



MoS Pankaj Chaudhary speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Monsoon session of Parliament, in New Delhi

PTI

Production (IIP) recorded a growth rate of 4.9 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in April 2026 and 5.1 per cent YoY in May 2026, indicating continued investment-led industrial growth despite heightened global uncertainty, he said.

"The industries reliant on imported inputs may face cost pressures. Thus, to support stability, the Government is easing import-led inflation through duty adjustments, expanding MSME credit, ensuring afford-

Govt sets up India Digital Payment Intelligence Corp to contain cyber frauds

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The government has set up the India Digital Payment Intelligence Corporation (IDPIC) to share real-time fraud intelligence and alerts to the banks and financial institutions in order to contain cyber financial frauds, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Tuesday.

In a reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, she said the new entity has been set up in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to check growing incidents of cyber frauds.

"To contain cyber financial frauds, the government in consultation with the RBI has set up India Digital Payment



Intelligence Corporation (IDPIC) to share real-time fraud intelligence and alerts to the banks and financial institutions by leveraging advanced technologies such

as Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Big Data Analytics," she said.

To address the growing cyber threats, she said, the government has been active-

ly engaging with the financial sectoral regulators to strengthen the cybersecurity posture of financial institutions.

Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has set up a National Cyber Coordination Centre (NCCC), which monitors cyberspace at metadata level to detect potential cybersecurity threats and facilitates real-time information sharing with concerned organisations, regulators and other stakeholders, enabling timely preventive and response actions, she said.

Further, she said, a nodal Computer Security Incident Response Team for the Financial Sector (CSIRT-Fin) has been set up under the overall supervision of CERT-In.

Samsung says foldable smartphones account for over20 % of flagship sales in India

JOYEETA DEY ■ New Delhi/London

Samsung's foldable smartphones now account for more than a fifth of its flagship sales in India, and it expects the adoption to accelerate as consumers shift to new mobile designs and layouts, the company's Southwest Asia CEO and President J B Park said.

Samsung first introduced foldable phones in 2019, and since then it has launched a new version of foldables every year. Last week, the South Korean technology giant announced the launch of its 8th generation of foldables — Galaxy Z8 — which are made in India.

"When we first introduced the foldables in 2019, they were not even known to the consumers. Even my neighbours were surprised that our phone could fold and asked - Is this real? Since then, we have come a long way. Today, more than 20 per cent of our flag-



ship sales are from foldables. And year by year, it (foldable sales) is growing.

"Based on whatever the experience or the requirements are for the consumer, that's where we are focussing. I expect there will be an expansion in the con-

sumer base transitioning to the new form factor," Park said at an Indian media roundtable in London.

Samsung currently sells almost 65 per cent of its flagship devices, including the Samsung Galaxy S26 Ultra, Samsung Galaxy S26+, and the foldable Galaxy Z series, in tier 2 and tier 3 cities and rural markets.

"We have seen the rural market growing in double-digits, much faster than metros... We continue to invest heavily in tier 2 and tier 3 towns to educate them about our premium products, which are different from what we used to sell in rural markets like 2G and feature phones which were mostly about voice. But once these (tier 2, tier 3 and rural) customers come in touch with a new technology and environment, the transition rate is much faster, and that's how we are focussing on the rural market for expansion," Park said.

Gold drops ₹2,640 per 10g, silver slides ₹5,200

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Gold prices retreated by ₹2,640 to ₹1.47 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday, and silver dropped ₹5,200 per kg, tracking weak global trends and a firm rupee.

The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity depreciated by ₹2,640 to ₹1,47,000 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from Monday's closing level of ₹1,49,640 per 10 grams,



according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Silver also witnessed selling and tumbled ₹5,200 to

₹24,800 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). The white metal had settled at ₹23,000 per kg in the previous session.

Traders said a stronger rupee reduced the landed cost of imported bullion in the domestic market, while weak global trends and caution ahead of the US Federal Reserve's policy decision kept investors' sentiment subdued.

"Gold edged lower on Tuesday, retreating from the

previous session's gains as investors turned cautious ahead of the US Federal Reserve's policy decision," said Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst — Commodities at HDFC Securities.

Praveen Singh, Head of Commodities at Mirae Asset ShareKhan, the precious metals traded lower despite crude oil prices extending the decline to the third day on hopes of Iran and the US resuming their peace talks over other critical matters.

Govt orders sugar dealers to limit stocks to 30 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The government on Tuesday directed that no dealer of sugar should hold stock for more than 30 days and also imposed a stock limit of 4,000 quintals as part of its efforts to keep prices of sweetener under control.

The order would come into force with effect from August 1, 2026, and would remain in force up to November 30, 2026.

In a gazette notification, the Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs imposed this restriction using powers under section 3 of the Essential Commodities



Act, 1955, and the Sugar (Control) Order, 2025.

