

Narwar Fort, believed to have been rebuilt by the Kachhwaha Rajputs in the 10th century, is one of the Madhya Pradesh's prominent heritage sites. The hill fort is also associated in local tradition with Kush, the son of Lord Rama, and the legendary King Nala and Damayanti. The latest theft has once again raised serious questions over the protection of priceless historical artefacts housed at ASI-protected monuments.

Haryana Govt doing excellent work for the youth, farmers and women under CM Saini: PM Modi

PNS ■ Jind / Chandigarh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while appreciating the working style of Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, on Friday said that Haryana's double-engine government is working on the mantra of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Saini, the Haryana Government is doing excellent work for the youth, farmers, and women of the state. The path shown by the Haryana Government of providing jobs without 'kharchi-parchi' was not easy, but the BJP government has made it possible. Haryana is now moving rapidly on the path of development. Agriculture and industry are the two pillars that are strengthening Haryana.

Addressing a public rally organised in Jind after flagging off the country's first hydrogen train, Modi said that he was overwhelmed with happiness upon coming to Jind. "This is no ordinary land. This is a land of history, valour, faith and pride. The name and blessings of Shakti Peeth Mata Jayantiya always remain with this city. The affection and love shown by the people here will never be forgotten. The milk, curd and ghee of the Murrah buffalo, Jind's desi boora and its ghevar are memories that are inseparably associated with Jind," he said.

The Prime Minister said that Jind's ghee and ghevar may not have changed over the years, but Jind's spirit has changed. Today, Jind is



emerging as a picture of the BJP-NDA's good governance model. Over the past few years, the entire Haryana has embarked on a new track of development. Today's programme is infusing new energy into the mission of the BJP's double-engine government.

He said that Jind and Haryana's name had been etched in the pages of history today. The country has received its first hydrogen train from Jind. Even today, we read and hear that India's first train ran between Bombay and Thane. Similarly, whenever hydrogen trains are mentioned in the future, the names of Jind, Sonipat and Haryana will also be remembered.

Modi said that Haryana had also received other projects worth more than Rs 14,000 crore. These include projects related to railways, highways and heritage, while two new medical

colleges have also been dedicated to the service of Haryana. This will open new avenues for the youth to become doctors and other medical professionals. Besides this, the Prime Minister handed over the keys to 5 beneficiaries of PMAY (Rural).

45-day special campaign launched in Haryana against power theft

PNS ■ Chandigarh

Taking serious note of the outstanding penalty amount pending against electricity consumers in Haryana, Director General of Police (State Enforcement Bureau), Navdeep Singh Virk, on Friday directed all Station House Officers (SHOs) to conduct a thorough scrutiny of police station records and case diaries and immediately prepare a list of all electricity theft cases where penalties of Rs lakh or more remain unpaid. The DGP has instructed all SHOs to personally monitor the recovery process and initiate immediate action to realise the pending penalties. He has also ordered the launch of a 45-day special campaign aimed at recovering the 56 crore rupees in outstanding penalty revenue pending across the state.

He further directed that a weekly progress report, along with details of the penalty amount recovered, must be submitted every Monday to the Office of the Superintendent of Police, Enforcement Headquarters, Shakti Bhawan.

The Haryana State Enforcement Bureau operates round the clock through its 22 police stations across the state. Its core responsibilities include curbing electricity theft, preventing water theft, checking illegal mining, controlling the sale of illicit liquor, and monitoring the development of unauthorised colonies.

The Bureau maintains that electricity theft is a social offence. Since electricity generation depends primarily on natural resources such as water and coal, power theft amounts to the misuse of finite natural resources. Controlling electricity theft, therefore, is not only a law enforcement priority but also part of the Bureau's broader social responsibility.

Opposition Slams Modi's Punjab Visit; Questions PM over Punjab's issues

PNS ■ Chandigarh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Jalandhar visit on Friday sparked a sharp political backlash, with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Congress accusing him of turning an official visit into an election campaign while failing to address Punjab's pressing concerns. Adding to the political confrontation, the Punjab Youth Congress alleged a police crackdown ahead of the Prime Minister's programme, claiming that its leaders were detained to prevent a planned black-flag protest.

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal accused the Prime Minister of misleading Punjabis instead of answering questions on issues affecting the state. In a post on X, Kejriwal alleged that the country's "biggest leader" of those involved in the alleged Shri Ram Temple donation scam had come to Punjab to lecture people on honesty.

AAP, in an official party statement, said that the Prime Minister should first respond to allegations linked to the temple donation controversy before preaching integrity. AAP also questioned the Centre over repeated seizures of narcotics at Gujarat's Mundra Port, alleging that the BJP was diverting attention instead of explaining how large consignments of drugs repeatedly reached the port. Referring to public explanations over some of the seizures, the party said that the BJP should answer what was happening in Gujarat before pointing fingers at Punjab.

The party further alleged that the Centre had not released nearly Rs 50,000 crore due to Punjab and accused the Prime Minister of ignoring the state's financial concerns. It also claimed the BJP had no moral authority to lecture Punjab, alleging that the state's condition had deteriorated under the BJP-led "double-engine government" between 2014 and 2017.

Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said that the Prime Minister's visit offered nothing substantial for Punjab and was limited to political attacks on the AAP government. He maintained that the Bhagwant Mann government had fulfilled several key election guarantees and alleged that the Prime Minister failed to produce any evidence to support his allegations against the state government.

Cheema also accused the Centre of neglecting Punjab, saying that although financial assistance was announced after devastating floods in the state, Punjab never received the promised relief. He blamed the previous SAD-BJP government for many of the state's longstanding problems and asserted that the present government remained committed to public welfare and development.

Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring said the Prime Minister's visit was clearly aimed at the forthcoming Assembly elections. He alleged that despite being Prime Minister for 12 years, Modi

had failed to deliver anything meaningful for Punjab except repeated promises during election-time visits.

Warring questioned whether Punjab would receive its rightful share only if the BJP formed the state government. Accusing the Centre of discriminating against Punjab since 2017, he said the state needed economic revival, agricultural reconstruction, industrial growth, employment for youth, a legal guarantee for MSP, a special package for border districts and decisive action against the drug menace rather than political rhetoric. He also remarked that divisive politics would not succeed in Punjab.

Punjab Youth Congress also accused the police of suppressing democratic protest ahead of the Prime Minister's visit. State Youth Congress president Shuvam Sharma (Shubi) alleged that he was detained at the Ladowal Toll Plaza while travelling to Jalandhar to lead a peaceful black-flag demonstration over youth issues, including the alleged NEET paper leak.

The organisation claimed that police personnel threatened Sharma before registering an FIR against him under Sections 126 and 170 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Calling the case false, Sharma said that neither the FIR nor police intimidation would deter the Youth Congress from raising issues concerning students, unemployed youth, fair examinations, employment opportunities and accountability.

BRIEFS

CHANDIGARH PRESS CLUB CONDEMNS ATTACK ON SENIOR JOURNALIST RAMESH HANDA BY BJP WORKERS
Chandigarh: Chandigarh Press Club on Friday condemned the assault on senior journalist Ramesh Handa by BJP workers while he was performing his professional duties. According to the Press Club's official statement, Ramesh Handa, City Chief Editor (Chandigarh Region) of Punjab Kesari, was covering a news story related to the Prime Minister's visit to Chandigarh. He was at Sector 37 reporting on the movement of Chandigarh Transport Undertaking (CTU) buses ferrying BJP workers to PEC, Sector 12, the venue of the Prime Minister's programme. While Handa was recording video footage on his mobile phone, some BJP workers who were about to board a bus objected to the recording. When he continued filming in the discharge of his professional responsibilities, they allegedly manhandled him, forcibly snatched his mobile phone, and took it away. "Such conduct is wholly unacceptable and amounts to an unlawful obstruction of a journalist in the lawful discharge of his professional duties. Any attempt to intimidate, assault, or prevent media personnel from carrying out their work strikes at the very foundation of press freedom and the public's right to receive information," the statement said.

Classifieds

BEDKHALI NOTICE

I, Ramesh Chand S/o Late Garib Dass and Neelam Kumari W/o Ramesh Chand R/o House no. 2402/1, Sector 40-C, Chandigarh declare that our son Amit Kumar, his wife out of our control. We disown both of them from our moveable immovable properties. Anybody dealing with them at their own risk.

I, Guddi W/o Jagdish, R/o House No. 2329, Sector 24-C, Chandigarh informed that my son Sonu Gill and his wife Parampreet Kaur are out of my control. I disown them from my all moveable and immovable properties. Anybody who is dealing with them will do at their own Risk.

I, Kishore Chand Sharma S/o Khiali Ram R/o H.No.2075, Gali No.1, Chodhry Hari Singh Nagar, Amritsar have declare that my son Sourav Sharma alias Sunny and his wife Veena Sharma are out of my control I disinherit them from my all movable and immovable properties anybody deal with them is his own risk and responsibility.

PUBLIC NOTICE

I Ajeet Kumar Singh S/o Lakkan Lal Kushwaha Permanently residing at Flat No. 1005, Akshita Heights, Kanakia road, Mira Road East, Near Santhome Public School, Mira-Bhayander, PO: Mira road, Distt: Thane, Maharashtra - 401107 and Presently residing at H.No. 2986B, Sector-47C, Chandigarh - 160047, declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as Ajeet K Singh in my service record and in my 10th and 12th class educational documents. The actual name of mine is Ajeet Kumar Singh. Concerned note. before Notary, Distt. Court Chandigarh.

I, Daizy Rani W/o Sh. Jagdish Raj, R/o VPO Dainkwan, Teh. Indora, Distt Kangra, hereby notify that the name and DOB of my son in his Aadhaar Card have been incorrectly recorded as Divanshu and 04-07-2010 instead of Divyansh Raj and 04-07-2011. Kindly correct them as per affidavit dated 13-07-2026. before tehsildar Indora.

CHANGE OF NAME

मैं, शान्ति देवी उर्फ बादोमा पत्नी श्री महाबीर प्रसाद, निवासी मकान नं० 1109, वार्ड नं. 18, कुम्हारान मोहल्ला, हिसार ब्यान करती हूँ कि मेरे बच्चों के स्कूल रिकार्ड में मेरा नाम शान्ति देवी दर्ज है तथा मेरे अन्य सभी कागजातों में मेरा नाम बादोमा दर्ज है। उपरोक्त शान्ति देवी व बादोमा ये दोनों नाम मेरे ही हैं तथा एक ही व्यक्ति के हैं। इस बाबत भविष्य में कोई परेशानी होती है तो उसकी ज़िम्मेवारी मेरी होगी।

I, Naga Hanuma Kumar K S/o Sh. Bikhshal Rao R/o #3607, Sector 31-D, Chandigarh have changed my name from Naga Hanuma Kumar K to Kamarajugadda Naga Hanuma Kumar vide Affidavit No - IN-CH62972898487721Y Dated 10.07.2026 before Notary, Distt. Court Chandigarh.

I, Raman Devi mother of Amrendra Kumar Choudhary R/o #1328, Sector 47-B, Chandigarh have changed my name from Raman Devi to Raman Devi vide Affidavit No - IN-CH62993907423398Y Dated 11.07.2026 before Notary, Distt. Court Chandigarh.

I, Sanapati Venkata Krishna father of Sanapati Siva Rama Krishna R/o #1352-B, Sector 47-B, Chandigarh have changed my name from Sanapati Venkata Krishna to Sanapati Venkatakrushna vide Affidavit No - IN-CH62992073107306Y Dated 11.07.2026 before Notary, Distt. Court Chandigarh.

I, Sanapati Ramanamma mother of Sanapati Siva Rama Krishna R/o #1352-B, Sector 47-B, Chandigarh have changed my name from Sanapati Ramanamma to Sanapathi Ramanamma vide Affidavit No - IN-CH62992043818136Y Dated 11.07.2026 before Notary, Distt. Court Chandigarh.

I, Madhavi D/O Jung Sher, R/o House No. # 469, Ramdarbar, Phase-2, Chandigarh- 160002. I Have Change My Name From Madhavi to Madhavi Madhavi.

I hitherto known as PRAGYA daughter of GAURAV GOSAIN, residing at H.No.1046/24, Jagdish Colony, District Rohtak, Haryana-124001, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as PRAGYA GOSAIN. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

I, Raj Kumar S/o Sheo Narayan, resident of House No. 418, Ward No. 02, Village Dhani Bhakhra, Post Office Jhumpa Kalan, Tehsil Siwani, District Bhiwani, Haryana, PIN - 127046, have changed my name from RAJ KUMAR to RAJKUMAR. Henceforth, I shall be known and identified as RAJKUMAR for all purposes and in all records.

I, Rahul S/o Rajbir, R/o House No. 137, Village Laloda, Tehsil Tohana, District Fatehabad, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from Rahul to Rahul Bhaker for all future purposes.

I, Roshni W/o Ram Sarup, R/o H. No. 317, Ward No. 06, Village Dabra, Tehsil and District Hisar, Haryana, declare that I have changed my name from Roshni to Roshni Devi for all future purposes.

I, Prem Parkash alias Prem Manocha S/o Sh. Narayan Dass R/o H. No. 371/3, Near Manocha Dharamshala, Dadal Park, Hansi Tehsil Hansi, Distt. Hisar (Haryana)-125033 declare that I have changed my name from Prem Parkash alias Prem Manocha to Prem Parkash Manocha for all future purposes.

I, Parmila Devi w/o Sunil Kumar r/o 238, Shiv Colony, Behind Vidyut Nagar, Hisar Haryana in my husband Service record my name mentioned as Parmila Devi. Which is incorrect. My correct name is Promila. Which may be amended accordingly in my husband's service record.

I, Karamvir Singh, son of Shri Harbans Mehta, resident of House No. 119, Rajiv Gandhi Nagar, Gurukul Road, Near Duggal Palace, Bathinda, Punjab, declare that I request the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) to correct my name from Karmvir Singh to Karamvir Singh in my son's ICSE Class X Pass Certificate, Migration Certificate, and all other relevant records/documents, and to issue the corrected documents accordingly.

I Parminder KAUR w/o gursewak singh r/o Adarash nagar zira (Fzr) have changed my name to Parminder kaur gill

I, Deepali Garg W/o Mr. Abhishek Garg R/o C3, GF 11, Nirmal Chhaya Towers, VIP Road, Zirakpur, Tehsil Dera Bassi, Distt. S.A.S. Nagar (Punjab) I have changed my name From Deepali Garg to Deepali Bansal.

I Seema W/o Sh.Pawan R/o H.No.1879, Urban Estate, Jind declare that I have changed my name from Seema to Seema Rani. This is for all future references.

I, Jasbir Kaur W/o Prem Chand R/o Village Ghasipur P.O. Bhikhowal Distt. Hoshiarpur have changed my name to Jasvir Kaur. Concerned Note.

I, Yogesh Kumar S/o Yashpal Singh R/o Village Palewala, Po. Alahar, Tehsil Radaur, Distt. Yamuna Nagar have changed my minor son's name from Aryamann to Aryamann Rana.

I, Mohit Kumar Sharma S/o Shakti Sharan R/o 1423, Gombi Gali, Jagadhri, Distt. Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Mohit Kumar Sharma to Mohit Kumar.

I, Shashi Bala Laller W/o Virender Laller R/o Village Ban, Tanesar, Distt. Kurukshetra have changed my name from Shashi Bala Laller to Shashi Bala.

I, Virender Laller S/o Shamsher Singh R/o Village Ban, Tanesar, Distt. Kurukshetra have changed my minor son's name from Aryaveer to Aryaveer Laller.

I, Masuma W/o Hussaina, R/o Vill. Bhirgadu, P.O. Kihar, at present Vill. Ariyas, P.O. Kihar, Tehsil Salooni, Distt. Chamba (H.P.) declares that my correct name is Masuma but wrongly written as Sakina in my Aadhar Card (372762769538). Both names belong to same person. In future, I should be known as Masuma.

I, Satar S/o Shri Noor Muhammad, R/o Village Ariyas, P.O. Kihar, Tehsil Salooni, District Chamba (H.P.) declares that my correct name is Satar but wrongly written as Abdul Satara in my Aadhar Card (563483237417). Both names belong to same person. In future, I should be known as Satar.

I, Rishu Gautam W/o Shiv Kumar R/o House No. 190, Street No. 8, Khalsa School Road, Khanna (Ludhiana) have Changed my name to Rishu.

I, Ankit S/O Sh.Bhag Singh R/o Village Bharog, Sub. Tehsil Shahzadpur, Tehsil Naraingarh Distt. Ambala Haryana have changed my name from Ankit to Ankit Singh Saini

I Surinder Kumar s/o Ram Lal r/o # 1098, Street Number 3,Abohar Road,Sri Muktsar Sahib have declared that in the school record of our minor son Vikas Wadhwa his name incorrectly written as Vikas Kumar instead of his correct name Vikas Wadhwa, I declared that his correct name is Vikas Wadhwa. All concerns note it

I, Mehak Mattu. Daughter of Sh. Sunil Masih, resident of Village Mehtabpur, Tehsil Mukerian, District Hoshiarpur, Punjab, declare that I therefore, request the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), New Delhi, to kindly issue me a duplicate/re-issued Class XII (10+2) Certificate.

I, Indra Rani W/o Sanju Kumar R/o Village Bherthal, Tehsil Chhachhrauli, Distt Yamunanagar have changed my name from Indra Rani to Mahindro.

I, Simone Kasana D/o Bajinder Kumar R/o H. no. A-120, Ansal town, Sec-20, Jagadhri, Distt Yamunanagar have changed my name from Simone to Simone Kasana.

I, Virender Singh S/o Balbir Singh R/o House No. 124, Vasant Vihar, Ratouli Road Yamunanagar, Tehsil Jagadhri, Distt. Yamunanagar have changed my name from Virender to Virender Singh. In the future, I should be known by the name Virender Singh.

I, Ritika, W/o Sh. Sanjeev, R/o H.No. 1574-A, Gali No.1, HSPV Sector 13, Vrinda Enclave, Distt. Panipat, declare that I have changed my name from Dimpay Bala to Ritika. for all future purposes.

I, Saroj Bala W/o Balbir Singh R/o House No. 124, Vasant Vihar, Ratouli Road Yamunanagar, Tehsil Jagadhri, Distt. Yamunanagar have changed my name from Saroj to Saroj Bala. In the future, I should be known by the name Saroj Bala.