"...Central Government hereby directs that no dealer of sugar shall hold any stock for a period exceeding thirty days

from the date of receipt of such stock and shall not keep sugar in stock at any time and in any place throughout the country in excess of 4,000 quintals," the notification said.

To keep prices under check amid a forecast of a deficit monsoon, the Centre has already banned sugar exports.

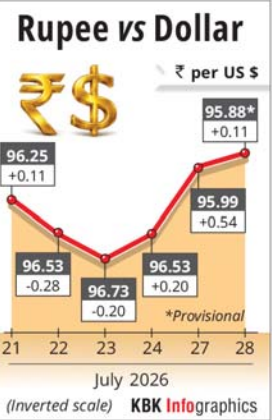
The order would not apply to sugar stocks held on the government account, or by dealers nominated by the State Government or an officer authorised by it to hold stock for distribution through fair price shops under the Public Distribution System.

Rupee settles at 95.88 against US dollar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

The rupee stayed on upward track for the third straight session and ended 11 paise higher at 95.88 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, supported by lower crude oil prices amid signals of easing West Asia crisis. According to forex traders, the sustained outflow of foreign capital amid selling pressure in domestic equity markets, as well as an elevated dollar index ahead of the US Federal Reserve's policy decision, capped gains for the local currency.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 95.75 and touched the



intraday high of 95.63 before ending the session at 95.88 (provisional) against the greenback, up 11 paise from its previous closing level.

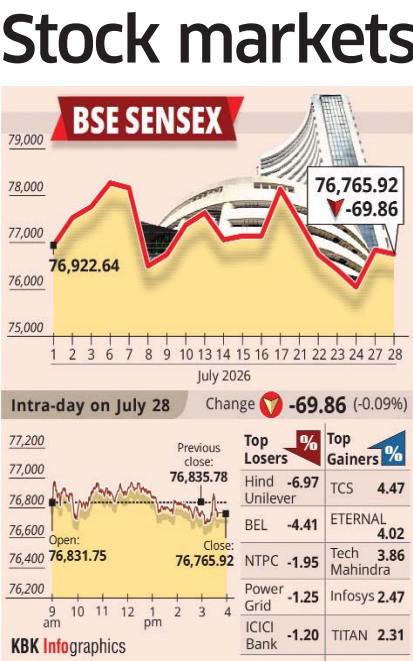
On Monday, the rupee

appreciated sharply by 54 paise to close at 95.99 against the US dollar, after rising 20 paise in the preceding session on Friday.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said the rupee strengthened on the halting of strikes between the US and Iran.

"Traders may take cues from CB (Conference Board) consumer confidence data from the US. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 95.35 to 96.05," Choudhary said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.08 per cent higher at 101.46.



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended flat on Tuesday as investors' sentiment turned cautious ahead of key global central bank policy meetings this week and heavy sell-off across Asian markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dipped 69.86 points, or 0.09 per cent, to settle at 76,765.92. During the day, it hit a high of 76,988.48 and a low of 76,672.77, gyrating 315.71 points.

The 50-share NSE Nifty slipped 10.60 points, or 0.04 per cent, to end at 23,985.35.

From the Sensex pack, Hindustan Unilever tanked 6.97 per cent after the FMCG major reported a 3.17 per cent year-on-year decline in consolidated net profit to ₹2,680 crore for the June quarter, mainly on account

of exceptional items and higher taxes. Bharat Electronics, NTPC, ICI Bank, Power Grid, and Reliance Industries were also among the laggards. Tata Consultancy Services, Eternal, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, and Titan were among the major gainers.

"The respite in crude oil prices provided relief to markets by easing concerns over inflation and input cost pressures. However, investor sentiment remained cautious ahead of key central bank policy meetings this week, including those of the Fed, BoE (Bank of England), and BoJ (Bank of Japan)," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, dropped 2.82 per cent to USD 85.87 per barrel.

Foreign institutional investors

(FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹1,688.23 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

In Asian markets, South Korea's KOSPI tanked 10.84 per cent, Japan's Nikkei 225 index and Shanghai's SSE Composite index also ended lower. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled marginally higher.

"Indian equity markets ended largely flat as a broad selloff across Asian markets weighed on investor sentiment," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Markets in Europe were trading in positive territory. US markets ended on a mixed note.

On Monday, the Sensex jumped 776.01 points, or 1.02 per cent, to settle at 76,835.78. The Nifty surged 228.50 points, or 0.96 per cent, to end at 23,995.95.

PROSPECT



Assam Minister Atul Bora along with Asom Gana Parishad MLAs and party functionaries, on Tuesday contributed to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma thanked them for their generous support



Yuva Bharti Trust chairman HN Sharma on Monday welcomed Dr Vinay Sahasrabudhe on being appointed the President of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai

Hudco intends to raise \$1.3b via ECB to fund urban infra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd (Hudco) on Tuesday said it plans to raise \$1.3 billion via external commercial borrowings (ECB) in the next five months to fund urban infra in the country.

Hudco, a techno-financing public sector enterprise in the field of housing and infrastructure development, intends to raise up to \$2 billion through ECB under the RBI concessional swap window available up to December 31, 2026.

"So, far we have raised \$700 million through External Commercial Borrowings this financial year. Remaining \$1.3 billion would be raised in the next five months depending on funding requirement,"



Hudco Chairman and Managing Director Sanjay Kulshrestha said.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in June opened a special US Dollar-Rupee forex swap window to give cheap currency hedging support to public sector undertakings (PSUs) raising External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs).

Last year, the financial institution had raised about USD 700 million through the ECB in Japanese Yen. This year, Hudco is planning to raise the ECB in US dollars along with Yen, he said, adding borrowing in dollar terms would be first for the company.

Experts push universal screening to end viral hepatitis by 2030

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

India has the knowledge, vaccines, diagnostics and treatments needed to eliminate viral hepatitis as a public health threat.

The next challenge is ensuring that these lifesaving interventions reach every individual from expectant mothers and newborns to high-risk adults through universal screening, adult immunisation, stronger maternal healthcare, early diagnosis and equitable access to treatment, leading policymakers, hepatologists and public health experts said at the second edition of the Illness to Wellness Foundation's conference on "Prevention, Diagnosis and Treatment for Hepatitis," organised on the occasion of World Hepatitis Day 2026.

Delivering the keynote address, Rajesh Bhushan, former secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, and



chairperson, Governing Council, Illness to Wellness Foundation, said, "India has made meaningful progress through the National Viral Hepatitis Control Programme, but achieving greater impact will require stronger collaboration across stakeholders. Government, healthcare institutions, the private sector, civil society and development partners must work together to expand the reach of hepatitis services and ensure that quality care is available to every community."

Delivering the welcome address, Anil Rajput, chairperson, Advisory Council, Illness to Wellness Foundation, asserted, "We believe that success demands a whole-of-society approach. Governments, healthcare professionals, researchers, industry, civil society, the media and citizens all have vital roles to play. Public health succeeds not through isolated efforts but through partnerships that place prevention at the heart of national development. The Illness to Wellness Foundation remains committed to advancing this movement through awareness, evidence-based dialogue and collaborative action."

The conference featured three thematic technical sessions that examined critical dimensions of hepatitis prevention and management across the continuum of care.

Other spokespersons who delivered key notes are Padma Bhushan Dr (Prof) SK Sarin, senior professor, Department of Hepatology and Director, ILBS; Asha Hegde, director, South Asia-HIV/Hepatitis/STIs and Family Health, PATH India; Dr RS Mishra, principal director and head - Internal Medicine, Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital, Saket, Dr Anil Agarwal, co-chairman, Institute of Surgical Gastroenterology, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Dr Anita Shete-Aich, Scientist-E, Hepatitis Group, ICMR-National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune and Dr Suneela Garg, member, FICCI Swasth Bharat Task Force.

FY26: Private banks collect ₹4,949 cr, PSBs ₹2,138 cr for minimum balance shortfalls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Private sector banks have collected ₹4,948.71 crore from account holders for failing to maintain minimum average balance in their current accounts and savings accounts in FY26, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

During the period under review, public sector banks (PSBs) collected ₹2,137.92 crore for the non-maintenance of minimum average balance (current account & savings account), Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

HDFC Bank collected the highest amount — ₹1,798.14 crore, followed by Axis Bank at ₹1,081.33 crore during FY26, he said quoting Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data.

Both these private-sector lenders collected ₹2,879.47 crore as charges for non-maintenance of minimum average balance. This is 58 per cent of the total collection done by 19 private-sector banks.

No penal charges are levied on Basic Savings Bank Deposit Accounts, including Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) Accounts, etc, he said.

Replying to another question, Chaudhary said the financial health of PSBs has shown significant improvement with healthy balance sheets, historically high profits and multi-decadal low level of gross



non-performing assets (GNPAs). Further, PSBs have recorded sustained credit growth across different sectors of the economy, he said.

He further said that the government has introduced Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS 5.0) in May 2026, to tide over any short-term liquidity mismatches faced by businesses due to the West Asia Crisis.

The scheme provides guarantee coverage to Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) through National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd (NCGTC) for the amount in default under the additional credit facility extended to the eligible borrowers, he said.

The scheme provides 100 per cent guarantee coverage for MSMEs and 90 per cent guarantee coverage for non-MSMEs and the scheduled passenger airline sector, up to a credit flow of ₹25,50,000 crore, which includes ₹5,000 crore specifically earmarked for the scheduled passenger airline sector.