I, SHAMMI KHAN S/O AMANULLAH KHAN, R/o - House No. 2127/2, Ward No. 22 Arya Nagar, Sonipat, Haryana-131001, have changed the name of my minor son SHEHRAN KHAN, aged 06 years and he shall hereafter be known as SHAHRUL KHAN.

I, Parmod Beniwal S/o Jagdish Chander R/o Village Chadival, District. Sirsa (Haryana) have changed my name from Parmod Beniwal to Parmod Arya . That in future my name is to be called as Parmod Arya

I, JASPREET KAUR W/o Gurpreet Singh R/o Moriwala (72), Sirsa-25060(Haryana) have changed my name from JASPREET KAUR to JASWINDER KAUR. That in future my name is to be called as JASWINDER KAUR.

I, No. 15690319H, Rank Hav, Sarbjeet Kumar S/o Lal Mohar Singh R/o Village Ratan Tola, Mahinawan, Distt. Patna, Bihar declare that in my service record my mother name are wrongly mention as Prabha Devi and DOB 01/07/1967 but correct name is Vijaya Devi and correct DOB is 15/11/1956.

I, Kuldeep Singh S/o Raghubir Singh R/o Village Karora, Tehsil Pundri, Distt. Kaithal (Haryana) declares that in my Passport No. A7524645 my mother's name is written as Nihal Devi which is incorrect. My mother's correct name is Nihali Devi. All concerned please note.

I, Rishu Gautam W/o Shiv Kumar R/o House No. 190, Street No. 8, Khalsa School Road, Khanna (Ludhiana) have Changed my name to Rishu.

I, Gopal son of Mahinder Singh resident of Village Ujjal Majri P.O. Kathe Majra Tehsil Naraingarh Distt. Ambala have changed my minor daughter's name from Nirmat to Nimrat.

I, Balvir Singh s/o Shri Ram Singh resident H.No. 232, V.P.O. Korwa Khurd, Teh Naraingarh Distt- Ambala Haryana declare that I have changed my name from Balvir Singh to Balbir Singh. This is for all future references.

I Rajan Kumar Gupta S/o Sh. Madan Lal Gupta r/o H.No 1682, Sector 22B, Chandigarh declare that Rajan Gupta and Rajan Kumar Gupta is one and the same person.

I SHUBHI RASTOGI, aged 30 years W/o Sh Lakshya Rastogi R/o Village Tibbi, Post Office Kathgarh, Tehsil Indora, Distt-Kangra H.P-176401 declares that I have changed my name from KM. Shubhi Rastogi to Shubhi Rastogi. All concerned note it.

I Jatin s/o Rajesh r/o H.No. 527 Ward No. 27, Subhash Nagar Rohtak Road Jind declare that in all document my father name is Rajesh. But in my 10th DMC my father name is Rajesh Kumar. That Rajesh and Rajesh Kumar are one and same person. That in fure known me as Jatin s/o Rajesh for all purposes.

I Tegbeer Singh S/O Harinder Singh, R/O Village Chak Duhe Wala, Tehsil Sri Muktsar Sahib, Dist- Sri Muktsar Sahib, Have changed my name to Tegbeer Singh Brar.

I, Nisha Rani W/o Sh Surinder Kumar R/o House No. 1009 First Floor, Sector 19 Panchkula have changed my name from Nisha Rani to Nisha Arora.

Continuity Pg. No. 04

Modi Unveils Rs 5,470-cr Push for Punjab; Launches Blistering Attack on AAP; Says BJP Alone Can Bring Change

PNS ■ Chandigarh/Jalandhar

Wearing a green turban — widely seen as a gesture of respect towards Punjab's farming community and agrarian identity — and amid chants of “Modi, Modi” from a massive gathering, Prime Minister Narendra Modi turned his Jalandhar visit into a high-voltage political and development show on Friday. After receiving a traditional bhangra welcome at the “redesigned” Jalandhar railway station, interacting with passengers, schoolchildren and saints, Modi repeatedly switched between Punjabi and Hindi during his speech, drawing loud cheers from the crowd. While unveiling and inaugurating projects worth Rs 5,470 crore for Punjab, Modi used the platform to mount one of his sharpest attacks yet on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led State Government, accusing it of corruption, poor governance, mounting debt, deteriorating law and order, and failing farmers, women and youth.

Also dismissing Congress as a party consumed by an endless leadership battle,

Modi said that the Shiromani Akali Dal was trapped in its own internal problems, declaring that only the BJP could bring real change to Punjab.

Coming just months before the Punjab Assembly elections, the visit clearly blended development with politics, as Modi coupled major infrastructure announcements with a full-scale attack on the ruling AAP and an appeal for a BJP government in the State.

Beginning his address by greeting the crowd in Punjabi with a cheerful “Punjabio, kiven ho...chardi kala ch ho?”, Modi said that he felt honoured to be on the land of the Gurus and saints before congratulating Punjabis for the new development projects. The atmosphere at the rally remained charged throughout, with supporters waving party flags, raising slogans, and applauding repeatedly as the Prime Minister switched between d e v e l o p m e n t announcements and political attacks.

Earlier, Modi reached Jalandhar after flagging off India's first hydrogen-powered train in Haryana and



inaugurating projects worth over Rs 4,700 crore in Chandigarh. At Jalandhar, he inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for projects worth Rs 5,470 crore, focusing on railway modernisation and road connectivity. He also met saints, interacted with schoolchildren and passengers, and flagged off the Shri Sant Ravidas Express connecting Amritsar and Varanasi, making travel easier for devotees of Guru Ravidas. During the train inauguration, he interacted with Dera Sachkhand Ballan head Sant Niranjan Das, who also travelled in the inaugural train.

MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PUSH FOR PUNJAB

Projecting the Centre's focus on Punjab despite the BJP not being in power in the state, Modi said the NDA government was leaving no stone unturned to accelerate Punjab's development. He stressed that although Punjab did not have a BJP Government, the Centre was continuing to invest heavily in the State's infrastructure and connectivity projects.

Among the key announcements was the inauguration of 75 redeveloped Amrit Bharat railway stations across the country, including the modernised Jalandhar Cantt railway station. Calling it much more than a railway station, Modi described it as a

modern city centre with enhanced passenger capacity and commercial facilities. He said similar transformations had taken place at stations including Anandpur Sahib and Muktsar Sahib, while over 1,300 railway stations were being modernised nationwide under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme.

He said the redesigned stations reflected local identity, with Jalandhar station showcasing the city's sporting heritage, Anandpur Sahib highlighting Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib, while local artisans and self-help groups had also been provided space to market their products.

The Prime Minister also flagged off the Shri Sant Ravidas Express between Amritsar and Varanasi, saying that it would significantly ease travel for devotees visiting Guru Ravidas' birthplace. He also inaugurated the Daulatpur Chowk-Kartoli railway line, virtually opened another section of the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway, and laid the foundation stone for the 25.2-km six-lane Southern Ludhiana Greenfield Bypass — aimed at improving traffic movement and boosting regional connectivity.

Highlighting the Centre's commitment to preserving Sikh heritage, Modi referred to the foundation stone of a Sikh museum laid earlier in Kurukshetra and said it would help preserve the teachings and history of the Gurus for future generations. He also said that his Government was working with the spirit of “Nagrik Devo Bhava”, with the objective of making citizens' lives easier and creating equal opportunities for progress.

Earlier, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that Punjab was witnessing unprecedented railway investment under the Modi Government, with redevelopment work underway at 18 railway stations, 12 Vande Bharat trains already operational in the State and the railway network now fully electrified.

TRIBUTES, HERITAGE AND PUNJAB'S IDENTITY

The Prime Minister praised Jalandhar residents for the “Swachhta Se Swagat” initiative, saying that it reflected Guru Ravidas' message of collective effort and social harmony. He paid tribute to Sardar Teja Singh Samundri on his 100th

PUNJAB GETS RS 5,470-CR INFRASTRUCTURE PUSH

- Inaugurated 75 Amrit Bharat Stations, including Jalandhar Cantt
- Flagged off Shri Sant Ravidas Express between Amritsar (Chheharta) and Varanasi
- Opened the Daulatpur Chowk-Kartoli rail line
- Inaugurated a 30.9-km stretch of the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway
- Laid the foundation stone for the 25.2-km Southern Ludhiana Greenfield Bypass
- Dedicated the revamped Jalandhar Cantt Railway Station
- Announced modernisation of 1,300+ railway stations, including Anandpur Sahib and Muktsar Sahib

deteriorate sharply. He claimed that gang wars, firing incidents, and attacks on police stations had become common while extortion and drug trafficking were flourishing. Businessmen, he said, were finding it increasingly difficult to operate in such an atmosphere.

“The youth of Punjab are being pushed into the swamp of drugs while drug smugglers roam freely,” he alleged.

The Prime Minister further accused the government of betraying farmers, women, and employees. He alleged that women had still not received the promised financial assistance, despite assurances made before elections.

Drawing comparisons with neighbouring Haryana, Modi said that farmers there were receiving MSP on 24 crops, while Punjab farmers were being deceived. He also claimed that Haryana government employees were receiving 60 percent dearness allowance, whereas Punjab employees were forced to stage protests for their dues.

He further alleged that the Punjab Government was not allowing beneficiaries to fully avail themselves of Central schemes, particularly Ayushman Bharat, accusing it of “playing games” with the flagship health insurance scheme and preventing

eligible families from receiving its full benefits despite massive Central funding.

CONGRESS, SAD AND BJP'S 2027 PITCH

Modi also targeted Punjab's opposition parties, saying that Congress remained trapped in an endless fight for the chief minister's chair rather than focusing on people's welfare.

“The Congress is busy deciding who will occupy the chair,” he remarked, adding that the Shiromani Akali Dal was equally caught in its own internal complications.

Against this backdrop, the Prime Minister asserted that Punjab now needed a BJP government and a “double-engine” administration to unlock its development potential. “Punjab now needs a BJP Government. Only the BJP can bring development and real change to the State,” he asserted, making one of his strongest electoral pitches ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections.

Expressing confidence in Punjab's youth, he urged them to embrace sports and emerging opportunities in the new economy. Referring to five sports agreements signed during his recent New Zealand visit, Modi said sectors like sports manufacturing would create fresh opportunities for cities such as Jalandhar, already known as India's sporting goods hub. Calling sports a key pillar of the emerging economy, he said Jalandhar's globally recognised sports industry stood to gain immensely from the Centre's policies and international partnerships.

“I have complete faith in Punjab's youth. The Centre will always stand with them,” he said, while highlighting the Khelo India programme.

The rally also marked the first major BJP platform appearance of former AAP Rajya Sabha members Vikramjit Singh Sahney, Harbhajan Singh and Ashok Mittal, who have joined the BJP. Senior BJP leaders, including Punjab BJP chief Kewal Singh Dhillon, Tarun Chugh, Sunil Jakhar, Vijay Sampla, Preetneet Kaur, Ashwani Sharma and Manoranjan Kalia, shared the stage. Punjab political veteran and former Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh, however, was not present at the rally.

Modi's Jalandhar Visit Sets Stage for BJP's Standalone Battle in Punjab

MONIKA MALIK ■ Chandigarh

Barely months before Punjab heads into the 2027 Assembly elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Jalandhar visit appeared less like a routine government programme and more like the BJP's political blueprint for the state. Every announcement, project, symbolic gesture and political message pointed towards a carefully crafted strategy aimed at expanding the party's footprint beyond its traditional urban base and positioning it as the principal alternative to the AAP Government, Congress, and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD).

The visit also removed any lingering doubts over the BJP's electoral plans. The party has virtually signalled that it is preparing to contest all 117 Assembly seats on its own, with no indication of returning to an alliance with the Akali Dal. Instead, the focus is on building an independent support base by combining development, welfare, religious outreach, and targeted social messaging.

The inauguration and foundation laying of 15 development projects reflected a carefully balanced regional strategy rather than just an infrastructure push. Seven projects were concentrated in Malwa, five in Doaba, and three in Majha — covering more than a dozen key districts and potentially influencing nearly 54 Assembly constituencies.

Malwa, which sends the

largest number of MLAs to the Assembly, received projects including the Southern Ludhiana Bypass, the Delhi-Katra Expressway, the IT City-Kurali Highway, railway station redevelopment, and expansion of PGI facilities. Together, these are expected to impact around 23 constituencies.

Doaba, where the BJP has traditionally sought greater political space, received major railway redevelopment, highway upgrades, and improved rail connectivity, potentially touching around 20 Assembly seats. Majha too figured prominently through railway redevelopment and the launch of the Sant Ravidas Express linking Amritsar with Varanasi, benefiting around 11 constituencies.

The distribution suggests that the BJP intends to project itself as a party delivering balanced regional development rather than concentrating on a single political belt.

STRONG OUTREACH TO PUNJAB'S DALIT ELECTORATE

Perhaps the most significant political signal came through the sustained outreach to Punjab's Dalit community, which constitutes nearly 31 percent of the state's population.

The Prime Minister's second meeting within five months with Dera Sachkhand Ballan chief Sant Niranjan Das, his earlier decision to name Adampur airport after Guru Ravidas, and now naming the

new Punjab-Varanasi train as the Sant Ravidas Express together form a consistent political narrative rather than isolated decisions.

The timing also carries electoral significance. Guru Ravidas Ji's 650th prakash parv falls in February 2027, around the same period when Punjab is expected to vote. The train is likely to facilitate pilgrimage to Varanasi while simultaneously reinforcing the BJP's outreach among Ravidasia followers.

The importance of Dera politics in Punjab is well established. With Dera Sachkhand Ballan and Radha Soami Dera Beas enjoying influence well beyond their immediate regions, the BJP appears to be investing heavily in strengthening grassroots acceptance through respected religious institutions. The strategy could particularly influence 14-15 of Doaba's 23 Assembly constituencies where Dalit voters hold decisive electoral influence.

EXPANDING BEYOND URBAN HINDU IMAGE

Another notable element of the visit was the attempt to broaden the BJP's appeal among Sikh voters. The sequence of inaugurating a Sikh Museum in Haryana before arriving in Punjab, followed by highlighting the project during the rally, appears aimed at conveying that the BJP seeks to preserve and honour Sikh heritage. Since ending its alliance with

the Shiromani Akali Dal, the party has been attempting to shed its image as a formation confined largely to urban Hindu voters and establish wider acceptance among rural and panthic Sikh communities.

RECLAIMING THE FARMER NARRATIVE

Symbolism also played a prominent role. The Prime Minister's decision to wear a green turban — widely associated with Punjab's farming identity — was viewed as an effort to reconnect with the rural electorate after years of political tensions surrounding the farm agitation. Coupled with references to Haryana's agricultural model, the BJP attempted to revive its “double-engine government” narrative by suggesting that Punjab could benefit from closer alignment with a BJP-led Centre and a BJP government in the state.

A DIRECT CHALLENGE TO ALL RIVALS

The political messaging completed the picture. By attacking the AAP Government over governance, law and order and drugs, questioning Congress over internal leadership battles, and portraying the Akali Dal as politically weakened, the BJP sought to place itself as the only credible alternative ahead of thlections only months away, the visit served as an unmistakable signal that the party has shifted from being a junior ally in Punjab politics to seeking power on its own terms.

PM Flags Off Nation's First Hydrogen-Powered Train, Hails It as ‘Make in India’ Success

PNS ■ Jind

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday flagged off India's first hydrogen-powered train connecting Jind and Sonipat in Haryana, describing it as a landmark step towards clean and sustainable transportation and a successful example of the ‘Make in India’ campaign.

With this, India has joined a select group of countries that have operational hydrogen-powered trains and marks an important step towards the adoption of clean and sustainable mobility in the railway sector. After flagging off the train from Jind, the Prime Minister also dedicated to the nation and laid the foundation stone of various development projects worth Rs 14,700 crore.

Modi said, “The hydrogen-powered train is a proud symbol of Aatmanirbhar Bharat and our commitment to cleaner, future-ready transportation.” Today, Indian Railways has taken a major step and this is the world's most powerful hydrogen train, he said addressing a public gathering later. The 89-km distance between Jind and Sonapat will be covered in two hours, with the train halting at 12 intermediate stations.

Modi also took a veiled dig at the previous Congress-led UPA government, saying had the situation due to West Asia conflict arisen before 2014, the work of Indian Railways would have come to a standstill as trains in large parts of the country used to run mainly on diesel.

“At that time, in large parts of our country our trains used to run on diesel only. Had diesel supplies been disrupted then, how would



diesel-powered trains have operated? The country would have faced a massive crisis. But friends, this is not the situation of 2014. It is Modi, who thinks well before and also turns solutions to problems into reality on the ground,” he said.

He said Indian Railways has taken a big step in this 21st century technology as only three to four countries have the capability of running hydrogen-powered train. This train has 3200 horsepower and it is not only the most powerful, but also the longest one (10 coaches), Modi said. “At other places in the world, hydrogen train has three to four coaches only. But in India, this train has 10 coaches,” he said.

CM SAINI EXPRESSES GRATITUDE TO PM MODI FOR BRINGING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS RS 14,721 CRORE TO HARYANA

Expressing his gratitude to the Prime Minister Narender Modi for dedicating nine major development projects worth Rs 14,721 crore to Haryana, State Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini said the Prime Minister is not only a symbol of the hopes, aspirations, and trust of 1.4 billion Indians but also the architect of a Viksit Bharat (Developed India).

Saini said under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the country has witnessed unprecedented transformation over the past 12 years. Today's India is not merely talking about development but is presenting a new model of development to the world. The nation is making rapid progress in every sector, including infrastructure, railways, roads, expressways, metro connectivity, healthcare, education, and digital governance.

Saini said the Prime Minister has dedicated nine major development projects worth more than Rs 14,721 crore to Haryana, giving a new direction to the state's growth. He said the day was historic not only for Haryana but for the entire country, as India, under the visionary leadership of the Prime Minister, is setting new benchmarks in every field. There was a time when India sought technology from the world, but today the world wants to adopt India's technology. There was a time when India looked for opportunities abroad, but today the world is looking for opportunities in India. The same world that once questioned India's capabilities now recognizes it as a confident nation leading

a new era.

Welcoming the Prime Minister, the Chief Minister said that the launch of the country's first hydrogen train from the soil of Haryana is a matter of great pride for the state. He said this is a strong example of the Prime Minister's vision of green energy and an Atmanirbhar Bharat, and marks a historic step towards clean, modern, and environment-friendly transportation.