Assam CM Himanta flags off Purabi Dairy's first ice cream export to Bhutan

TONY DAS
Guwahati

In a major boost to the dairy sector of Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday flagged off Purabi Dairy's first export consignment of 5,627 litres of Purabi ice cream to Bhutan, marking the first such export of dairy products from the State. The consignment will make Purabi ice cream available in major markets across Bhutan, including Thimphu, Paro, Phuentsholing and Wangdue.

The flag-off ceremony was attended by Minister for Cooperation Kaushik Rai. Senior Government officials — KC Samrta, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Fishery & Animal Husbandry, Govt of Assam, Aruna Rajoria, IAS, Commissioner & Secretary, Agriculture, Govt of Assam; Virendra Mittal, IAS, Commissioner & Secretary, Finance, Govt of Assam; Anant Lal Gyani, IAS, Secretary, Cooperation, Govt of Assam; Sunita Rai, Deputy General Manager, APEDA; SB Bose, Managing Director, NEDFL —

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Tata Sons executive chairman N Chandrasekaran received total remuneration of ₹158.66 crore in the year ended March 31, 2026, up from ₹155.81 crore a year earlier, according to the holding company's annual report. The compensation is the highest that Chandrasekaran has received since Tata Sons began disclosing executive remuneration in fiscal 2022. Over the past five years, he has earned a cumulative ₹671.4 crore.

His FY26 remuneration comprised salary and other benefits of ₹17.97 crore, up 18 per cent from ₹15.12 crore in the previous fiscal, and a profit-linked commission of ₹140.69 crore, unchanged from FY25. While his fixed pay has risen over the past five years, the bulk of Chandrasekaran's remuneration has come from commissions, which have increased alongside Tata Sons' profitability.

His commission rose from ₹94 crore in FY22 to ₹100 crore in FY23 and ₹121.5 crore



N Chandrasekaran

in FY24 before increasing to ₹140.69 crore in FY25, where it remained in FY26.

While the commission remains unchanged from the previous year, the salary and other benefits are up from ₹15.12 crore in 2024-25. The 2024-25 salary and other benefits were higher than the ₹13.82 crore earnings of the previous year and ₹13 crore in 2022-23. This was ₹14.61 crore in 2021-22. The remuneration places Chandrasekaran among India's highest-paid corporate executives.

HCLTech Chief Executive C Vijayakumar received ₹176 crore in FY26, while Persistent Systems CEO Sandeep Kalra earned ₹148 crore in FY25.



and representatives of the organisations involved in facilitating the export were also present on the occasion.

Commenting on the export, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said, "This export marks a proud milestone for Assam and reflects the growing strength of our dairy sector. Purabi ice cream is made from milk produced by farmers across the State, and its entry into the Bhutanese market will create new opportunities for our dairy cooperatives and rural producers."

Commenting on the milestone, Assam Minister for Cooperation & Chairman, NEDFL, Kaushik Rai said, "The export of Purabi ice cream to Bhutan is a significant achievement for Assam's dairy sector

and reflects the strength of the entire Purabi value chain. Every pack in this consignment has been manufactured using milk produced by farmers of Assam, making this milestone particularly meaningful for our dairy farmers." Sunita Rai, Deputy General Manager, APEDA said, "APEDA has been working to promote exports of agricultural and processed food products from the Northeast and to help organisations in the region meet the requirements of international trade. The export of Purabi ice cream to Bhutan is an important development for Assam, and APEDA is pleased to facilitate NEDFL and Purabi Dairy in completing the required export procedures and formalities."

India's telecom user base hits 134.8cr: TRAI data



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Telecom subscriber base in the country increased marginally to 134.8 crore in June, driven by net addition of subscribers on the networks of Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio, according to data released by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Tuesday.

Bharti Airtel led subscriber growth during the month, adding 31.63 lakh users compared with May. The additions included 29.89 lakh mobile subscribers and 1.73 lakh fixed-line connections.

It was followed by Reliance Jio which reported a net addition of 22.91 lakh subscribers, comprising 21.46 lakh in mobile segment and 1.44 lakh in fixed line segment.

Together, the two private telecom operators accounted for 54.54 lakh, or about 87 per cent, of the total net addition of 62 lakh subscribers in June. "The number of total telephone subscribers in India increased from 1,343.1 million at the end of May 2026 to 1,348.08 million at the end of June 2026, thereby showing a monthly

growth rate of 0.37 per cent," sector regulator TRAI's monthly data subscriber report for June 2026 said. The total number of wireless connections in June increased to 130 crore from 129.4 crore in May. The total wireless connections comprised 114.7 crore consumer sim, 13.47 crore M2M sim and 1.78 crore fixed wireless access connections.

Vodafone Idea reported net addition of 1.63 lakh wireless subscribers.

State-run BSNL added 94,006 subscribers during the reported month. MTNL lost 11,284 mobile subscribers in June.

The wireline subscriber base declined 1.67 per cent on monthly basis to 4.78 crore in June, from 4.86 crore in May, mainly due to BSNL losing 7.96 lakh fixed line subscribers.