The Chief Minister said that under the Prime Minister's leadership, Haryana has received assistance of more than Rs 7 lakh crore through various Central Government schemes over the past 12 years, thanks to the double-engine government. This support has accelerated the expansion of national highways, railways, metro projects, healthcare institutions, and other infrastructure across the state. He further stated that during the Prime Minister's 4,435 days of dedicated public service, this was his 18th visit to Haryana. On previous occasions as well, the Prime Minister had dedicated development projects worth more than Rs 71,000 crore to the state. The projects launched today will further accelerate Haryana's development.

PM Unveils Rs 4700 Crore Projects in Chandigarh, Says City Seeing Major Boost in Healthcare, Education & Connectivity

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Unveiling multiple development projects worth over Rs 4,700 crore in Chandigarh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the journey towards ‘Viksit Bharat’ must be accompanied by a modern mindset focused on technologies and healthcare services of the future.

“We must take decisions that benefit not only the present generation but also continue to serve generations to come. We must build institutions that grow stronger with the passage of time. The BJP-led NDA government is moving ahead rapidly in this direction,” he said.

Modi was addressing a gathering at Punjab Engineering College (PEC) in Chandigarh after inaugurating and laying foundation stones of various projects spanning healthcare, education and road infrastructure. Highlighting the city's unique status as an exemplary model for systematic national progress, he emphasized its reputation for ensuring a



better lifestyle and ease of living. Acknowledging the divine grace of Maa Chandī over the region, he reaffirmed the ruling administration's unwavering commitment to its continuous, structured growth. “The development of Chandigarh has always been the absolute priority of the current government,” asserted Modi.

Recalling the historic and massive overhaul of the nation's justice system implemented a year and a half ago, the Prime Minister pointed out the transition from punitive colonial laws to

a justice-oriented framework. “The implementation of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita began from Chandigarh itself,” observed Modi.

Detailing the financial investments made to modernize the urban landscape, the Prime Minister listed transformative initiatives such as the Integrated Command and Control Center, Smart Traffic Management, and Digital Governance. Congratulating the residents on the inauguration of health, education, and infrastructure projects, he highlighted the

massive capital infusion driving these futuristic upgrades. “More than two and a half thousand crore rupees have been spent on this mission to make the city high-tech,” noted Modi.

Emphasizing the broader regional impact of localized urban growth, the Prime Minister explained how enhancements in the city directly elevate the quality of life for neighboring populations across Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. He specifically spotlighted the city's indispensable and central role in regional healthcare delivery. “For medical services, Chandigarh is a mega hub in this entire region,” observed Modi.

Announcing the major expansion of advanced healthcare facilities at the local medical institute, the Prime Minister introduced critical new additions including a Neuroscience Center, a Mother and Child Center, and a Critical Care Hospital Block. “These projects will provide even better treatment facilities to millions of people,” affirmed Modi.



Classifieds

BEDKHALI NOTICE

I, Tejveer Singh (Aadhar No. 7568 0884 4388) S/o Sh. Shyam Singh R/o H.No. 65/2, Near Sarkari Rashan Deepo, Sainik Colony, Rohtak Haryana declare that my son Karambir and his wife Manjeet are out of my control. So I disown them from my all moveable/immoveable properties. Any body dealing with them at their own risk. I or my family are not responsible for any type of their any legal or illegal acts.

I, Kanta Devi, W/o late Sh. Ishwar Singh R/o Village Sarsaud, District Hisar (Haryana), hereby declare that my son, Aman, has become beyond the control and counsel of myself and my family; therefore, I am disinheriting my son, Aman, from all my movable and immovable property. Neither I nor any member of my family shall bear any responsibility for any of his financial transactions, associations, conduct, or wrongful acts; he alone shall be held responsible for the same.

I, Kuldeep Singh, son of Chanan Singh, resident of Village Panj Dhera, Jagatpura, Tehsil Phillaur, District Jalandhar, Punjab, India – 144410, hereby publicly declare that I have disowned and debarred my son Jaswinder Singh Johal, my daughter-in-law Baldish Kaur Johal, my granddaughter Armeet Kaur Johal, my grandson Nidhanveer Singh Johal, and my granddaughter Rehmat Kaur Johal.

I, Sarup Singh S/o Atma Singh R/o #948 Subedar Complex Mataur Distt. SAS Nagar, Mohali declare that my daughter-in-law Jaspal Kaur wife of Bahadur Singh & my grandson Jhujhar Singh and his wife Rimpal Kaur W/o Jhujhar Singh is out of my control. So I disown with them from my moveable/immoveable property. If anybody dealing with them at his/her own risk.

ਮੈਂ ਸੁਤਵਿੰਦਰ ਕੌਰ ਪੁੱਤਰੀ ਤਰਲੋਚਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਾਸੀ ਵਾਰਡ ਨੰ. 1/2 ਸੁਤਨਾਮ ਨਗਰ ਚੌਥੀ ਨੋਬਰ 2 ਖੰਨਾ ਜ਼ਿਲ੍ਹਾ ਖੰਨਾ ਜ਼ਿਲ੍ਹਾ ਲੁਧਿਆਣਾ ਜ਼ਿਲ੍ਹਾ ਵਰਦੀ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਮੇਰਾ ਪੁੱਤਰ ਕਮਲਜੀਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਿੱਧੂ ਅਤੇ ਇਸਦੀ ਪਤਨੀ ਜੁਸਲੀਨ ਕੌਰ ਜੋ ਕਿ ਮੇਰੇ ਕਹਿਣੇ ਤੇ ਬਹਾਰ ਹਨ। ਮੈਂ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੀ ਚਲ-ਅਚਲ ਸਾਇਦਾਂ ਤੇ ਬੇਦਖਲ ਕਰਦੀ ਹਾਂ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨਾਲ਼ ਲੈਣ ਦੇਣ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲ਼ਾ ਖੁਦ ਜ਼ਿੰਮੇਵਾਰ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ। ਮੇਰਾ ਜਾਂ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਤਾਲੁਕ ਵਾ ਵਾਸਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਵੇਗਾ।

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Jagjit Singh Dhindsa S/o Sulakhan Singh Dhindsa R/o H.No. 11, Near M.K Public School. Guru Ramdass Colony, Mithapur, Jalandhar-144022, Punjab declare that name of my father has been wrongly written as Sulakhan Singh in my Passport H3835856. The actual name of my father is Sulakhan Singh Dhindsa.

I, Vijay Kumar S/o Hans Raj R/o Fateghar Teh-Dasuya Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab declare that in my Indian Passport No. N1681811 (Valid up to 29-07-2025) my date of birth written 04-05-1961 wrongly. Actually my correct date of birth is 27-07-1964 according to my Aadhar Card and Pan Card record.

I, Ranjan Kaur Mother of 17013733W Nk Girase Chetansing Tatya residing at Vill. Bole Distt. Jhalgaon (MH) 425111 have changed my name from Ranjan Kaur to Girase Ranjankorbai Tatya and date of birth 03.04.1967 to 01.01.1970 vide Affidavit date 18.07.2026 before notary public Distt. Court Bathinda (PB).

I, Mainabai Tanaji Chavan Mother of 15584895 F Hav Chavan Nitin residing at Vill. Hatid Distt. Solapur (MH) 413307 have changed my date of birth 01.01.1969 to 04.05.1965 vide Affidavit date 17.07.2026 before notary public Distt. Court Bathinda (PB).

I, Chandro Devi Mother of 15774008A Hav Manni Lal residing at Vill. Todar Pur Distt. Alwar (Rajasthan) 301401 have changed my date of birth 29.09.1950 to 01.12.1955 vide Affidavit date 17.07.2026 before notary public Distt. Court Bathinda (PB).

I, Army No 13918175F Ex-Nb Sub Harcharan Singh Chahill R/o St. No. 3, Multania Road Bachan Colony Tehsil & Dist. Bathinda . I have changed My wife name from Jagdip Kaur to Jagdeep Kaur and DOB from 25-05-1954 to 01-05-1955 vide Affidavit No IN-PB67544264582098Y dated 07-07-2026.

I, Shingade Sheshabai kisan Mother of 15579292F hav Shingade Vilas kisan residing at Vill. Kokarewadi Distt. Satara (MH) 415508 have changed my name from Shingade Sheshabai kisan to Sheshabai kisan Shingade and date of birth 14.12.1962 to 01.01.1973 vide Affidavit date 17.07.2026 before notary public Distt. Court Bathinda (PB).

I, Shingade Kisan Bhikaji Father of 15579292F hav Shingade Vilas kisan residing at Vill. Kokarewadi Distt. Satara (MH) 415508 have changed my name from Shingade Kisan Bhikaji to Kisan Bhiku Shingade and date of birth 01.06.1957 to 01.01.1968 vide Affidavit date 17.07.2026 before notary public Distt. Court Bathinda (PB).

I, Dhanpat Mother of 453154F Sub Yogesh Kumar residing at Vill. Jharka Distt. Alwar (Rajasthan) 301403 have changed my name from Dhanpat to Dhanpati and date of birth 01.03.1970 to 01.01.1963 vide Affidavit date 18.07.2026 before notary public Distt. Court Bathinda (PB).

I, Jagaveer Singh Father of 453154F Sub Yogesh Kumar residing at Vill. Jharka Distt. Alwar (Rajasthan) 301403 have changed my name from Jagaveer Singh to Jagveer Singh and date of birth 05.07.1968 to 20.10.1966 vide Affidavit date 18.07.2026 before notary public Distt. Court Bathinda (PB).

CHANGE OF NAME

I Tegbeer Singh S/O Harinder Singh, R/O Village Chak Duhe Wala, Tehsil Sri Muktsar Sahib, Dist- Sri Muktsar Sahib, Have changed my name to Tegbeer Singh Brar.

I, Nisha Rani W/o Sh Surinder Kumar R/o House No. 1009 First Floor, Sector 19 Panchkula have changed my name from Nisha Rani to Nisha Arora

I Bhagwanti chabra W/O: Ashok Kumar, House No. 2346, Arya Samaj Road, Rajpura, Rajpura, Patiala, Punjab, 140401 have changed my name from Bhagwanti chabra to Bhagwanti.

I, Santosh Kumari is legally mother of Army No. 13770606N Hav Name Pradeep Kumar R/o Karandi Lower, Samba, Dhiiani, Jammu, State Jammu and Kashmir- 184121 declare that in my son's army service record my name wrongly mentioned as Santosh Devi instead of Santosh Kumari and my date of birth is 07/12/1966 as per my Aadhar Card, vide affidavit No. IN-PB70945404018576Y Dated 17/07/2026 before Notary Public, Gurdaspur Punjab.

I, Mukesh S/o Suraj Bhan employed as Officer Commanding 750 (I) Transport Platoon ASC (CIV GT) in Indian Army under The Ministry Of Defence, Government Of India R/o Bohar (Part)(68), Rohtak, Haryana-124021 have changed my name to Mukesh Nandal.

I, Suresh Kumar S/o Mohinder Singh R/o Village And Po Chakkar, Tehsil Dhar Kalan, Hara, Pathankot, Punjab-145001 have changed name of my minor daughter aged 15 years to Aridhima.

I, Gurpreet Singh Gill S/o Nirmal Singh R/o Vill Kotla Dhak, Ludhiana, Punjab-141414 have changed my name to Gurpreet Singh.

I, Neerja Anand alias Neerja Arora W/o Harish Anand R/o House No. 67, First Floor, Sector 16a, Po: Sector-15, District: Chandigarh-160015 have changed my name to Neerja Anand.

I, Govind Sharma S/o Manoj Sharma R/o House Number-1038, Ward-2, Purewal Colony, Panipat, Haryana-132103 have changed my name to Inderjeet.

I, Nathen Saho S/o Munni Lal Shah, House NO. 2539, Vikas Nagar Mauli Jagran Chandigarh have changed my name from Nathen Saho to Nathuna Shah

I, Jai Parkash S/o Kamleshwar Singh S/o 95/C, Raipur Khurd, Chandigarh have changed my name from Jai Parkash S/o Kamleshwar Singh to Jayaprakash Singh S/o Kameshwar Singh

I, Bharat Lal S/o Ram Sumer, R/o SCF 27-28, Sector 22-C, Chandigarh inform that I have changed my name Ajay Morya to Bharat Lal.

I, Usha Bhandari W/o Surinder Singh # 1356, Sector 35-B, Chandigarh I, have changed my name to Usha Rawat for all future purposes.

I hitherto known as Lal Singh S/o Ram Kishan R/O Ganjbar, Ganjbar (31), Ganjbarh, Panipat, Haryana-132103 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Shamsheer Singh.

I, Ranjit Singh S/o Baldev Singh R/o Village Dhadde, PO Chawinda Devi, Distt. Amritsar, Punjab-143504 have changed my name from Ranjit Singh to Singh is my surname and Ranjit is my given name.

I, Loveleen Singh S/o Mahinderpal Singh R/o Village Shahzada, PO Chawinda Devi, Distt. Amritsar, Punjab-143504 have changed my name from Loveleen Singh to Singh is my surname and Loveleen is my given name.

I, Pathan Sumaiya Bagum Iqbal Khan Wife of No. 17002713H Nk Shaikh Jawed R/o Nachanwel, Kannad, Aurangabad, Maharashtra-431104 now at 6023 (1) Armd Wksp, C/o 56 APO, have changed my Name from Pathan Sumaiya Bagum Iqbal Khan to Shaikh Sumaiya Jawed vide Affidavit No. IN-PB71170713117911Y dt. 17-7-2026 before Notary Public Amritsar.

I, Sakhubai Mother of No. 17026970Y Cfn Chate Balaji Shivram R/o Ladzari, Beed, Ghatnandur, Maharashtra-431519 now at 6023 (1) Armd Wksp. C/o 56 APO have changed my Name from Sakhubai to Sakhubai Shivram Chate and Date of Birth From 12 Jun 1972 to 01 Jan 1974 vide Affidavit No. IN-PB71168333433653Y dt. 17-7-2026 before Notary Public Amritsar.

I, Jagraj Singh, son of Sukhdev Singh, resident of Dharul Kalan (Sub-Tehsil Kulan, Tehsil Tohana, District Fatehabad), state that my correct name is Jagraj Singh, as recorded in my Aadhaar card, voter card, family ID, and other portals. I accept full responsibility in this regard.

I, Geeta Kumari W/o Robin Sakhuja R/o 33, Ward No.8, Maniyanar Mohalla, Buriya, Chaneti (399), Buriya, Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Geeta Kumari to Geeta Sakhuja.

I, Yogesh Kumar S/o Subhash Chander R/o Village Gatauli Teh Julana Distt, Jind Haryana declared that I want change my minor Daughter name Tanvi to Tanvi Malik for all futures purposes.

I, Reena Kumari W/o Anant Chopra R/o H.No. 614 Santapura, Near M.L.N.College, Yamuna Nagar, Jagadhri, Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Reena Kumari to Reena Chopra.

I, Bhovesh S/o Purushotam Das R/o Nirmal Kunj 2, Chhachhrauli, Distt. Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Bhovesh to Bhovesesh Madaan.

I Gagan Deep S/o Harash Kumar 44 Gali No 2 B/S School Nimla Avenue Chheharta Amritsar 143105 Have changed my name from Gagan Deep S/o Harash Kumar to Gagan Dhir S/o Harsh Kumar Dhir

I, Manjeet Singh S/o Balwinder Singh R/o H.No.211, New Azad Nagar, Amritsar have changed my name from Manjeet Singh to Manjit Singh

I, Parvinder Singh S/o Harnam Singh R/o # 206, Preet Vihar, Near Purani Chungi, Chheharta, Amritsar -143105 (Pb.) have changed my name from Parvinder Singh to Parwinder Singh, please note.

I, Tejinder Singh S/o Satnam Singh R/o H.No.1063, B-Block, New Partap Nagar, Amritsar have changed my name from Tejinder Singh to Tajinder Singh

I, Gurdeep Singh S/o Swaran Singh R/o H.No 38, Block -C, Guru Nanak Nagar, Bhalla Colony, Chheharta, Amritsar, Punjab have changed my name from Gurdip Singh to Gurdeep Singh

I, hitherto known as Neel Kamal Bir Kaur wife of Harpreet Singh Malhi residing at VPO Sialka Tehsil Baba Bakala Distt.Amritsar-143119 Punjab have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Neel Kamalbir Kaur Malhi.

I Kanta Gupta W/o Sh. Radhe Shyam Gupta R/o H.No A-84, TDI city sec-23, cannaught estate dist. Panipat, declare that I have changed my name from Kanta devi to Kanta Gupta for all future purposes.

I Anand S/o Baljit R/o H. NO. 99/946, Nand Vihar Colony Gali No 4 Jattal Road, Panipat, Haryana-132103, have changed my name to Anand Kumar for all future purpose.

I, Paramjit Kumar S/o Gurmeet Lal R/o House No. 303-A, Street No.7, Jujhar Nagar, Patiala (Punjab) have changed my name from Paramjit Kumar to Paramjit Singh.

I, Charan Singh S/o Mahabir Singh R/o H.No. 217A, Aman Nagar, PO. DCW, Patiala, Panjab have changed the Name of my minor Daughter Avneet Aged 13 Years and she shall hereafter be known as Abhineet.

I, Ranvir Singh S/o Sh. Mahasingh R/o VPO Bhagwatipur, Distt. Rohtak, Haryana - 124514 declare that I have changed my name from Ranbir Singh to Ranvir Singh for all future purposes.

I, Kumari Kirti Wd/o No. 155992B Ex Petty Officer Late Sh. Amarjeet R/o H.No. 8, Gali No. 01, New Vishal Nagar, Near ST Paul College of Education, Rohtak (Haryana) declare that my name Kirti Malik is wrongly mentioned in my husband service record. But my correct & actual name is Kumari Kirti. vide affidavit dated 17.07.2026 before Notary Public Rohtak.

I, Vidya Devi spouse of Army No. 13666706M Name Balbir Singh Rank Nk (TS) R/o Krishana Colony Jind-126102 (Haryana) have declare that my husband service record wrongly mentioned my Name Veda Devi D.O.B. 15.07.1957 but my all documents actual & correct name Vidya Devi & D.O.B. 10.07.1953 vide affidavit dated 09.07.2026 attested by Notary Public District Court Jind.

I, Seema Bansal, residing at Shiv Colony, Cheema, Sangrur, Punjab, have changed my name to Seema Goyal after marriage with Rajesh Kumar. In future, I shall be known by my new name Seema Goyal. All concerned please note.

I Rajan Kumar Gupta S/o Sh. Madan Lal Gupta r/o H.No 1682, Sector 22B, Chandigarh declare that Rajan Gupta and Rajan Kumar Gupta is one and the same person.

I, Kalu Ram S/o Prahlad Singh R/o House No. 85, Near Water Works, Village Ghoran Wali (243), Sirsa - 125103(Haryana) have changed my name from Kalu Ram to Kamal Jyani.

I, Kamal Devi W/o Bhim Singh, R/o Village Payal(12), Talwandi Rukka, Tehsil and District Hisar, Haryana (India) PIN-125001, declare that I want to change my name from Kamal Devi to Kamlesh in all my documents.

I Gurjap Singh S/O Sarabjit Singh R/O Village Butala PO dhilwan district Kapurthala declare that have changed my name from Gurjap Singh to Gurjap Singh butala. Please note.

I, Puja Ghosh wife of Army No. 14933918M Rank Hav Rajib Ghosh presently residing at village Loha Sarmastapur, Post office Dighra, P.S Chakdaha, District Nadia Pin code 741222 West Bengal, India Unit 14 Bengal BN NCC, Muragachha Boys Hostel, Muragachha, Nadia, Pin code 741154 (West Bengal) India declare that my name & DOB erroneously recorded as Puja Ghosh & DOB 19/11/1990 in my husband service records. My correct name Puja Ghosh Goala & DOB 09/11/1990 vide affidavit No. IN - PB71099189859645Y dated 17 July 2026

I, Govinda Ghosh father of Army No. 14933918M Rank Hav Rajib Ghosh presently residing at village Loha Sarmastapur, Post office Dighra, P.S Chakdaha, District Nadia Pin code 741222 West Bengal, India Unit 14 Bengal BN NCC, Muragachha Boys Hostel, Muragachha, Nadia, Pin code 741154 (West Bengal) India declare that my name & DOB erroneously recorded as Govinda Ghosh & DOB 01/07/1956 in my son service records. My correct name Gobinda Ghosh & DOB 29/01/1960 vide affidavit No.IN PB71101920066875Y dated 17 July 2026

I, Govinda Ghosh father of Army No. 14933918M Rank Hav Rajib Ghosh presently residing at village Loha Sarmastapur, Post office Dighra, P.S Chakdaha, District Nadia Pin code 741222 West Bengal, India Unit 14 Bengal BN NCC, Muragachha Boys Hostel, Muragachha, Nadia, Pin code 741154 (West Bengal) India declare that my name & DOB erroneously recorded as Govinda Ghosh & DOB 01/07/1956 in my son service records. My correct name Gobinda Ghosh & DOB 29/01/1960 vide affidavit No.IN PB71101920066875Y dated 17 July 2026

I, Govinda Ghosh father of Army No. 14933918M Rank Hav Rajib Ghosh presently residing at village Loha Sarmastapur, Post office Dighra, P.S Chakdaha, District Nadia Pin code 741222 West Bengal, India Unit 14 Bengal BN NCC, Muragachha Boys Hostel, Muragachha, Nadia, Pin code 741154 (West Bengal) India declare that my name & DOB erroneously recorded as Govinda Ghosh & DOB 01/07/1956 in my son service records. My correct name Gobinda Ghosh & DOB 29/01/1960 vide affidavit No.IN PB71101920066875Y dated 17 July 2026

I, Geeta W/O Late Sh. Bhaiya Lal, R/O Village-Rajnakhara, Po:- Aoras, Distt-Unnao, Uttar-Pradesh-241503, That I Have Changed My Son's Name From Baby Three Of Geeta To Naitik.

I, Ahallwa Ghosh Mother of Army No. 14933918M Rank Hav Rajib Ghosh presently residing at village Loha Sarmastapur, Post office Dighra, P.S Chakdaha, District Nadia Pin code 741222 West Bengal, India Unit 14 Bengal BN NCC, Muragachha Boys Hostel, Muragachha, Nadia, Pin code 741154 (West Bengal) India declare that my name & DOB erroneously recorded as Ahallwa Ghosh & DOB 01/07/1960 in my son service records. Whereas my correct name Ahalla Ghosh & DOB 21/08/1963 vide affidavit No. IN -PB71100520737748Y dated 17 July 2026

I, Japjee Chahal D/O Mohpreet Singh Chahal, R/O 221/10, Improvement Trust Colony, Scheme-7, Tibri Road, Gurdaspur, Punjab 143521 have changed my name from Japjee to Japjee Kaur Chahal. All note.

I, Inder Singh S/o Shri Hava Singh R/o Village Rawat Khera, Post Office Talwandi Rukka, Tehsil and District Hisar, Haryana 125001 declare that I have changed my name from Inder Singh Bishnoi to Inder Singh for all future purpose.

I, Prahlad Singh Chaudhary S/o Shri Nihal Singh R/o House No. 1969, Sector 16-17, Hisar, Haryana 125001 declare that I have changed my name from Prahlad Chaudhary to Prahlad Singh Chaudhary for all future purpose.

I, Rahul S/o Shri Sandeep R/o VPO Puthi Mangal Khan, Tehsil Hansi, Distt. Hansi, Haryana-125033 declare that my father name is mentioned Ramnarayan in my Adhhar Card as well as other records of my father name as Sandeep. My father name Ramnarayan and sandeep are the names of one and same person.

I, Jasdeep Singh S/O Joginder Singh. Resident Of Mohalla Zaildara. Vpo- Kalanaur, Tehsil - Kalanaur, Distt- Gurdaspur, Punjab, India, Pin Code- 143512. I Have Changed My Name From Jasdeep Singh To Singh Jasdeep, Surname As Singh And Given Name As Jasdeep.

I Anuj S/o Dalveer resident of Vill. Dherdu District Kaitahl Haryana 136021 have Changed Given my Name From Anuj to Anuj Dahiya

I, Satpal S/O Tulsi Ram R/O Village Jurasl Khurd, Pehowa, Kurukshetra, Haryana Changed Name Satpal Pandal.

I, Reshma and Resham Kaur W/o Late Mohinder Singh (Ex-Subedar, Army No. JC-347084H) R/o Village Gorsian, P.O. Jansui, Tehsil & Distt. Ambala, Haryana, declare that my name is recorded as Reshma & Resham Kaur and my DOB as 01.01.1956 & 01.07.1953 in different documents. Both names and both DOBs belong to the same person.

I, Kheela Devi W/o Atinder Pal Singh Vill.Gumthala Garhu, Pehowa, Kurukshetra have changed my name Komalpreet Kaur

I, Mandeep Singh S/o Lakhwinder Singh Vill.Usmanpur, Kurukshetra have changed My Minor Son name Alvin Singh to Arjan Singh Ghotra.

I, Rohit S/o Krishan Lal R/o H.No.29/A, Ashok Nagar, Jalandhar, Punjab have changed my name from Rohit to Rohit Kumar. (Kumar as surname)

I, Navodita D/o No.185105W Rank MCERA-1 Pawan Bammi R/o H.No. NG 18, Gazi Gulla, Jalandhar-144008, Punjab, have changed my name from Navodita to Navodita Bammi.

I, Rajinder Kaur W/o Gurdial Singh Bajaj R/o H.No. 1189, St.No.9, Baba Budha Ji Nagar, P.O. Dakoha, Jalandhar (Pb.) have Changed my name to Rajinder Kaur Bajaj. All Concerned please note.

I Sukhchain Singh Bhurji S/O Jaswant Singh R/O Vpo. Chuharachak Distt. Moga Have Changed My Name To Sukhchain Singh Bhurji To Sukhchain Singh.

I Raj Karan Garg S/O Jaspal Kumar R/O Vill. Daulatpura Ucha Distt. Moga Have Changed Minor Daughter's Name Saina Garg To Shaina Garg.

I Manmohan Singh S/O Bachan Singh, R/O 111, Gali No.2, Basai Enclave, Gurgaon, Haryana-122001, Changed My Minor Son Name Baby Of Shivali Gossain, 6 Years To Shivansh Negi.

I Naveen Soni S/O Devi Lal, R/O H.No.247, Ward No.13, Sirsa, Haryana-125055, Have Changed My Minor Daughter Name Saavni Soni, 4 Years To Samaira Soni.

I Jagdev Singh S/O Jarnail Singh R/O H.No.13842 St.No.1 Adarsh Nagar Tibba Road Ludhiana Declare That My Given Name As Jagdev And Singh As Surname.

I Ankita Singla W/O Kushal Singla R/O H.No.-1243 Sector 68 Mohali (S.A.S. Nagar) Have Changed My Name To Ankita Kansal.

I, Sourav Choudhary S/o Subhash Chand, Vill Nangal Khurad, Tehsil Haroli (UNA) (H.P) Have Changed my name Sourav to Sourav Choudhary.

I, Sukhwinder Singh S/o Ram Lal, vill Meghpur, Tehsil Nangal (Rupnagar) have changed my minor son name from Dheeraj to Dheeraj Badhan.

I, Jubesh Kumar S/O Rajinder Kumar resident of # 1184, Sector 25-D Chandigarh, have changed my minor son Name from Baby One of Kanchan to Reyansh Kumar.

I, Payara Singh s/o Nasib Chand r/o # 223 Village Kaimbwala, Chandigarh have changed my name to Piara Singh.

I, Raveena Kumari W/o Naresh Kumar R/o H. No. 864 A/1, Hansi Road, Opp. Vita Plant, Joginder Nagar, Jind, Haryana 126102 declare that I have changed my name from Raveena Kumari to Ravina for all future purposes.

I, Abhishek Jangra S/o Sh. Satya Narayan R/o Talwandi Rana, Distt. Hisar, Haryana declare that I have changed my name from Abhishek to Abhishek Jangra. In future I shall be known as Abhishek Jangra for all purposes.

I, Pawan Kumar S/o Madan Lal R/o H.No. 162/3, Dharampura Colony, Batala, Distt. Gurdaspur, Punjab have changed my name from Pawan Kumar to Pawan Padam. Concerned Note.

I, Sukhjinder Singh Boparai S/o Sher Singh R/o Roshan Shah Wala (Butter) Teh-Zira Distt. Ferozepur have changed my name as Sukhjinder Singh.

I, Girase Tatya Dulat Father of 17013733W Nk Girase Chetansing Tatya residing at Vill. Bole Distt. Jhalgaon (MH) 425111 have changed my name from Girase Tatya Dulat to Girase Tatya Daulat vide Affidavit date 18.07.2026 before notary public Distt. Court Bathinda (PB).

I, Amrita Kaur W/o Jagdish Singh R/o H No 780, Gali No. 10, Ward No. 1, Sarabha Nagar, Malout, Tehsil Malout District Sri Muktsar Sahib, Punjab-152107, have changed my name to Amritpal Kaur.

I, Navdeep Kaur W/o Dharminder Singh R/o Near Gurudwara Sahib, Rajgarh, Po Salabatpura ,District Bathinda, Punjab-151108, have changed my name to Navpreet Kaur.

I, Sukhpal Singh S/o Faqir Singh R/o Santu Wala (Ferozepur) have changed my name to Sukhpal Shah.

I Pritam Kaur W/o Gurmel Singh R/o 1935/4, Raikot, Distt Ludhiana Have Changed My Name To Maya Kaur.

I, Shubam Singh S/o Hans Raj R/o Chohla Sahib Teh-Tarn Taran, Chohla Sahib Distt. Tarn Taran declare that my given name is Shubam and my surname is Singh.

I, Kawaljit Kaur W/o Bikramjit Singh R/o Vpo. Ghoman House No. 765/A Teh-Batala Distt. Gurdaspur Pb, have changed my name from Kawaljit Kaur to Kanwaljit Kaur.

I, Ranjeet Kaur W/o Jaspal Singh R/o 207/2, Majri Mohalla, Shahbad (Kurkshetra) have changed my minor son's name from Prabhleen Singh to Prabhddeep Singh, his DOP: 03/10/2009.

I, Harmandeep Singh S/o Harshan Singh R/o Village Katahri, Tehsil Payal (Ludhiana) have changed my name to Harmandeep Singh Grewal.

I, Harjit Kaur Mander W/o Baltej Singh R/o Village Mehmoodpur, Tehsil Amloh (Fatehgarh Sahib) have changed my name from Harjit Kaur Mander to Harjit Kaur.

I Tarsem Lal S/o Bhagwan Dass R/o Bansal Street, Kotkapura (Faridkot) have Changed my name to Tarsem Chand.

I, Pinky W/o Ranjit Singh R/o Vill: Nanderpura Teh & Distt. Mansera have changed my minor daughter name from Khushi to Jasmeen Kaur.

I, Vaishali Wife of JC 357865K NB Sub Patil Vikas Sampatrao residing at Vill. Kavthe Piran Distt. Sangli (MH) 416417 have changed my name from Vaishali to Vaishali Vikas Patil vide Affidavit date 18.07.2026 before notary public Distt. Court Bathinda (PB).

I, Gauri Wife of 15579292F hav Shingade Vilas kisan residing at Vill. Kokarewadi Distt. Satara (MH) 415508 have changed my name from Gauri to Gauri Vilas Shingade vide Affid

Over 2.7 lakh candidates skip NEET re-test, highest absentee count ever

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

Over 2.7 lakh fewer candidates appeared for the medical entrance NEET-UG re-examination than the original test conducted on May 3, according to official data.

The crucial exam conducted on May 3 was cancelled by the NTA on May 12 amid allegations of paper leak. The CBI is investigating the matter.

The exam was re-conducted on June 21. For the re-examination, 19,99,895 candidates appeared compared to 22.05 lakh candidates who had taken the original NEET-UG examination.

The result for the high-stakes exam was announced on Thursday, with the National Testing Agency (NTA) announcing that 11.21 lakh candidates have qualified for the exam.

The result data shows that registrations remained almost unchanged from last



year, but a significantly larger number of candidates skipped the re-examination.

Over 22.79 lakh candidates registered for NEET-UG 2026, only marginally higher than 22.76 lakh registrations in 2025.

However, only 19.99 lakh candidates appeared, leaving 2,79,848 candidates absent, the highest absentee count recorded so far.

In 2020, 2.30 lakh candidates had skipped the exam when it was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The original examination held on May 3 had recorded an attendance of 22.05 lakh candidates, translating to an attendance of 96.72 per cent.

The attendance for the re-examination stood at 87.72 per cent, making it the

second-lowest recorded since 2020. The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test-Undergraduate, or NEET-UG, is the largest undergraduate entrance exam in the country, with nearly 25 lakh candidates registering for the crucial test.

The NTA conducts NEET every year for admission into medical colleges, with 1,08,000 seats available for the MBBS course. Of these, approximately 56,000 are in Government hospitals and about 52,000 are in private colleges. Undergraduate courses in dentistry, Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha also utilise NEET results for admissions.

Following the controversy over paper leak and alleged irregularities in the exam process, the Centre announced that the exam will now be conducted as a computer-based test (CBT), rather than in the pen and paper mode.

750 hectares of forest land likely to be diverted for coal mining in Odisha's Angul district

ALIND CHAUHAN n New Delhi

More than 750 hectares of forest land in Odisha's Angul district is likely to be diverted for mining at the proposed Alakananda coal mine, allotted to Rungta Sons Private Limited.

The mining site is about 4.9 kilometres from the Similipal-Satkosia Gorge tiger corridor and 8.5 km from the Sambalpur elephant reserve. In recent years, the site and its surrounding areas have witnessed the presence of not only elephants but also sloth bears and leopards, among other wild animals.

The forest-land diversion, leading to the felling of more than 3.3 lakh trees, was recommended for stage-1 (in-principle) approval by the environment ministry's Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) at its meeting on July 7.

The stage-I clearance stipulates conditions, including compensatory afforestation, which must be fulfilled before the stage-II formal diversion approval can be granted.

At the meeting, the committee also observed that the mining site's eastern and southern boundaries are flanked by the Olhani river. The Tikra river, a tributary of the Brahmani river, flows



about 750 metres north of the proposed mining lease area. The proposed project also involves the displacement of 818 families and affects 1,584 families across five villages.

The FAC has recommended approval based on several conditions, including that the state Government must ensure a safety barrier with a minimum width of 50 metres on either side of the Olhani river. Another condition is the imple-

mentation of a regional wildlife-management plan, as approved by the chief wildlife warden, according to the minutes of the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting also state that the "tree felling shall be carried out in a phased manner, in consultation with the state forest department and in accordance with the approved mining plan, mine-closure plan and the guidelines of the forest department". (PTI)

Gujarat tops Niti Aayog's Investment Friendliness Index

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

Gujarat, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have emerged as the top three States in NITI Aayog's Investment Friendliness Index for States and Union Territories (UTs), as per a report released on Friday.

Lakshadweep was the worst performer followed by Ladakh and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

The index focuses on eight parameters: infrastructure, business climate, resources, Government policy, regulatory ease, institutional environment, financial health and environment resilience.

The rankings had three categories — large States, hilly and northeastern States and city States and UTs, as per the report released by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Ashok Kumar Lahiri.

Among large States, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal were the worst performers. Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh were ranked 4th, 5th and 6th among large States.

Gujarat leads the ranking, with an overall score of 56.6. The state's score is driven by its strong performance across infrastructure, business climate, financial health, regulatory ease and Government policy



pillars, with areas of improvement in the resources, institutional environment and environment resilience pillars. The report pointed out that Gujarat's high rank in infrastructure is on account of its efficient port operations and power sector, driven by competitive industrial and commercial power costs and well-contained transmission and distribution (T&D) losses.

Maharashtra records an overall score of 53.7, ranking second in both the large state category and at the pan-India level. The State's score is driven by its leading performance

in the business climate pillar, the Aayog said, adding that the score is further supported by a strong performance in the resources and financial health pillars, with infrastructure and regulatory ease areas for improvement. Tamil Nadu records an overall score of 53.3, ranking third at the pan-India level and the large state category. The score is driven by its strong performance in the infrastructure and business climate pillar, with financial health emerging as an area for improvement.

Uttarakhand, Assam and Himachal Pradesh emerged as the top three

States in hilly and northeastern States category. Releasing the report, Lahiri said investment rate in India is around 25 per cent, which is less than China when its economy was growing fast.

"In the last few years, India has been the fastest growing major economy. Investments play a major role in economic growth. India needs more investments as it also boosts demand. "As we aspire to realise the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047, our challenge is not only to sustain high rates of economic growth but also to ensure that such growth is broad-based, resilient and driven by productivity," he said.