Only Airtel, Reliance Jio and STPL added new subscribers, while rest all the companies including Vodafone Idea, MTNL, APSFL, Tata Teleservices, Quadrant reported decline in fixed line connections.

As per the information filed by 1,580 operators for June 2026, the total number of broadband subscribers increased to 108.75 crore from 108 crore in May.

DAILY SUDOKU
DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★
HOW TO SOLVE IT
Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction—no maths involved.
SOLUTION (28.7.26)

DOUBLE CROSSWORD
WEDNESDAY | JULY 29, 2026
ACROSS
3 Fellows seemingly half sane but of great intelligence (5)
8 Letters to Jack from a Gulf state (5)
10 Nice change at the medical centre for old people (5)
11 One way to address a person of class (3)
12 Music group at number ten, possibly (5)
13 Charming women get it at church in various ways (7)
15 One doesn't feel right out of them! (5)
18 Hugh, we're told, is just a "hack" (3)
19 Being in the way, a tree could be removed (6)
21 Garden structure by Olga, cleverly (7)
22 A book can be a good one about modern times (4)
23 Stingy chap embracing his sweetheart intelligence (5)
24 Means of printing a penetrative article? (5)
26 Old king possessing £1 and a dog (6)
29 It's a lot to carry to the end of the garden (3)
31 Put to a fitting test (3,2)
32 Cut terribly crude keys (7)
34 Looked desirous of gold, perhaps, out East (5)
35 Has to do without love, being on his own (3)
36 Frustratingly promise central heating with no problem (5)
37 Agrees all but initially to weave cloth (5)
38 Trial outcome? (5)
DOWN
1 He's apt to get into the salad, etc. (5)
2 Walked in a charmed manner? (7)
4 Archer, one of the immortals (4)
5 Rest period for which one can set seats out (6)
6 He'll do something dramatic (5)
7 Join one for a close finish (5)
9 Bird after coal, maybe (3)
12 Old prison's modern entrance (7)
14 That woman from Motherwell (3)
16 A woman with contrary ways about her can be fun (5)
17 To astound the team leader is no ordinary feat (5)
19 Inclined to be biased (7)
20 Booklet concerning a car crashed during a race (5)
21 Friendly injection of money into a new play (5)
23 They shouldn't take long to read (7)
25 Spot cash for fish (3)
27 Decree in gold and possibly red (5)
28 Solo arranged by an egghead for free (3)
30 Is it peripheral in the field of betting? (5)
32 Where to end a united state in the United States (4)
33 Gosh, a French horn! (3)
SOLUTION (28.7.26)

Ajaya wins CWG silver in 79kg weightlifting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Glasgow

Fast-rising Indian weightlifter Valluri Ajaya Babu produced a remarkable performance to win the silver medal in the men's 79kg category and continue the country's successful run in the sport at the ongoing Commonwealth Games here.

The 21-year-old from Andhra Pradesh's Vizianagaram district lifted a Games record 149kg in snatch and 181kg in clean and jerk for a total of 330kg to win the second prize, narrowly missing out on gold to Malaysia's Erry Hidayat Muhammad, who totalled a Games record 331kg (147 + 184)



during a gripping contest on Monday night.

This was India's sixth medal in weightlifting in the current edition of the Games.

England's Chris Murray settled for bronze with a total of 325. First, Hidayat lifted

181kg to smash the Games record, the Indian then bettered it within seconds by lifting 181kg in his final attempt to break the record again for 330kg.

Hidayat did one better, breaking the record again

with a lift of 184kg in his final attempt to win the gold medal. Earlier, after a failed second attempt at 149kg, Ajaya Babu made a fine comeback to lift the weight in his final try and set a new Games record, finishing at the top of the heap at the end of snatch section ahead of England's Chris Murray (148kg) and Malaysia's Erry Hidayat Muhammad (147kg).

He had 145kg listed as his first attempt and nailed it too easily. Entering the clean and jerk section on a high, Ajaya Babu looked confident of winning the top prize but his opponent from Malaysia edged the Indian out eventually.

Seen as one of India's fastest-growing lifters, Ajaya

Babu had in the past won the gold medal in the men's 79kg category at the 2025 Commonwealth Championships in Ahmedabad with a personal-best total lift of 335kg (152kg snatch + 183kg clean & jerk), breaking the championship records. That performance earned him his direct qualification spot for Glasgow 2026. In the 2024 Commonwealth Championships, he secured double gold medals across both the junior and senior divisions in the men's 81kg category in Suva, Fiji.

After that, in the 2025 World Championships, the youngster was placed 16th overall in a highly competitive 39-lifter field in Forde, Norway.