Lahiri said achieving this ambition will require a significant acceleration in investments that expand productive capacity, strengthen manufacturing, create quality employment and foster innovation. The index covers all 28 States and eight union territories (UTs) and evaluates what makes a state attractive for investors, as well as the challenges investors face.

The Union Budget 2025-26 announced the development of an Investment Friendliness Index to strengthen the spirit of competitive and cooperative federalism by promoting reforms and fostering a conducive investment ecosystem across States.

CEC a weapon of mass destruction for electoral rolls: Jairam Ramesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Friday slammed Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar as a "complete weapon of mass destruction" for electoral rolls in the country and said the opposition would push for his removal as the poll panel chief.

Opposition parties on April 24 had submitted a fresh notice in the Rajya Sabha seeking to move a motion for the removal of Kumar.

The opposition's fresh charges on Kumar's "proved misbehaviour" included "continued partisan asymmetry in the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct".

Asked whether the opposition will push for action against Kumar on the notice submitted in April, Ramesh said, "We haven't heard anything on that. Absolutely, we have to push. I mean he's a complete weapon of mass destruction as far as electoral rolls are concerned."



"The most devastating indictment of Mr Gyanesh Kumar has come from a very senior IAS officer, who was the first director general of the Unique Identification Authority of India, and has a culturally very important name — Ram Sevak Sharma. He's written an article detailing how damaging and devastating the entire SIR exercise has become," the Congress general secretary in-charge communications said.

So, this is not just what the Congress party is saying or what Trinamool Congress is stating, Ramesh said. "I mean

this is a retired civil servant who has worked in the Modi Government, he was given important positions and he's come out and of course retired election commissioners have come out very openly (against SIR)," Ramesh said.

He pointed out that opposition parties submitted a notice on April 24 for moving a motion for the removal of the chief election commissioner.

"Mr Gyanesh Kumar is just executing what he's told to do by the home minister (Amit Shah)," Ramesh alleged.

His remarks come days after former chief election commissioner SY Quraishi hit out at the Election Commission over the ongoing SIR exercise, saying the process is focused more on "exclusion" and has "played havoc with democracy" with free and fair elections having been "disturbed". The Monsoon session of Parliament is scheduled to start from July 20 and conclude on August 13.

All 36 States and UTs adopt KPI framework for health programmes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE n New Delhi

All 36 States and Union Territories have unanimously adopted a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) framework to strengthen the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of key public health programmes, the Union Health Ministry said on Friday. The Centre and States have agreed to hold monthly reviews to track progress against the defined KPIs and address gaps, it said.

The decision was taken at the conclusion of a two-day National Review Meeting on Disease Surveillance and Public Health Programmes organised by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare here. According to a statement issued by the ministry, the KPI framework commits all States and UTs to achieve defined targets and performance benchmarks for strengthening disease surveillance and implementing public health programmes.

The Centre and States also agreed to undertake monthly performance reviews to assess progress against the defined KPIs, identify implementation gaps and facilitate



timely corrective action. The ministry said the reviews will also draw upon findings from supportive supervision carried out by SPOT (Supportive Supervision and Performance Observation Team) members, with States and UTs committing to address critical operational bottlenecks and improve the delivery of disease surveillance and other public health programmes.

The meeting, held on July 16 and 17, brought together senior health officials from all States and UTs to review the implementation of key public health programmes, assess progress in disease surveillance and deliberate on measures to strengthen data-driven governance.

J&K LG commissions India's first, deepest geothermal wells in Ladakh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Leh

In a landmark mission for India's clean energy journey, Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena on Friday commissioned the country's first and deepest geothermal wells at Puga Valley in the Union Territory of Ladakh, an official spokesperson said. Developed by the ONGC Energy Centre and powered by renewable sources, the commissioning of the two 1,000-metre-deep wells at an altitude of over 14,000 feet would significantly advance Ladakh's journey towards becoming a clean energy hub as envisaged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the spokesman said.

He said the project, which



VK Saxena

is a big stride towards setting up of India's first-ever geothermal power plant, also fulfils the prime minister's vision of carbon-neutral Ladakh and the call for harnessing alternative, renewable energy sources for future security.

The Lt Governor termed the commissioning of the

geothermal wells as a historic milestone in India's clean energy journey and a defining moment in Ladakh's transition towards a carbon-neutral future.

"This geothermal power project would act as a catalyst for Ladakh's holistic development. Beyond its scientific significance, this initiative will strengthen Ladakh's energy security, promote environmental sustainability and contribute to regional socio-economic development.

"What has been achieved in Puga Valley would serve as a blueprint for India's net-zero journey and significantly contribute towards making Ladakh a carbon-neutral and environmentally sustainable region,"

Saxena said. He lauded the ONGC engineers, saying the Indian engineers and technicians were among the best in the world, capable of achieving the most difficult engineering feats, and they truly symbolise India's growing stature in the field of global engineering.

The Lt Governor also appreciated every worker associated with the project, saying it was a true testament to their grit, determination and perseverance.

The two geothermal wells are critical for the successful implementation of the 1-MW pilot geothermal power project at Puga, which will be India's first demonstration-scale geothermal power project, the spokesperson said.

Lakhanpur to be developed as street food hub in J&K: Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Jammu

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Friday said that Lakhanpur has been selected among 50 towns across the country to be developed as a 'street food hub' under the PM SVANidhi initiative, while announcing the construction of a '1.5 crore gateway monument at the entry point to Jammu and Kashmir.

The minister, who was accorded a warm welcome by street food vendors and traders during his visit to the Lakhanpur Vendors Market, said the Narendra Modi Government has, for the first time, prioritised the welfare of street vendors through a dedicated national scheme. Addressing vendors and traders, Singh said suc-



Union Minister Jitendra Singh

sive Governments had ignored the concerns of street vendors, but the PM SVANidhi scheme has brought them into the mainstream by providing financial assistance, dignity and sustainable livelihood opportunities. He said

Lakhanpur's selection in the first phase of the Street Food Hub initiative reflects the Government's commitment to empowering small vendors while creating organised, hygienic and visitor-friendly vending spaces. According to the

minister, the proposed Street Food Hub will be developed in two clusters near the old bus stand and the Sales Tax Office in Lakhanpur market.

Spread over 1,754.25 square metres, the project will provide modern vending infrastructure while promoting Dogra cuisine and other regional delicacies.

Located at the gateway to Jammu and Kashmir from Pathankot and on the route to the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi shrine, Lakhanpur witnesses heavy movement of tourists, pilgrims and transit travellers, making it an ideal location for the project, he said.

Singh said the Government had received 126 proposals from 32 States and Union Territories covering 106 Urban Local Bodies

and seven Census Towns, with Lakhanpur being selected in the first phase.

The Union minister also announced that a landmark gateway to Jammu and Kashmir, along with beautification works at Lakhanpur, will be developed at an estimated cost of over '1.5 crore. He said part of the funding would come from his Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) allocation, while the remaining amount would be mobilised from other available resources.

During the visit, Singh inaugurated a statue of Maharaja Gulab Singh at Lakhanpur, describing it as a tribute to the Dogra ruler's contribution to nation-building and the history of Jammu and Kashmir.

Ex-NSG commando held in drug case in Jodhpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Jodhpur

Police arrested a former National Security Guard (NSG) commando here and seized over '1.06 crore in cash and 8 kilograms of opium latex during a raid at his residence, officials said on Friday.

According to officials, the accused Ratan Singh Jat allegedly tried to flee after seeing the police team at his house in the upscale Ekta Nagar locality on Thursday following a late-night raid, but police overpowered him.

During the search, police seized '1.06 crore in cash, 8 kilograms of opium latex and a Hyundai Creta SUV from the house. "The accused was arrested in connection with drug trafficking. A substantial



quantity of opium latex and over Rs 1.06 crore in cash have been recovered from his residence. We are investigating the source of the narcotics as well as the origin of the seized cash," DCP (East) Manish Choudhary said.

The DCP said the accused had earlier served as a soldier in the Assam Rifles and was later deployed as an NSG commando. Police said cash counting continued for several hours and the operation lasted until Friday morning.

IYC, NSUI to gherao Parliament on August 9



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Indian Youth Congress (IYC) and the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) announced on Friday that they would 'gherao' Parliament on August 9 as part of the party's 'Chhatron Ki Goonj (Voice of Students)' campaign to amplify the alleged corruption in education as well as the need for reform.

These two frontal organisations of the Congress reiterated their demands seeking the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, strict action against incidents of alleged paper leaks and the release of an annual examination calendar. Indian Youth Congress (IYC) president Uday Bhanu Chib and NSUI in-charge Kanhaiya Kumar outlined the future roadmap of the 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' campaign during a press conference here.

Chib said that the 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' campaign began with a press conference, followed by engagement with students and youth through various programmes. He informed that protests and demonstrations would be held in various cities on August 1, and the 'gherao' of Parliament would take place on August 9 under the slogan 'Delhi Chalo (March to Delhi)'.



Editor's
TAKE

Semicon 2.0: India's silicon gambit

The Union Cabinet's approval of a `1.27 lakh crore semiconductor programme is timely – the real test now is execution, not intent.

On July 15, the Cabinet cleared Semicon 2.0, a `1,27,500 crore programme launched alongside a `62,500 crore mobile-phone manufacturing scheme. Together, they mark India's clearest statement yet that its chip ambitions are a sustained industrial project, not a one-time bet. The new phase builds on the original India Semiconductor Mission, under which 12 projects worth over `1.64 lakh crore have been approved, and three plants – run by Micron, Kaynes and CG Semi – have already begun commercial production. Semicon 2.0 widens the lens from fabrication alone to six pillars: chip design; the equipment and speciality chemicals that feed fabs; manufacturing capacity; advanced packaging; research into next-generation process nodes; and engineering talent, with over 300 universities already training more than 68,000 students on industry-grade design tools.

The stakes explain the scale of the bet. Semiconductors sit beneath almost everything India wants to build next – smartphones, electric vehicles, defence electronics, data centres and an AI-driven economy – yet the country still imports the bulk of what it consumes. That dependence is both a fiscal drain and a strategic vulnerability at a time when global chip supply chains are concentrated in a handful of geographies and are increasingly entangled in great-power rivalry.

A credible domestic base would cut import bills, generate the high-skilled manufacturing jobs India badly needs, and enable it to position itself as a trusted alternative as multinationals look to diversify beyond China and Taiwan. Yet ambition still outruns capacity. Most Indian plants today work in mature 28-110 nanometre nodes, a generation or more behind the 3-5 nm chips inside flagship phones and frontier AI hardware. Closing that gap takes years of accumulated process knowledge, not just capital.

Fabrication also requires uninterrupted power and ultra-pure water on a scale that few Indian sites can yet guarantee, and much of the specialised machinery and gases on which fabs depend are still imported – precisely why this round adds a materials-and-equipment pillar that the first phase lacked. Talent is being developed, but VLSI and process engineers take years to mature, not months. Nor is India racing alone: the United States, the European Union, Japan and South Korea are all running comparable subsidy programmes to attract the same pool of capital and expertise. Semicon 1.0's own timeline is itself a caution: India's first major fabrication plant is expected to come on stream only in 2028, seven years after that mission was first announced.

None of this makes Semicon 2.0 misguided; it makes it demanding. Capital alone did not build TSMC or Samsung - decades of disciplined execution and ecosystem depth did that. Semicon 2.0 gives India the mandate and the money. What it does with both, far more than the headline figure, will determine whether the country becomes a genuine chip power or merely a well-funded aspirant.

Recalibrating communication for the Global South

India can help build it by placing the orange economy, educational leadership, media exchange and digital cooperation at the centre of its engagement. The objective is not simply to improve how the Global South is seen



CHAITANYA
K PRASAD

The Global South does not suffer from a shortage of stories. It suffers from a shortage of control over how those stories are framed, circulated and remembered. Its countries are home to most of the world's population, some of its youngest societies, fastest-growing markets, oldest knowledge systems and most inventive responses to scarcity, climate stress, digital exclusion and social inequality. Yet much of the world still encounters the Global South through a narrow lens: conflict, poverty, instability, aid, extraction or delayed development. This is not merely a problem of image. It is a problem of power.

Communication shapes which experiences become universal, which institutions are treated as credible and which countries are seen as sources of ideas rather than recipients of them. For decades, the Global South has participated in an international communication order whose principal platforms, standards, narratives and gatekeepers were located elsewhere. Its societies have been represented, interpreted and often simplified before being heard directly. That order is no longer adequate.

The Global South now needs a communication strategy built around centrality. It must move from reacting to global conversations to setting them. It must stop appearing only as a subject of development and begin speaking as an author of the future. For India, this is both an opportunity and a responsibility.

India's role cannot be confined to amplifying diplomatic messaging or promoting national achievements. It can help build a wider communication architecture through which the countries of the Global South exchange knowledge, circulate culture, shape policy language and develop direct relationships with one another.

At the heart of this effort should be the orange economy. The orange economy brings together culture, creativity, technology, intellectual property, design, media, entertainment, heritage, fashion, animation, gaming, publishing and digital content. It recognises that ideas and cultural expression are not decorative additions to economic life. They create employment, shape identity, influence aspiration and build international visibility.

India's recent public communication increasingly reflects this understanding. The country presents itself not only through diplomacy, infrastructure, trade and technology, but also through cinema, crafts, music, cuisine, design, digital storytelling, creative entrepreneurship and civilisational knowledge. This shift matters because communication is most effective when audiences do not experience it as communication policy. They experience it as culture.



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ESSENTIAL

The author is a Commentator and Writer on Cinema, Branding, Media Management and Geo-Strategic Communication. Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavie Srinivasan

For too long, culture has been treated as soft power in the weakest sense of the term, something attractive but secondary. In reality, creative industries are central to how countries become visible and memorable. The nations that shape global imagination do so not only through military or economic influence, but through stories, images, language, design and platforms. The Global South already produces extraordinary cultural work. Its weakness lies in circulation. Creators struggle with translation, financing, copyright protection, discoverability and access to regional markets.

India can propose a network for creative exchange that goes beyond ceremonial festivals. It could support film and documentary coproductions, translation funds, digital archives, publishing partnerships, creator residencies, animation collaborations, gaming exchanges and common platforms for cultural content.

The aim should not be to produce propaganda or a uniform Global South identity. The South is too diverse for that. The aim should be to allow its societies to encounter one another without always passing through external filters. This requires direct communication networks. At present, news about one country of the South often reaches another through institutions based in Europe or North America. Research produced in Africa may become visible in Asia only after recognition by a Western university or journal. A policy innovation in Latin America may remain unknown in South Asia. Cultural products often become internationally valuable only after endorsement by global festivals, streaming platforms or award systems located elsewhere.

This indirect model keeps the Global South on the sidelines of its own story. India can help create a communication framework with four connected pillars: culture, knowledge, media and technology. The cultural pillar should focus on the orange economy. It should link filmmakers, writers, designers, musicians, game developers, publishers, museums, heritage institutions and digital creators across the South. The knowledge pillar should connect uni-

versities, think tanks and research institutions. India's educational leadership can be especially important here. Scholarships and training programmes remain valuable, but they are not enough. The deeper need is for a Global South knowledge commons: shared digital libraries, multilingual courses, collaborative research networks and accessible repositories of public-policy experience.

The media pillar should support direct reporting among countries of the South. Journalist exchanges, regional news partnerships and multilingual editorial networks can reduce dependence on second-hand interpretation. The technology pillar should strengthen translation, distribution and discoverability. Artificial intelligence can lower language barriers, but technology must serve cultural context rather than flatten it. India's greatest advantage is not that it has solved every communication challenge. It has not. Its advantage is that it contains many of the tensions the Global South must manage: scale and diversity, tradition and modernity, local languages and global platforms, public institutions and private creativity, democratic debate and strategic messaging. This gives India the ability to act as a convener rather than a lecturer. Its communication strategy for the Global South should therefore avoid paternalism. India should not claim to speak for a large and varied group of countries. It should build platforms on which those countries speak directly, equally and repeatedly.

Global South communication cannot become another exercise in official declarations. It must involve universities, creators, entrepreneurs, students, journalists, teachers, researchers and local communities. Governments can create the architecture, but they should not monopolise the voice. Much official communication across the Global South remains formal, defensive and overloaded with institutional language.

The Global South must also stop communicating through the language of catching up. Its societies are not moving towards a future already perfected elsewhere. They are producing different futures: affordable digital systems, frugal innovation, multilingual education, community-led climate solutions, public technology at scale and new creative markets. These are not regional exceptions. They are global ideas. The Global South does not need a louder version of the old communication order. It needs a different one: more direct, multilingual, creative, networked and confident. India can help build it by placing the orange economy, educational leadership, media exchange and digital cooperation at the centre of its engagement. The objective is not simply to improve how the Global South is seen. It is to change who gets to define what is worth seeing. The South must no longer wait to be invited into the main story. It must build the stage, create the language and draw the map itself.

PIC TALK



A mahout with his elephant at the Vadakkumathan Temple on the opening day of the Malayalam month of Karkidakam amid rainfall in Kerala.

PHOTO: PTI



RAJYOGI
BRAHMA
KUMAR
NIKUNJ JI

2ND OPINION

It was not so long ago that scientists predicted climate change would make monsoons unpredictable; as a result, rain-fed food grain cultivation in South Asia would suffer significantly and total cereal production would decline. Unfortunately, that prediction is becoming true day by day, with many parts of India now battling heavy rains and flooding. What was once a warning has become a pattern.

In 2023, 2024 and 2025, the world witnessed some of the hottest years on record, each surpassing the previous one. There is no doubt that this crisis is unexpected, yet one cannot deny that it has arrived because of man's own deeds. The situation across the globe has become so alarming that one question comes to everyone's mind: "Is there nothing we can do against nature's fury?" Does this question really need an answer?

When the unprecedented becomes routine

Despite the galloping scientific achievements mankind has witnessed, we have never been able to question the invincibility of Nature. While textbooks are filled with lessons on natural calamities, there is still no breakthrough in predicting or preventing them with certainty. In such a scenario, the best bet for any country is to be prepared for the worst while hoping for the best. A recent scientific study has concluded that almost all of the summer sea ice in the Arctic Ocean is likely to disappear by the end of this century because of global warming caused by greenhouse gas emissions. In India, another study has predicted that by the middle of the century, sea levels will rise by 24.1 cm, causing coastal floods and more cyclones in the Bay of Bengal, while the average temperature in cities such as Delhi and Mumbai will increase by three to four degrees Celsius. That prediction no longer feels distant. Delhi has already recorded some of its heaviest monsoon rainfall in decades, while Mumbai's low-lying areas now flood with alarming regularity.

It has taken many scientists a long time to accept that the world's climate is changing because of human activity. The burgeoning population, increasing industrial activity, deforestation and the rampant exploitation of the earth's natural resources have altered our ecosystem irreversibly. The devastating consequences are now becoming apparent. However, despite all these developments, many experts continue to explain extreme weather as isolated local phenomena instead of recognising the larger picture. It is obvious that the earth's climate is changing for the worse. Nature, which has sustained human civilisation for thousands of years by providing sunshine, food and water, is turning harsher. The world went agog when a country like the UAE, associated more with deserts, witnessed rare snow and hail on its northern mountain peaks a few years ago. Similarly, the devastating tsunami, which killed lakhs of people, showed how powerless humans are before the forces of nature. The lesson has not faded with time. Dubai, the same desert emirate, was paralysed in 2024 when a year's worth of rain fell in a single day, turning highways into rivers. Closer home, the Wayanad landslides buried entire hillside settlements in Kerala, while glacial lake floods in Sikkim swept away a dam and homes with barely any warning. Each of these events was described as unprecedented. None of them should have been. These manifestations of nature's fury cannot be mere anomalies. They are increasingly becoming the result of the damage done to the environment by human beings. In other words, we are now paying the price for abusing nature. Yet we continue to ignore these warning signs in pursuit of economic growth. Instead of learning from our mistakes, we are trying to outsmart nature.

But no amount of technology or money can save us from nature's wrath. It is still not too late to adopt sustainable, nature-friendly practices. This requires a shift from acquisition and consumption to sharing and caring. These cyclonic rains are nature's warning bells. If we fail to change, even greater disasters may await us.

The writer is a spiritual teacher and a columnist

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Messi's magic lives on

Lionel Messi, like his legendary countryman Diego Maradona, is God's gift to football. Though short in stature like Maradona, the Argentine's upper-body strength, nimble footwork and quicksilver reflexes are a treat to watch.

Football lovers continue to admire his sublime free kicks, exceptional ball control and match-winning brilliance. Every time he charges towards the goal, creates an opportunity or finds the net, he inspires his teammates with renewed confidence and belief. Calm, humble and smiling, Messi's leadership qualities have rubbed off on the entire team.

As a friend, philosopher and guide, he has been a revelation both on and off the field. When his teammates joyfully tossed him into the air after victories, they made a powerful statement: here was an inspirational leader who had guided Argentina through difficult times and captured the imagination of an entire generation. Leading Argentina to the 2014 FIFA World Cup final, winning the trophy in 2022 and remaining a symbol of excellence are remarkable achievements. Great players may retire, but legends like Messi will always be remembered for their extraordinary skill, humility and enduring contribution to football.

GANAPATHI BHAT | AKOLA

Lessons from NEET 2026

The successful declaration of the NEET-UG 2026 results after a difficult journey brings some relief, yet it also underscores the serious hurdles the process encountered. The original examination in May had to be cancelled due to a paper leak, forcing a re-examination in June under intense scrutiny. Nearly 20 lakh students appeared amid tight security, with many facing months of uncertainty and stress. It is commendable that the NTA declared the results promptly, keeping the admission calendar on track, but the episode exposed gaps in our examination system.

We must now focus on practical solutions. The NTA should invest in stronger digital security for question papers and conduct regular audits of examination centres. Greater transparency in setting question papers and faster grievance redressal would help rebuild trust. At the same time, expanding medical seats and improving the counselling process can reduce the intense competition that makes such leaks so damaging. Supporting students with mental health resources during such disruptions is equally important. Ultimately, a more robust system will ensure future examinations run smoothly and give young aspirants the fair opportunity they deserve.

S M JEEVA | CHENNAI

Balancing law and education

The proposed demolition of a large part of Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar University raises a difficult question: should thousands of students suffer because of alleged violations by the management? If buildings have indeed been constructed without mandatory approvals or fail to meet fire safety norms, the authorities are duty-bound to enforce the law. No institution, regardless of its founder or political affiliations, should be above legal scrutiny. However, the action must be proportionate and humane. Nearly 3,000 students pursuing higher education should not become collateral victims of an administrative or political dispute. Before resorting to demolition, every legal remedy should be exhausted, including opportunities for regularisation, wherever permissible, rectification of deficiencies, and compliance with safety standards. If demolition ultimately becomes unavoidable, the Government must ensure uninterrupted education by relocating students and safeguarding their academic future.

The rule of law and the right to education must go hand in hand. Strict enforcement should target those responsible for the violations while safeguarding the interests of innocent students who have invested their aspirations in the institution.

SANJAY CHOPRA | MOHALI

CYBER SECURITY SCARE AT KUDANKULAM NUCLEAR PLANT

The reported data breach at the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant is a cause for concern, notwithstanding the claim by the NPCIL and the Central Government that it does not pertain to nuclear safety or security.

The World Leaks publication of a large cache of files linked to the nuclear plant on the dark web cannot be ignored or downplayed, as it cannot be said with certainty that no risks are involved.

The Anil Ambani-led Reliance Group, entrusted with the Balance of Plant (BoP) construction work for Units 3 and 4, has tried to make light of the breach by irresponsibly describing it as only a "partial breach".

The seriousness of the breach can be gauged from the fact that

the leaked data are not otherwise obtainable under the RTI Act.

The fact that the breach occurred on the Reliance Group's side clearly vindicates the position taken by many against bringing private companies into the nuclear sector. The breach makes it clear that the Government failed to verify and confirm Reliance Infrastructure's capability to prevent data theft and keep sensitive data secure before handing them over to the company.

Needless to say, the safety of nuclear facilities is paramount. Data leaks relating to them can be costly. The Government should ensure that such data breaches never occur and that the leaked data cause no harm.

G DAVID MILTON | MARUTHANCODE

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

Reimagining urban resilience through labour codes and women’s livelihoods

The new labour codes align with global perspectives on resilient cities, focusing on childcare, housing and infrastructure for workers, especially migrant workers in the informal sector. The OSHWC Code also provides portability of benefits between native and destination States, benefiting migrant women workers



ELLINA SAMANTROY

The expansion of urban population and growth of cities in India has contributed in making India as one of the largest urban agglomerations. A recent report of the World Bank and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs titled ‘Towards Resilient and Prosperous Cities in India’ in 2025 had stated that Indian cities hold tremendous potential as centres of economic growth with 70 percent of new jobs coming from cities by 2030. With these developments, one of the biggest challenges the cities are grappling with is the problem of informality. As Indian cities increasingly depend on workers in the informal sector particularly contract, self-employed, migrant, domestic workers, gig, platform workers etc to sustain urban economies, protecting these workers and strengthening social protection and resilience for urban workers including women workers has remained a challenge. The protection of livelihoods in urban areas is perhaps one of the most important question facing India’s urban transformation today.

Women’s employment and social protection in urban India

While reflecting on women’s employment in urban areas, it is observed that women are mostly engaged in sectors like services, retail, hospitality, healthcare, manufacturing etc. Also one of the pressing demands for women workers has been domestic work and the emerging gig economy. While reflecting on urban employment situation, the estimates from the Periodic Labour Force Survey show a grim picture with only a 3 percent increase in labour force for women from 24.7 percent in 2022 to 27.7 percent participation in 2025. It is evident from the PLFS data that a large majority of urban women i.e. 40.9 percent are engaged in other services, 21.7 percent in Manufacturing and 16.1 percent in trade, hotel and restaurant. Further, there has been dearth of long term job contracts for women, with only 16 percent having contracts for more than 3 years while a large proportion i.e. 77 percent women in the 15-59 age group did not have written job contracts.

Now a question which arises here is how far these sectors are protected by legislative provisions and whether women are entitled to social security? In fact, most of these workers are in informal arrangements with lack of employment contracts and access to social security. Apart from protection under labour legislations, urban livelihood protection also includes access to basic infrastructure facilities like housing, drinking amenities water, health, sanitation, safety etc. The Economic Survey 2025-26 while recognising the importance of informal sector, has emphasised on the need for revisiting urban planning strategies to promote a more integrative and inclusive approach for the informal workers for a more resilient urban transition.

What do the labour codes offer ?

While the announcement of the new labour codes on November 21st, 2025 has been a historic and opens up plethora of opportunities for protecting the livelihoods of urban women. However the concern is how far these provisions will strengthen livelihood protection and well-being of urban women workers? The introduction of fixed term contracts under the Industrial Relations Code 2020 includes employment contracts that promote better access to social security. Workers are eligible for proportionate gratuity after completion of one year of continuous service based on the length of their service and are also entitled to maternity benefit. These new provisions can contribute in regularising employment contracts in the sectors where women are engaged in urban areas. It is a significant step towards formalisation of employment towards promoting better social security.

Another important development under the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions code 2020 has been the introduction of a ‘common



THE E-SHRAM DATA NEED TO BE LEVERAGED TO IDENTIFY MIGRANT STATUS AND INTEGRATE STATE LEVEL LABOUR WELFARE SCHEMES SO THAT WORKERS ARE NOT DEPRIVED OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS WHEN THEY MIGRATE. URBAN RESILIENCE FOR WOMEN CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED BY COMBINING SOCIAL PROTECTION RIGHTS UNDER LABOUR CODES WITH INVESTMENTS IN GENDER RESPONSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE THAT ENCOURAGE WOMEN TO WORK

The writer is a Fellow and Co-ordinator, Centre for Gender and Labour, VV Giri National Labour Institute, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Noida

Scrutiny, not applause: Philosophy meets its skeptics



ACHARYA PRASHANT

Indian spiritual figures have been travelling abroad for more than a century. Halls have filled, applause has sounded, and followings have formed across the world. My tour of Britain in May to July 2026 might look like one more link in that chain. But what mattered was who sat across from me, and the standard against which the argument was placed.

The tour began on May 30, at the Cambridge Union, moderated by Professor Jaideep Prabhu. A student put her point: “At Cambridge, learning is based on evidence, and every belief is tested against a standard. So how is this philosophy any different from any other belief?”

“Let us rebuild this framework right now, right here, from scratch,” I said, “leaning as little as possible on belief and dogma.” If a framework is universal, it cannot belong to any one person; it has to be built and tested together. A session scheduled for one hour stretched into nearly three sittings across two days. When a participant thanked me for sharing “my philosophy,” I corrected her: it had been built together in that room.

At the London School of Economics there was a dialogue with Professor Jonathan Birch, who has led the Jeremy Collier Centre for Animal Sentience and whose work has shaped Britain’s animal welfare laws. At University College London there was a long conversation with Professor Steve Fleming, an expert in metacognition. There were dialogues with Cambridge-trained biologist Rupert Sheldrake in Hampstead; Professor Lars Chittka, a Fellow of the Royal Society and an expert in insect cognition, at Queen Mary University; and Harvard-educated psychologist Melanie Joy, who works on the psychology of eating animals.

These gatherings assembled not for emulation but examination. Those present had every reason to challenge the framework in their own professional fields.

At the centre of this philosophical framework is a question that shifts the source of human problems. The real issue is not external but psychological: a mistaken sense of “I” that identifies itself with the body and mind. Vedanta calls it the ego. From it arise fear, desire, conflict and consumption that widen into social and ecological crises. Without examining this inner structure, external solutions such as law, technology and reform remain incomplete, because the same agent that creates the problem stays active within the solution.

At London Climate Action Week, the present climate effort was compared to a society that keeps repairing roads and ambulances without addressing the drunk driver. The belief that technology and policy will solve the crisis has to be abandoned. Technology is born not of human need but human desire, and what the world calls success is, to a large extent, another name for a growing carbon footprint.

At Queen Mary University of London, when the ego was called the “master exploiter” behind every discovery, Professor Chittka offered examples where scientific work led directly to conservation. “I am perhaps a little less pessimistic,” he said. The answer was that the agent that does the damage is the one that repairs it too, and the repair does not acquit it: a clean-up campaign run by the exploiter himself.

When animal violence was called instinct rather than psychological, Chittka countered with field observations. The answer was that the observer projects human interiority onto animal behaviour. “Sir, you yourself have long campaigned against anthropomorphism,” I said, “and I am afraid that at this moment you are doing exactly that.” The dialogue ended without agreement, but with full engagement.

Animal welfare law has been growing for nearly two centuries, yet neither species extinction nor per-capita meat consumption has fallen. The one who makes the law and the one who breaks it are the same person. At LSE, Professor Birch did not give up his ground: “Do laws help? I think they do. But I do not believe they solve all our problems.”

The sharpest moment came when Birch said, “But I think we matter.” I answered, “No, we do not.” His counter-question was direct: what measurable change has come from my work? Media reports record more than a million animals saved from slaughter in 2024, and more than two hundred thousand registered students in structured programmes of self-enquiry.

At UCL, Professor Fleming appreciated an analogy separating metacognition from self-knowledge: a car’s speedometer reads the system, while the driver examines himself and finds that there is no driver at all. But Fleming did not agree. “There is one part of your analogy where I would perhaps differ,” he said, “and that is the notion of the driver.”

If the system has no separate dashboard, then the sense of a separate ego reading it is itself the error. Fleming asked: if the ego is an illusion, then whose is the error? My answer was that the one speaking and thinking is the one predicating itself. No separate observer exists apart from the ego who could say there is an error. Professor Fleming held out a research goal that runs against the framework: an account of the mind so complete in its computations that there is no need to admit any third thing. My answer was direct: “You may explain it, and the ego will say, I did the explaining, but it will still remain.”

In Kingston, the conversation with Rupert Spira was the closest philosophically, yet it was not allowed to dissolve into mutual admiration. Where most Advaita teaching turns towards awareness, I keep bringing the conversation back to the ego. “If you are speaking of spirituality without the ego,” I said, “then we are speaking of medicine without the patient.”

The professors were on their own ground, in their subjects and institutions. The conversation was held in the language of empirical science, not in the tradition’s vocabulary. The framework had to be tested; there was no room to escape by saying, “this lies beyond the scope of my tradition.” The established guru circuit usually keeps its distance from such a format.

What this proves is limited, but real. It made a demand of both sides that traditional gurudom does not. The speaker had to bear the risk of being shown wrong, and the audience had to take part in examination in place of applause. In a field where success is usually measured by crowd size, this tour set down another test: whether the argument holds up in that room. Whether this can grow larger, or even wishes to, remains an open question.



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

Female criminality: A lesser-addressed dimension of the criminal justice system



AKLAVYA ANAND | SHALINI SABOO

The alleged unfortunate homicide of Ketan Agarwal has brought the debate surrounding the actors and factors of the criminal justice system to every nook and corner of our nation. Ketan was visiting Lohagad Fort, a scenic spot popular with tourists and trekkers, with his fiancée, Siya Goyal, when he fell into a ditch. Days later, police arrested Siya, 20, and her friend, Chetan Chaudhary, 22, alleging that they murdered Agarwal by pushing him from a height. The alleged motive for this murder was that Ketan was to be married to Siya, though she was clandestinely in a relationship with Chetan. In this particular case, a pattern appears that is similar to other recent incidents in which neither Siya nor Chetan had a criminal record prior to this alleged crime. Their alleged participation and the subsequent public response warrant a thoughtful examination of pertinent questions regarding female criminality.

Societal expectations towards females always seek to create an ideal woman. This notion is challenged when a woman is involved in a particularly heinous crime that involves the killing of her to be husband. As a result, when the criminal justice system puts a woman on trial, we see that the house of justice is marked by two parallel trials. One is the justice system, which is formally designed to conduct a trial; and the second is the media trial. Here deterministic answers are sought about the mores of society which have been broken by the acts of perpetrators at all levels, including those of the accused and of womanhood itself.

Considering the wider outcry around the question of female involvement in the crime, there is a need to examine the theoretical framework for understanding and explaining female criminality and the pathology surrounding the deviant acts of women perpetrators. There is also a need to ensure parity and fairness in the treatment of female offenders compared with their male counterparts so that justice must not succumb to any kind of sexist ideology. The very idea of women being cross examined elicits indignation among stakeholders and justice entrepreneurs globally. Further, the criminal justice system is accustomed to viewing women as victims, and society still struggles to accept that women can also be perpetrators. As a result, when a woman is involved in a homicide case, it often attracts disproportionate public attention. Therefore, when women are accused of serious violence, it challenges not only criminal law but also deeply rooted social expectations. However, a dominant dis-



course on female criminality, propagated by Pollock, argues that females have an equally strong deviant character, and their methods differ from those of their male counterparts. He argues that it is rooted in manipulation, deceit, and treachery, whereas male criminality is predominantly rooted in physical force. Many landmark cases in criminal law, especially those related to murder, involve male perpetrators. A notable example is the case of South African athlete Oscar Pistorius, who was convicted of killing his girlfriend, claiming he mistakenly believed an intruder was present. In the recent case of the killing of Shraddha Walkar, after killing her, her body was kept in a freezer. Such a narrative portrays males as the primary perpetrators of crime. However, it overlooks female criminality in the current context, in which no gender has a monopoly over deviant behaviour. To substantiate women’s role in violent crimes, a few cases are important, showing how violent crime can be committed through deceitful means. Within this context, Battered Women’s Syndrome (BWS) emerged as

one of the most influential developments in criminal law. This challenges the stereotype that women are inherently non violent, showing that women may use violence as a means of emancipation from prolonged domestic abuse, eventually resorting to lethal violence against their abusers. So, violence could also be a tool to equalise and at times it is an act of rebellion.

Recently, in Kerala, a daughter in law killed six of her husband’s relatives by administering cyanide. In another case, Shabnam, along with her lover, killed seven relatives after administering sleeping pills. Mamta Pathak was convicted of murder for electrocuting her husband.

In the recent Sonam Shillong case, the husband was killed in Shillong and the whole episode was again allegedly planned with the active mental participation of the woman who was not so much in the physical aspect of the act. In all these cases one thing is apparent: female criminality is not based on physical aspects. They are a clear sign of treachery. Killing by poison, electrocuting, and hiring an assassin shows that women are capable of committing crimes in their own ways.

It is important to realise here that society finds female criminality shocking because it challenges traditional gender stereotypes. Deviance is often viewed as masculine. The female body is often regarded as sacred and, in many ways, perceived as incapable of committing heinous crimes. When a man commits murder, society typically views him simply as a man who has killed someone. In contrast, when a woman commits the same act, it tends to be viewed in a more complex manner, eliciting a range of emotional reactions

that probe the collective conscience.