MP off-spinner Saransh Jain gets maiden India Test call-up for Sri Lanka series

KUSHAN SARKAR
■ New Delhi

Veteran Madhya Pradesh off-spinner Saransh Jain earned his maiden Test call-up on Tuesday, capping a decade of consistent domestic performances as the selectors announced India's 15-member squad for the two-match series against Sri Lanka next month.

As reported by PTI on Sunday, the 33-year-old Saransh was in contention due to Washington Sundar's likely unavailability for the opening Test because of his ongoing rehabilitation from a hamstring injury. The short series will be played in Galle



(August 15 to 19) and Colombo (August 23 to 27). India will also play a four-day practice match from August 7 to prepare for the main assignment.

Saransh's inclusion stems from the Shubman Gill-led side's need for a right-arm finger spinner in

Washington's absence. A key member of Madhya

Pradesh's Ranji Trophy-winning side under Chandrakant Pandit's coaching, the tall off-spinner enhanced his credentials during the recent India A tour of Sri Lanka, claiming six wickets across the two matches while also scoring a gritty unbeaten 70.

With Ravindra Jadeja and Manav Suthar being the left-arm orthodox spinners and Kuldeep Yadav a left-arm wrist spinner, the selectors opted for variety by drafting in the only specialist right-arm finger spinner in contention. Jadeja had been given a break from the one off home Test against Afghanistan in June. (PTI)

Gonzalez and Gotham FC agree to part ways



ANNE M PETERSON
■ New York

Esther Gonzalez and Gotham FC have agreed to mutually terminate her contract so the Spanish forward can focus on personal matters in Spain. Gonzalez, who won the 2023 Women's World Cup with Spain, was Gotham's leading scorer this season with six goals.

The 33-year-old Gonzalez also has a team-high 30 regular-season goals since joining Gotham in August 2023. During her tenure, Gotham has won a pair of NWSL championships and a CONCACAF W Champions Cup. "This journey has surpassed every expectation I had when I first came to Gotham. Together we achieved everything there is to achieve, and I will forever be proud to say that with this club, I won it all," Gonzalez said in a statement. "But beyond the trophies, Gotham is the place where I

grew in so many ways - as a player, as a professional and, most importantly, as a person. And it is here, in New Jersey, where my family grew, too. I carry so many incredible memories with me, but I know that every time I think of this club, I will do so with a smile on my face."

Before she joined Gotham, Gonzalez played for Real Madrid, scoring 30 goals in 54 appearances. She was also on the Spanish team that was runner-up at the 2025 women's European Championship. "Esther has been a model professional on and off the field, helping us win four major trophies and serving as a respected leader in our team," said Yael Averbuch West, the president of soccer operations for Gotham FC. "We thank her for three great years full of world-class moments of brilliance. We will always support Esther wherever her path leads." (AP)

Sharmila Dhankar clinches India's first ever para-athletics gold in CWG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Glasgow

Sharmila Dhankar, a woman who was impaired by polio at the age of two and survived the trauma of an abusive marriage, became India's first para-athlete to clinch a gold medal in the Commonwealth Games, winning the women's shot put F57 event here.

The 40-year-old produced her season's best throw of 9.81m to end India's 20-year wait for a para-athletics medal in the CWG.

Compatriot Shilpa Shyla, was awarded the bronze medal following an Indian protest amid controversial circumstances. Shyla had produced a personal best effort of 7.26m. "I am very

happy. The feeling has not yet sunk in, may be it will take another two-three days. My mother fought the world to help me fulfil my dreams. My next target is a gold at the Asian Games," Sharmila told PTI. Nigeria's Eucharia Iyiazi was initially placed at the bronze medal position but after a protest and official review, her only valid mark was adjudged a foul.

That led to Shyla being upgraded to bronze from the initial fourth place. However, it is likely that a counter protest may also be launched by Nigeria.

A sobbing Shyla celebrated, along with Sharmila, after the dramatic upgradation to bronze, giving India two medals from the event.

F57 classification is for ath-



letes with lower limb impairments, limb deficiencies, or reduced muscle power.

Sharmila's performance

on Monday night is one for the ages not just for the result it yielded but the resolve that it took for her to

Sonam and Himanshu clinch bronze in 10m air rifle mixed team at ISSF World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Hangzhou

Rifle shooters Sonam Uttam Maskar and Himanshu Dhillon added another medal to India's campaign, clinching the bronze in the 10m air rifle mixed team event at the ISSF World Cup here on Tuesday.

The bronze medal took India's overall tally at the World Cup to four medals, including 1 gold, 1 silver, and 2 bronze. Both Indian teams delivered strong performances in the qualification round to advance to the final. Sonam Uttam Maskar (317.2) and Himanshu Dhillon (317.4) combined for an aggregate qualification



score of 634.6.

Meanwhile, the pair of Elavenil Valariivan (316.8) and Parth Rakesh Mane (317.4) qualified right behind them with a total score of 634.2. In the final, Sonam and Himanshu produced a composed performance to combine for 441.2 points (220.6 each), securing the

bronze medal behind China

1 and China 2.