If gender becomes a basis for justice, it undermines the notion of justice as impartial and objective. In the current case, equality before the law demands more than recognising women as victims. It requires criminal justice professionals to understand that a person can be both a victim and a perpetrator, regardless of gender. Until our public conversations integrate these possibilities, every woman accused of murder will continue to face two trials: one in court and another in the court of public opinion.

Crime can be committed regardless of gender. A criminal must be punished as per the law. Punishment devoid of legal basis becomes revenge. In this context, the statement by the parents of Siya Goyal that if she has committed the crime, she should also be pushed from the same fort from where Ketan was pushed and given the same punishment has no legal basis. Gandhi has said that an eye for an eye will make the whole world blind. Law needs to be reformative and forward looking.

To understand the current situation, the criminal justice system needs to be better equipped to handle cases of female criminality and society must recognise that it is on the cusp of a transformation in which the dominant narrative that portrays crime as a monopoly of males needs to be rethought.

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Authorities neglecting Periyar River conservation: Kerala HC

The Kerala High Court has expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed timeline for setting up a STP to curb pollution of the Periyar River, saying that the authorities concerned, including the PCB, have failed to give due importance to the need to preserve the waterbody.

The observation by a bench of Chief Justice Soumen Sen and Justice Syam Kumar VM came after the PCB submitted a report stating that the work to set up the Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) will be completed by August next year.

"We are not at all satisfied with the progress of the work expected to be carried out by the Pollution Control Board (PCB). The timeline suggested by the Chief Environmental Engineer in the report dated July 14, 2026 is not acceptable to this court. We are of the view that the authorities concerned have failed to attach due importance to the earlier orders passed by this court as well as to the need to preserve the river Periyar and its flora and fauna," the bench said. It directed that the entire work related to setting up of the STP shall be completed on or before December 31 this year. "The said direction is peremptory," it said and listed the matter to January 2027, where the Chief Environmental Engineer has to file a compliance report.

The court's observation and directions came on a batch of petitions seeking to curb the pollution of Periyar river by preventing dumping of effluents into it from industries and the Aluva Market. The bench had, in June, directed the Board to give a revised time schedule for setting up the STP to curb pollution of the river and to strictly follow the same as such a system was "essential for protection of bio-diversity and the flora and fauna" connected with the waterbody.

(PTI)



The Kerala High Court has approved the appointment of PS Santhakumar, presently working as the Director of Cultural Affairs, as the Executive Officer of Sabarimala for the term 2026-2027.

Santhakumar is replacing O G Biju whose continued retention in various posts in Sabarimala was earlier reportedly questioned by the High Court.

The court had also told the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) that while effecting transfers and postings, it shall ensure that only efficient and upright officers are posted as Administrative Officers/Executive Officers in the major temples under its management.

Subsequently, the Board filed an application seeking permission to transfer Biju and replace him with Santhakumar as the Executive Officer of Sabarimala.

A bench of Justices Raja Vijayaraghavan V and K V Jayakumar noted that the Chief Security and Vigilance Officer (Superintendent of Police), Vigilance and Security Wing of the Board, had conducted an inquiry into the credentials of Santhakumar.

"It has been reported that during his previous tenure as the Administrative Officer of Sabarimala, no adverse findings were recorded against him. The Audit Wing has also verified the Sabarimala Audit Reports relating to the period during which Santhakumar served as the Administrative Officer and has reported that no amount is pending recovery from him. The Devaswom Board has also submitted that there are no outstanding dues payable by Santhakumar," the bench noted.

(PTI)

SC to hear challenge to HC order on Indian Mission visa tenders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to hear on July 20 the Centre's plea against a Delhi High Court verdict setting aside the tender awarded to private firms for outsourcing Consular, Passport and Visa (CPV) services at Indian missions in Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, Singapore and Canberra.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana was urged by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the high court's decision has made rendering of visa and other services at these places difficult.

The CJJ agreed to hear the plea on Monday.

While setting aside the tender awarded to private

Absence of train ticket alone cannot defeat railway-accident claim: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

In a significant verdict, the Supreme Court on Friday said the mere absence of a train ticket on the body of a deceased passenger cannot be a ground to deny compensation to the victim's family in a railway-accident case.

The ruling, aimed to strengthen the rights of railway passengers and their families, set aside the concurrent orders of the Railway Claims Tribunal (RCT) and the Madhya Pradesh High Court, and awarded a compensation of `8 lakh to Lata, the widow of a man who died after falling from a running train in 2015.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and N Kotiswar Singh allowed the appeal of the widow, whose compensation claim was rejected by the RCT and the high court on the ground that her husband was not proved to be a bona-fide passenger because his ticket was not found after the accident. The top court said the Railways Act is a beneficial welfare legislation and must receive a liberal and purposive interpretation.

Referring to earlier verdicts, Justice Karol, who authored the judgment, said, "The beneficial legislations are to receive purposive and liberal construction in furtherance



of the intentions of the legislature, as can be discerned, instead of a literal or restrictive approach being adopted. The overall idea is to make the intention so understood, functional." The verdict said "technical approaches and lapses in procedure should not defeat the welfare aim of the statute as it does not befit the railways, as an instrumentality of the State, to take such a restrictive, pigeonhole view".

The verdict said the proceedings under section 124A of the Railways Act are based on the principle of "no-fault liability", intended to provide speedy compensation to victims of untoward railway incidents, without requiring any proof of negligence.

Relying on earlier decisions, the bench said, "Merely because the ticket of a train journey was not found on the person of the deceased, it will

and Untoward Incidents (Compensation) Rules.

It directed the Centre to release the amount within four weeks, failing which it will carry interest at the rate of 8 per cent per annum from the date of filing of the claim petition.

"Well, the above is about what a passenger or his family members must show to get compensation from the railways. But what is the duty of the railways towards the customer/traveller? To put things in perspective, it must be said that what happened in this case, that a traveller on a train, for whatever reason, fell off the train and injured himself or died, is not a rare occurrence," the court said.

The judgment also contains significant observations on railway safety and passenger welfare.

Referring to recurring incidents of passengers falling from overcrowded trains, the verdict said although the Indian Railways has framed detailed operational manuals requiring ticket checks, crowd-management and passenger-safety measures, effective implementation remains a challenge.

It pointed out that overcrowding continues to be a regular occurrence and has contributed to numerous fatal accidents across the country.

SC to hear Somnath Bharti's plea against Satish Upadhyay's 2025 election win

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday said it would hear AAP leader Somnath Bharti's plea challenging the election of BJP's Satish Upadhyay from Malviya Nagar constituency in the 2025 Delhi Assembly polls.

Upadhyay defeated Bharti by a margin of 2,131 votes in the Delhi Assembly elections held in February last year.

Bharti has moved the apex court challenging a January 17 judgement of the Delhi High Court which had dismissed his petition. His plea came up for hearing before a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta. "We will grant leave and hear the issue," the bench said.

In his election petition filed before the high court, Bharti had accused Upadhyay of corrupt practices under the Representation of the People Act, 1951, alleging he deployed his agents to bring people to the polling booths in cars.



Bharti had also alleged that entire election campaign of Jitender Kumar Kochar, the Congress candidate from the constituency, was directed exclusively against him.

He had alleged that there was a deliberate and coordinated strategy by Upadhyay to create a false contest, intended to confuse and divide the secular vote and secure an unfair electoral advantage.

"The petitioner's (Bharti) omission to implead Kochar is not a mere technical lapse but an incurable defect, which as per the provisions of ROPA (1951 Act) and the law declared

SC allows release of animated film Mahaprabhu Jagannath after July 28

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday permitted the all India release of animated film *Mahaprabhu Jagannath* on or after July 28 post Lord Jagannath Yatra festivities.

A bench of Justices B Nagarathna and R Mahadevan noted that the animated movie was based on a web series already released on Youtube, and that the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) had granted clearance for its screening. The producers of the film, which was scheduled to be released Friday, had challenged the July 15 order of the Orissa High Court which restrained Ele Animations Pvt Ltd from releasing the movie.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the State, said the Yatra has commenced on Thursday in Odisha and other parts of the country. The bench, which



refused to stay the high court order, declined to direct the release of the movie on July 17. "After the Rath Yatra concludes, you can release the movie," Justice Nagarathna told senior advocate Devadatt Kamat, appearing for the film producers.

Kamat strongly urged the bench to allow the release of the film on the date originally announced, saying the web series which was released on YouTube two years back had not created any problem for anyone.

The bench, however, asked him not to release the movie during Rath Yatra festivities. Kamat contended

Delhi HC to hear PIL on July 20 over intrusive surveillance at Jantar Mantar protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Friday agreed to hear a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) on July 20, alleging "continuous, indiscriminate and intrusive surveillance" at the ongoing protest at Jantar Mantar here over alleged irregularities in the NEET-UG examination.

The PIL by former JNUSU President Aishe Ghosh sought urgent hearing before a bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia.

The senior counsel of the petitioner said that policemen were roaming with mobiles and cameras at the protest site, which, they claim, was breaking the morale of the protesting students.

She claimed that the police's conduct was in flagrant violation of the fundamental right to privacy of the protesters. After the senior counsel urged the court to list the PIL for an urgent hearing, Chief Justice Upadhyaya scheduled it for Monday.

"We are preponing it



(from Wednesday when PILs are heard). Come on Monday," Chief Justice Upadhyaya said. The Cockroach Janta Party has

been holding a protest for over 26 days demanding Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation over alleged irregularities in the NEET-UG examination.

Activist Sonam Wangchuk joined the agitation on June 28 and has been on an indefinite fast since then.

The PIL, filed through lawyer Subhash Chandran KR, seeks a declaration that "continuous and intrusive mass surveillance" of peaceful protesters is constitutionally impermissible, disproportionate, and cannot be justified under the guise of maintaining public order or national security.

It seeks a direction to the authorities to immedi-

SC to hear plea against Kerala HC's Waqf Board order on Monday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Supreme Court agreed to hear on July 20 a plea challenging a Kerala High Court order restraining the State Waqf Board from taking any major decision without its permission.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana on Friday took note of the submission made by the Waqf Board's lawyer, who sought urgent listing of the matter.

The top court agreed to hear the matter on Monday.

In an interim order on July 15, the Kerala High Court restrained the state Waqf Board from taking

any major decision without its permission.

It had also directed that the Board shall not incur any capital expenditure or make any policy decision without the express leave of the court, a senior advocate associated with the case said.

The high court bench had also directed the Government to ensure that its representative is appointed on the



ately suspend the mass photography, videography, and surveillance at Jantar Mantar until there is a "proximate, real, and imminent threat to public order" justifying such measures.

"The petitioner has in her possession photographs depicting the permanent surveillance tower and the continuous photography and videography undertaken by police personnel, which demonstrate the pervasive and intrusive nature of the surveillance being carried out by the respondents," the plea said.

Board in accordance with the provisions of the United Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act.

The Board shall, for the time being, function under the administration of the joint secretary to the state Government dealing with Waqf matters, the high court had said.

The high court's directions came while hearing several Public Interest Litigations, including one by BJP leader Shone George, alleging that the Board's functioning was illegal as it did not have two non-Muslim members as mandated by the Act.

The high court had listed the matter for further hearing on July 22.

Child rape-murder case: Don't call yourself doctors, says SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday slammed two private hospitals and their doctors for failing to provide timely medical care to a four-year-old rape-and-murder victim in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad in March. A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana asked the hospitals to grant a reasonable compensation to the family.

"You have no business of writing 'doctor' if you do not perform your duty. If you had sensitivity, you would have gone with the child to the other hospital if you did not have facility.... You ignored because she was poor? Couldn't afford your fee?" the CJI told the doctors. The matter will again be heard next week.

On March 16, the victim was allegedly lured away by a neighbour on the pretext of buying her chocolates. When the child did not return, her father launched a search and found her lying unconscious and soaked in blood. The family took her to the two private hospitals, which allegedly denied admission. She was taken to a Government hospital in Ghaziabad, where doctors declared her dead. The top court had, in April, flagged



the "reluctance" of the Ghaziabad Police in lodging an FIR and conducting a probe in the case.

It had also directed the two private hospitals — Khajan Singh Mannvi Health Care and St Joseph (Mariam) Hospital — which had allegedly denied treatment to the victim, to file their affidavits in response to the allegations made against them. The bench was hearing a plea filed by the victim's father, a daily wager, seeking a court-monitored probe either by a special investigation team (SIT) or the CBI in the case. Hearing the matter on April 10, the apex court lambasted the Ghaziabad Police's "insensitive approach" in the investigation of the case.

The bench had issued notices to the Uttar Pradesh Government, the station house officer (SHO) of the police station concerned, the two hospitals and the executive magistrate.

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Reliance shares jump 3% ahead of Q1 earnings report

Shares of Reliance Industries Ltd climbed nearly 3 per cent on Friday ahead of the company's June quarter earnings announcement, adding `45,334 crore to its market valuation. The blue-chip stock edged higher by 2.59 per cent to settle at `1,326.50 on the BSE. During the day, it surged 2.85 per cent to `1,329.95. On the NSE, the stock climbed 2.36 per cent to end at `1,327.20. The company's market valuation surged `45,334.01 crore to `17,95,091.26 crore. The rally in the stock was instrumental in driving the equity markets higher. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 964.58 points, or 1.25 per cent, to settle at 78,151.45. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 261.55 points, or 1.09 per cent, to end at 24,334.30. In volume terms, 8.49 lakh shares of the company were traded on the BSE and 183.02 lakh shares on the NSE during the day. Meanwhile, the promoter group of Reliance Industries increased its shareholding by nearly 0.5 percentage points during the June quarter through market purchases, reinforcing its long-term commitment to the country's most valuable company. (PTI)

Gold declines `800 to 3-week low of `1.45 lakh per 10 grams

Gold price resumed its downward trend to hit a three-week low in the national Capital on Friday, declining by `800 to `1.45 lakh per 10 grams, and silver dropped `2,000 due to sluggish local demand. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity depreciated by `800 to `1,45,500 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from Thursday's closing level of `1,46,300 per 10 grams, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Silver also dropped by `2,000 to `2,22,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). The white metal had closed at `2,24,500 per kg in the preceding session. Gold traded near this level on June 25, when it was quoted at `1,45,300 per 10 grams. Traders said gold prices resumed their decline after a two-session pause, falling to their lowest level in three weeks, while silver continued to witness sustained liquidation. In international markets, spot gold gained \$15.42, or 0.39 per cent, to \$3,992 per ounce; however, silver edged lower to \$55.37 per ounce. (PTI)

AI skill demand rises over 17-fold in technology jobs, says report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

AI fluency is rapidly emerging as a baseline workplace capability, with AI-related skills now featuring in 15.4 per cent of technology job descriptions, while AI skill mentions in non-technology roles have increased nearly sixfold, says a report. According to Naukri's latest World AI Day Report 2026, AI-related skills now appear in 15.4 per cent of technology job descriptions, up from 0.9 per cent in 2020, reflecting a nearly 17-fold increase in employer demand over the past six years.

The report drew insights from nearly 27,000 professionals across 80+ industries and 15+ cities and analysed over 3 lakh job descriptions. Interestingly, AI adoption is spreading beyond traditional technology functions. Mentions of AI-related skills in non-technology job descriptions have increased from 0.26 per cent in 2020 to 1.59 per cent in 2026, reflecting nearly six-fold growth. As AI talent becomes increasingly valuable, professionals with AI skills continue to enjoy a measurable salary advantage. "AI is no longer a future

trend; it is already reshaping how India works. It's showing up in job descriptions, hiring patterns, workplace tools and career decisions. The real question now is readiness," Sumeet Singh, Group CMO, Info Edge (India) Ltd, said. According to the report, professionals with AI skills earn higher median salaries across both IT and non-IT roles than peers without AI skills. AI-enabled roles have also recorded stronger salary growth over the past four years, reinforcing the growing business value of AI expertise. AI hiring has grown fastest among professionals with 13 to 16 years of experience, followed by those with 16+ years, as per the report. Recruiter demand has also increased significantly for higher salary brackets,

The Pioneer

CHANDIGARH | SATURDAY | JULY 18, 2026

West Asia crisis, weak monsoon major risks to growth: RBI Guv

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra has said the West Asia crisis and the expectation of a weak monsoon present significant risks to economic growth. "Despite global uncertainties, India has witnessed an over 7 per cent growth rate in the past few years. Last financial year, India clocked a growth rate of 7.7 per cent supported by strong and robust macroeconomic fundamentals," he said in an interview to DD News. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has projected a GDP growth of 6.6 per cent for the current financial year despite various challenges, he said. "Monetary and fiscal policies are robust, and because of that, we are witnessing high GDP growth," the governor added. On inflation, he said the central bank has raised its inflation forecast to 5.1 per cent for FY27, higher than its earlier estimate of 4.6 per cent. Inflation going past the Reserve Bank's median target of 4 per cent in June was largely driven by supply-side factors, Malhotra noted. Retail inflation climbed to

Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra

4.38 per cent in June from 3.93 per cent in May, mainly due to costlier food items. The food inflation increased to 5.32 per cent in June from 4.78 per cent in the preceding month. Talking about another risk factor, Malhotra said that how the monsoon behaves is crucial, as a large population depends on the agriculture sector. Agriculture contributes about 17 per cent to the GDP, he said, adding that "we have to be vigilant about that (monsoon)". On the rupee depreciation, Malhotra said the domestic currency performance against peers remains stable despite a stronger dollar and heightened global uncertainty. "After the war in West Asia,

the dollar has become strong. The currencies of many countries have weakened. If we look at it from a global perspective, India's rupee situation can be considered normal," he said. Last year, the gross FDI was around \$95 billion, which was a record, Malhotra said, adding that net foreign direct investment in the first two months of the current financial year was around \$7 billion. "In the medium and long term, our balance of payments and our external sector will remain strong. There is no need to worry," he said. Malhotra further said that the RBI will continue to prioritise inflation while supporting economic growth, and low and stable inflation pro-

vides the foundation for sustainable growth. Inflation control remained the RBI's primary objective under the flexible inflation-targeting framework, while growth was its secondary objective. "They are not in opposition. They support each other," he added. Asked about the loan growth, the governor said credit growth remained broad-based across sectors. Overall bank credit grew around 18 per cent year-on-year in June against 17.5 per cent in May, he said. On artificial intelligence adoption, Malhotra said the RBI had encouraged banks to adopt AI to improve customer service, lower operating costs, and enhance decision-making while ensuring safeguards against cybersecurity and data privacy risks. Earlier this week, the governor, while addressing managing directors and chief executive officers of public and select private sector banks, asked them to leverage advanced technologies, including AI, to expand their reach while ensuring robust cybersecurity and safeguards against fraud and data misuse.