Elavenil (190.5) and Parth (188.3) finished fourth with a final score of 378.8.

"It was a tough competition, and the overall experience was very good," said Sonam, the 23-year-old from Maharashtra, in a release. "Winning a medal is

always important because it gives us confidence for the assignments ahead. Experience matters more than anything, and this performance will motivate us as we prepare for the Asian Games and the World Championships later this season." Making his first-ever senior ISSF World Cup final appearance, Himanshu said, "It was a great experience competing in my first senior World Cup final. I believed in myself, trusted my coach's guidance and relied on my strengths. I've competed in many junior finals, but winning my first senior World Cup medal makes this achievement very special."

After triumph, Anahat puts Harvard plans on hold to chase Olympic glory

BHARAT SHARMA ■ New Delhi

Newly-crowned junior squash world champion Anahat Singh has revealed that she placed her academic goals at the prestigious Harvard University on hold this year to give herself the best chance of winning a medal at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Anahat's original plan was to follow in her elder sister Amira's footsteps and pursue higher education at the Harvard. But bolstered by the title triumph in her fifth and final attempt, the 18-year-old now wants to put all her energies into preparing for the upcoming Asian Games and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics in a couple



of years' time.

Anahat has been living out of the suitcase for as far as she can remember, juggling top level squash and school. Having graduated from school only a couple of months ago, Anahat has now chosen to focus on the sport to take her game to the next

level. "I was supposed to go to college this year, but I decided to take a gap year because of the Asian Games coming up. And now I understand that this year is really important for me regarding squash and, the build up to the LA 2028 (Games)," Anahat told PTI in an interview refer-

ring to her plans for squash's Olympic debut.

"So, yeah, I mean, just focusing on this year, outside of school, because I've been doing that for the last 12 years (smiles). I'm just focusing on squash for a year and just making sure that I'm at my peak going in to LA 28," she said.

World title confidence-booster ahead of Asiad

Having got the monkey off her back with a world junior title in her fifth and final appearance, Anahat's next big assignment is the Asian Games in Japan in September-October.

If Anahat is to win gold, she will have to find ways to upstage higher-ranked players like world number

five Sivasangari Subramaniam from Malaysia and sixth-ranked Satomi Watanabe from Japan.

Considering the challenge ahead, the triumph in Canada that included wins over three Egyptians, will give Anahat more confidence against the world's best players. A gold in Japan would secure her automatic qualification to the Olympics.

"It (the win at world juniors) definitely adds a lot to my confidence to get into this event.

I mean, if I didn't win, it wouldn't really make much of a difference, but it definitely puts me on a high now," said the youngster, who is supported by JSW Sports.

In tears after his exit, Tejaswin stays to help Kushare

APARAJITA UPADHYAY
■ Glasgow

His own campaign derailed by a recurring knee problem, Tejaswin Shankar fought through tears and discomfort to be there for compatriot Sarvesh Kushare, offering him technical advice that proved crucial in securing his men's high jump silver in the Commonwealth Games here.

Tejaswin had claimed the high jump bronze in the 2022 Birmingham CWG, which was a first ever for India in the sport. On Monday, the 27-year-old felt a sharp pain in his knee during his warm-up and could not continue in the competition after clearing his first attempt.

break, he stayed back at the venue and switched roles to help Kushare, who eventually fetched a silver medal, bettering Tejaswin's 2022 performance.

Kushare credited Tejaswin's technical advice for helping him regain his rhythm after a shaky start.

"I wanted to clear the height in my first attempt itself, but during 2.25m my rhythm was affected and my stride became shorter. Then TJ told me to move forward in my run-up, and that helped," Kushare said.

A visibly emotional Tejaswin struggled to compose himself while speaking to reporters after the event. "I felt a shooting pain in my knee. It happened



during my warm-up. It's nothing new; I have always had tendonitis in my knees," he said. "I don't think there is any high jumper who doesn't have it. That's why it's called jumper's knee. Everyone

manages it, and so do I," he said. Tejaswin said the timing of the injury was particularly cruel as he had arrived in Glasgow believing he was capable of winning another Commonwealth Games

medal. "But it's one of those days. You want just one day in a year when you don't have that pain, but it came on that day only. It really stings. In these conditions, I was really confident I could jump for a win, jump for a medal. I really knew I could win a medal," he rued. "But to not even get through the first height, it stings because I was in really great shape."

Explaining the injury, he added: "It's just overuse of the patellar tendon. There is nothing spectacular about it. It just flared up today and ruined my entire competition." Tejaswin, however, remains hopeful of recovering in time for the decathlon, which begins on Thursday. (PTI)

First Indian to reach 110m hurdles final in CWG, suffers injury

APARAJITA UPADHYAY
■ Glasgow

National record holder Tejas Shirse became the first Indian to qualify for the men's 110m hurdles final at the Commonwealth Games but finished last in the medal race after sustaining an injury here. The 24-year-old Shirse finished third in Heat 1 with a time of 13.76 seconds and made it to the final at sixth place overall.

However, in the final later in the evening, an injured Shirse could only manage 15.39 seconds to finish eighth and last on Monday. His national record stands at 13.27 seconds.

"In the warm up, I suffered a Navicular stress fracture in my left leg. I didn't want to pull out so I told my physio to tape it," Shirse told PTI after the

race. "I am the first Indian to qualify for the 110m hurdles final in the CWG, so I didn't want to let the whole nation down (by pulling out)," he added. Shirse said it was too early to comment on his chances at the Asian Games, scheduled for September-October. "This is not a new injury, it had happened earlier also. I will have to get scans first."

The Pioneer

Classified

CHANGE OF NAME

I, hitherto known as B. SAISRUTI, D/o BAMAN AADIGA, R/o-Baulakoli Sahi Pitala, Pitala, Hinjili Ganjam Odisha-761103, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as S. SRUTI.

PD(332)C

AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an Affidavit No-1393, Dt 22.07.2026 sworn before The Notary Public, Sukinda, Jaipur, I Bikash Chandra Sahoo, At- Mahammedpur, P.O-Bahadalapur, P.S- Kuakhia, Dist- Jaipur, PIN-755009, Odisha declare that as per my CHSE certificate bearing Roll No-231CC018 vide Regd. No-144405/1996 and SI No-0790126 my name has been recorded as Bikash Chandra Sahoo. But as per my Aadhar Card No-2338 6813 1308 and my PAN-EECP9721A my name has been recorded as Bikash Chandra Sahoo. I also declare that myself Bikash Chandra Sahoo and Bikash Chandra Sahoo both the names are one & same person in our Village and there is no other such person in same name in said locality.

320011612/2627

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RWS&S MECHANICAL DIVISION,
PLOT NO. D-2/24, MANCHESWAR INDUSTRIAL ESTATE,
BHUBANESWAR-751010
e-Mail: "eernwssbsbs@gmail.com"
TENDER CALL NOTICE NO. SEMBBSR/04 (4) 2026-27.

The Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Mechanical Division, Bhubaneswar, Plot- D-2/24, Mancheswar Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-10 on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites item rate tender online conformity with Detail Tender Call Notice from registered and established Manpower Service Provider to provide service of bore well drilling skilled personnel to the Sub-Division office under Office of the Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Mechanical Division, Bhubaneswar as per the requirement.

Sl. No	Description of Items	No	Estimated Cost (Approximate per year)	Cost of Bid document	EMD
1	2	3	4	5	6
	RWS&S Mechanical Sub-Division-Puri				
1	HVD	1 No			
2	Asst. Driller	2 Nos	Rs. 13,65,312.00 (on wages only)	6000/-	@2% of estimate d cost
3	Boring mate	3 Nos			
4	Khalasi	1 Nos			
5.	Helper	1 No			

Tender document with detail technical requirement, scope of the work, term and condition will be available online in Govt. Web site www.tendersodisha.odisha.gov.in from date **01.08.2026 to 14.08.2026** up-to 5.00 P.M. The tender will be opened on dt. **17.08.2026** at 12.00 P.M onwards in Office of the Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Mechanical Division, Bhubaneswar in presence of the bidder or their authorized representative as availability. The interested man power service providers may submit the tender document complete in all respect and duly signed along with other requisite document failing which the bid is liable for rejection.

The authority reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

OIPR-32001/252581/2627/0005

I/C Superintending Engineer
RWS&S Mechanical Division
Bhubaneswar.

25001/832/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
RURAL WORKSELECTRICAL DIVISION
BRAHMAPUR
e-Procurement Notice No -EERWELBAM- 07/2026-27
E-Mail- eerwelect.bam@yahoo.com

1	Name of the Work	Electrical Shifting works.
2	Estimated Cost	Rs.05.00 to 11.00 lakhs (Excluding GST)
3	Period of Completion	4 Months
4	Date & Time of availability of Bid documents in the Portal	From Dt. 04.08.2026 at 11.00 A.M.to Dt-12.08.2026 up to 5.00 P.M
5	Date & Time of opening of tender	13.08.2026 at 1.00 P.M
6	Bid Identification No	EERWELBAM- 07/2026-27
7	Procurement officer/ Name and address of the officer inviting Bids.	Executive Engineer, R W EL DIVN.BAM At- Near I.T Office Ambapua. Dist. -Ganjam,Brahmapur Odisha. -760011

Further detail can be seen from the Govt. Web site www.tenderorissa.gov.in

OIPR-25001/251901/12627/0003

Executive Engineer,
Rural Works Elect. Divn. Bam