Govt adds iron ore as 9th core industry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Government on Friday said it has included iron ore in the list of core sector infrastructure industries, a move which will help in capturing the performance of the economy in a better way. Consequently, the number of core industries has increased from eight to nine. Currently, the Government evaluates the performance of eight key sectors—crude oil, petroleum refinery, cement, electricity, natural gas, fertiliser, finished steel and coal—on a monthly basis. "In view of the extensive

use of iron ore in industrial production and its significant contribution to industrial development, Iron Ore has been included as a core industry in the revised ICI series," the Commerce and Industry Ministry said in a statement. The new series with base year 2022-23, containing data for nine key sectors, will be released on July 20 this year. The revised series will replace the existing Index of Core Industries (ICI) series with the base year 2011-12. The ministry also said that to ensure consistency with the IIP (Index of Industrial Production), the revised ICI series uses gross production data for compiling the

Steel Index, replacing the net production data used in the ICI (2011-12) series. In the coal sector also, only Raw Coal has been retained in the revised series. Coal Middlings and Washed Coal have been excluded to eliminate double counting, as both are derived from Raw Coal, it added. In 2011, the Government included two sectors: natural gas and fertiliser. Production growth of eight core infrastructure sectors slowed to a seven-month low of 0.5 per cent in May due to a fall in output of coal, crude oil and refinery products.

Markets surge on blue-chip buying; Sensex jumps 965 pts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Mumbai

Market benchmark indices ended sharply higher on Friday, with the Sensex climbing 964.58 points and the Nifty reaching the 24,330 level, propelled by buying in blue-chip Reliance Industries, bank and IT stocks. Additionally, a strengthening rupee against the US dollar improved sentiment, even as the broader market remained predominantly negative due to weak global cues, traders said. After a subdued ending in the previous trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex bounced back 964.58 points, or 1.25 per cent, to settle at 78,151.45. During the day, it surged 1,095.68 points, or 1.41 per cent, to 78,282.55. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 261.55 points, or 1.09 per cent, to end at 24,334.30. "There is a shift in market momentum, with strong traction moving toward large-cap stocks, led by the IT and banking sectors. This is supported by optimism around business updates and Q1 earnings expectations," Vinod

Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said. The trend appears to be driven largely by domestic institutional investors rotating out of expensive mid and small-cap stocks and into more attractively valued large caps that offer a better risk-reward profile, he added. On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark climbed 582.06 points, or 0.75 per cent, and the Nifty went up by 127.4 points, or 0.52 per cent. From the Sensex pack, Tech Mahindra jumped 3.91 per cent after it reported a 28.4 per cent rise in consolidated

net profit for the June quarter to `1,465 crore, and expressed confidence about the demand environment. Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Reliance Industries, Hindustan Unilever, Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank and Bajaj Finance were also among the winners. Reliance Industries is scheduled to announce its June quarter earnings later in the day. Sun Pharma, Trent, Bharti Airtel and UltraTech Cement were among the laggards.

India's forex kitty jumps \$964 million to \$675.15 billion

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Mumbai

India's forex reserves jumped \$964 million to \$675.157 billion in the week ended July 10, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall kitty had jumped by \$7.26 billion to \$674.193 billion. The kitty had expanded to an all-time high of \$728.494 billion during the week ended February 27 this year before the onset of the West Asia conflict, which led to several weeks of drop as the rupee came under pressure and the RBI had to intervene in the forex market through dollar sales. For the week ended July 10, foreign currency assets, a major compo-

nent of the reserves, increased by \$930 million to \$546.508 billion, the central bank's data showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effects of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units, such as the euro, pound, and yen, held in the foreign exchange reserves. The value of gold reserves increased by \$24 million to \$105.223 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by \$3 million at \$18.626 billion, the apex bank said. India's reserve position with the IMF was also up by \$7 million to \$4.793 billion at the end of the reporting week, according to the apex bank's data.

PNB signs MoU with Digital India BHASHINI for multilingual AI banking

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

Punjab National Bank (PNB), one of India's leading public sector banks, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Digital India BHASHINI Division (DIBD) at its Corporate Office in Dwarka, New Delhi. The MoU was formalised in the presence of M Paramasivam, Executive Director, PNB; Amitabh Nag, CEO, Digital India BHASHINI Division (DIBD); and Atish Kumar Rout, Chief General Manager (D), Digital Banking Transformation Division (DBTD), PNB. Through this partnership, BHASHINI's advanced multilingual AI capabilities will be integrated into PNB's digital platforms. This will empower customers to access banking

services seamlessly in multiple Indian languages via both voice and text. Speaking on the occasion, M Paramasivam, Executive Director, PNB, said, "The collaboration between BHASHINI and PNB demonstrates how digital public infrastructure can accelerate inclusive digital transformation across sectors. By combining multilingual AI with public service delivery, this initiative will help bridge language barriers and ensure that digital banking services are more accessible, equitable, and citizen-friendly for people across the country." Amitabh Nag, CEO, Digital India BHASHINI Division (DIBD), said, "Language should never be a barrier to essential banking services. Our partnership with PNB advances BHASHINI's vision

of a voice first, multilingual banking system. By integrating AI powered language technologies, we are building inclusive digital infrastructure that enables citizens to access financial services seamlessly in their preferred Indian language, making digital banking more intuitive, inclusive, and citizen-centric." Atish Kumar Rout, Chief General Manager (D), DBTD, PNB, remarked, "PNB remains committed to delivering accessible, secure, and customer-centric digital banking services. Our collaboration with the Digital India BHASHINI Division will enable us to leverage cutting-edge multilingual AI technologies, making our digital platforms more inclusive and easier to use for customers across diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Bharat Tex 2026 generates \$2.8 billion in business inquiries

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

Business inquiries to the tune of \$2.8 billion, along with textile investment commitments from various States worth `14,300 crore, were generated during the first three days of the global textile event Bharat Tex 2026. The four-day Bharat Tex 2026, which concluded on July 17, brought together 1,647 exhibitors, nearly 95,000 business visitors, 11,315 buyers, including 6,090 international buyers, 3,461 delegates and participants from 138 countries, according to the Textile Ministry. "Bharat Tex 2026 catal-

ysed around `14,300 crore of textile investment commitments with over 30 MoUs signed by various States, including Karnataka (`2,821 crore, 11,020 jobs), Bihar (`1,476 crore, over 40,500 jobs), Maharashtra (`1,095 crore) and Andhra Pradesh (`4,100 crore)," the ministry said. It said the above figures reinforce the event's role in driving decentralised, State-led growth in India's textile and apparel sector. "Further, RE&UP (a textile recycling firm) announced investing `4,800 crores in India. Also, the serious business enquiries worth approximately \$2.8 billion were generated during the event," the ministry said.

FROM THE WORLD

SRI LANKA

Former Indian cricketer held

A former Indian under-19 cricketer, who is a co-owner of the Lanka Premier League (LPL) franchise Jaffna Kings, was arrested by Sri Lanka's sports anti-corruption investigators on Friday over allegations of attempting to bribe a player, the police said.

The arrest took place hours before the sixth edition of the tournament kicked off. The suspect, Manjot Kalra, remembered for his match-winning century in the final of the 2018 Under-19 Cricket World Cup, was arrested by the Police Special Investigation Unit for the Prevention of Offences Relating to Sports and produced before a magistrate, who ordered Kalra to be remanded till July 31. Kalra, 27, who transitioned into sports entrepreneurship, invested in the Jaffna Kings franchise earlier this year. (PTI)

DENMARK

Police officer, 2 others shot

A Danish police officer and 2 other people were shot, including the suspected perpetrator, on Friday, according to media reports.

The shooting occurred in Nørresundby, in the North Jutland region in northern Denmark.

Danish broadcasters TV2 and DR quoted a police spokesperson as saying the injuries were serious. The police department's website was down on Friday in the wake of the shooting.

Police received a report of a fire in an industrial area of Nørresundby at 1:39 p.m. (1139 GMT) and rushed to the scene, where they were met with gunshots, DR reported. The officers returned fire. Police said that the shooting was over by 3 p.m. (1300 GMT), but the investigation would continue, DR reported.

It wasn't immediately clear who the third injured person was. A column of black smoke was visible in photos and video from the scene. Further details weren't immediately available. (AP)

US strikes bridges, electrical infrastructure, ports in Iran

JON GAMBRELL n Dubai

The United States expanded its airstrike campaign against Iran early Friday by hitting more bridges, electrical equipment and collapsing a tower at a key Iranian port, part of US President Donald Trump's threats to start striking infrastructure to pressure Tehran to ease its chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran launched new missile attacks against US-allied nations in the West Asia, including Qatar, a key mediator in the war. It also damaged a power and water desalination plant in Kuwait - something crucial in the small, desert nation.

The interim ceasefire agreed to last month has collapsed, and the region has endured days of back-and-forth attacks by the US and Iran as they battle for control of



the strait. Iranian officials say US strikes have killed dozens of people and wounded hundreds of others, with new casualties reported in Friday's strikes. When the US and Israel launched the

war on Iran on February 28, Tehran effectively closed the strait to shipping traffic, a move that sent the price of oil soaring and gave Iran major leverage in negotiations. Speaking in a primetime

address to the American public, Trump insisted the war was going well. "We are likewise winning big in Iran, and you will see the fruits of that labour very, very shortly," Trump said.

Bridges and 'electrical infrastructure' hit in Iran

The US airstrikes hit bridges overnight into Friday in Iran's southern Hormozgan province, killing at least seven people, Iranian state television reported. The attacks hit Bandar Khamir, a city on Iran's coast on the Strait of Hormuz.

The highway and railway bridge strikes appeared aimed at cutting off Bandar Abbas, Iran's main port, from roads leading into the Islamic Republic's central region onward to Tehran, the capital.

While other routes still are open, the US strikes could expand further,

potentially disrupting both the movement of military materiel and goods needed for Iran's 90 million people.

Iran also acknowledged "attacks on power infrastructure" during the US airstrike campaign for the first time Friday when its Energy Ministry issued a call for people to use less power in southern provinces.

It said those areas "are currently experiencing extreme heat and attacks on power infrastructure." The ministry did not elaborate on whether it was power plants, transmission lines or other equipment that had been attacked.

Such strikes on power infrastructure had been suspected for days. Tehran city councilman Mehdi Chamran told journalists asking about electrical problems on Tuesday, "Just look at how many power facilities they hit ... and you wouldn't be asking that question."

The US military's Central Command said it hit dozens of targets in its latest airstrikes, which concluded at dawn Friday, the sixth night in a row of American attacks.

The strikes also collapsed a tower at Iran's Chabahar port on the Gulf of Oman, a key trade route for landlocked, neighbouring Afghanistan, the state-run IRNA news agency reported.

Chabahar port, which Iran had been running with support from India, has been a repeated target of American airstrikes. Iranian state media acknowledged a third round of strikes on the facility without immediately acknowledging the tower's collapse.

Iran described the tower as overseeing commercial traffic into the port. However, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard also operates at ports across the country. (AP)

Tanker boarded by armed group off Yemen, says British military

ASSOCIATED PRESS n Cairo

A chemical tanker was boarded by an armed group off the coast of Yemen on Friday while it was transiting in the Gulf of Aden, the British military said.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Centre (UKMTO) said military authorities had reported that the vessel was boarded by "unauthorised personnel" south of al-Mukalla province in Yemen. Ambrey, a British maritime security firm, said Somali pirates are believed to have boarded the tanker, which does not have an armed security team on board.

The firm said a Korean naval vessel was on its way to assist the tanker which issued a distress call while heading westbound. The data tracker, Maritime Traffic, showed that the Tanzania-flagged oil and chemical tanker Asana was en route to Bosaso, Somalia. Yemen's coast guard in Aden



didn't immediately respond to request for comments.

It is the latest maritime attack off one of the world's poorest countries, which has been ravaged by a yearslong civil war.

Somali pirates have been active further away in the Gulf of Aden recently. Suspected pirates attacked a vessel 76 nautical miles (140 kilometers) south of the port town of Balhaf in southeastern Yemen on July 1. Four armed men on a small craft

caused minor damage to the ship's bridge, according to the UKMTO. On Thursday, the European Union signed a deal with Djibouti to strengthen Red Sea naval force against the Iran-backed rebel Houthis, who have repeatedly threatened to launch attacks on vessels in the Red Sea.

The EU operates two maritime security fleets in the Red Sea, a vital waterway linking the Mediterranean Sea via the Suez Canal with the Indian and Pacific oceans.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan among new UK peers

ADITI KHANNA n LONDON

A leading Indian-origin academic in the field of psychiatry, Swaran Singh, and London Mayor Sadiq Khan have been conferred with peerages ahead of Keir Starmer's Downing Street exit as British prime minister next week.

Starmer, who announced his decision to step down as Labour Party leader last month, will have an audience with King Charles III on Monday to formalise his resignation and make way for Andy Burnham to take charge as the new prime minister.

As is customary, the government forwards the names for the monarch to confer political peerages as part of a resignation honours process at the departure of a prime minister.



However, Downing Street indicated that the 26 new members who will be entering the House of Lords are part of a cross-party list of nominations that was already in the

works before Starmer made his resignation speech last month.

Swaran Singh, Professor of Social and Community Psychiatry at the University of Warwick; Consultant Psychiatrist, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust; and former Equality and Human Rights Commissioner, is among three nominations from the Opposition Tories.

Singh, in his 60s, led the independent investigation into discrimination, including Islamophobia, within the Conservative Party, dubbed 'The Singh Investigation'.

According to his University of Warwick profile, Singh initially trained as a surgeon in New Delhi before moving to psychiatry after

witnessing the effects of violent trauma on children and young people. He moved to the UK in 1991 and conducted research on ethnic influences in mental health as a lecturer and joined the University of Warwick, where he is Director of the interdisciplinary Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing Research.

Meanwhile, Sadiq Khan – who received his knighthood from King Charles in June last year to become Sir Sadiq – will now become Lord Sadiq Khan as a Labour peer in the House of Lords.

The 55-year-old London-born politician of Pakistani heritage has been the Mayor of London since 2016 and former Labour MP for Tooting in south London.

UK: Burnham elected new Labour Party leader

ADITI KHANNA n London

Andy Burnham was on Friday confirmed as the newly elected leader of the UK's governing Labour Party, becoming the prime minister-designate to take charge at 10 Downing Street next week.

The 56-year-old member of Parliament for Makerfield in northern England, on track to become Britain's seventh prime minister in a decade, admitted that it was the "last chance" for Labour to deliver the change promised at the last general election in July 2024.

"We are going to give people hope back," said Burnham in his first speech as party leader.

"I am ready to lead, building on the foundations laid by Keir Starmer," he said, thanking the outgoing leader for his "service to the country". Burnham, the sole candidate in the leadership race since Starmer announced his resignation last month, vowed to "set Britain on a new path" with a less toxic political climate and a greater shift away from centralised power at Westminster in London.

"I will be a leader for every region and nation in this great country, and this party will be unashamedly Labour



in our priorities and in the decisions we take," he said.

"We want to give your area more power to build the council and social homes that you desperately need, more power to improve your high street, backing local businesses such as the pubs and the shops that bring them to life... more power to re-industrialise," said in the PM-in-waiting.

In an attempt to highlight a shift in leadership priorities, the former mayor of Greater Manchester took aim at the Opposition Tories "sweeping privatisation agenda" which began under former prime minister Margaret Thatcher as he indicated plans for greater nationalisation.

"Britain took a series of wrong turns in the 1980s. Political power was centralised and economic power was privatised," he noted.

Putin critic convicted, barred from Russia parliament race

ASSOCIATED PRESS n Moscow

Boris Nadezhdin, who criticised Moscow's military action in Ukraine and tried to challenge President Vladimir Putin in the 2024 election, was convicted on Friday of displaying "extremist symbols" - an action that will keep him out of this year's parliamentary race.

The charges against Nadezhdin, 63, were based on a 2023 online interview in which he briefly showed a picture of the late opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who at that time was serving a 19-year prison sentence on charges of extremism that were widely seen as politically motivated. Navalny later died in an Arctic penal colony on February 16, 2024.

Nadezhdin rejected the case against him as absurd and argued authorities were trying to keep him from campaigning in September's parliamentary vote. The court in Dolgoprudny, a town on Moscow's northern outskirts where he lives, convicted him and ordered him to pay a fine of 1,000 rubles.

A week ago, Russia's Justice Ministry named Nadezhdin as a "foreign agent," a designation that carries strong pejorative connotations and brings additional government scrutiny. It also bars



Boris Nadezhdin

him from holding public office, but he was still able to wage his symbolic campaign for a parliament seat until Friday's verdict.

Nadezhdin complained of feeling sick during Friday's hearing, which was interrupted to let an ambulance team check his condition. Before the hearing, he said he was considering going abroad but was barred from leaving Russia.

In January 2024, Nadezhdin collected thousands of signatures as he openly called for a halt to the fighting in Ukraine. But he was kept off the March 2024 ballot after Russia's Supreme Court ruled that more than 9,000 signatures submitted by his campaign were invalid - enough to disqualify him. Putin faced only token opposition in the election and easily won a fifth term. (PTI)

Rubio to travel to Philippines next week for ASEAN meetings

SAGAR KULKARNI n Washington

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will travel to the Philippines next week for ASEAN meetings, where he will also hold discussions with senior government officials from Indo-Pacific countries.

In a statement, State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott on Friday said that Secretary Rubio will travel to Manila, Philippines, from July 19-23 to attend the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference, the East Asia Summit Foreign



Ministers' Meeting, and the ASEAN Regional Forum Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The secretary of state will also meet with senior gov-

ernment officials from Indo-Pacific countries, he said. His visit advances a clear US priority: a free and open Indo-Pacific that delivers safety,

security, and prosperity for the region and for the American people, Pigott said. "Secretary Rubio will use this trip to demonstrate the tangible results of the US-ASEAN partnership and to deepen the United States' comprehensive partnership with the Philippines," the spokesman said. Addressing an event here last month, US Ambassador to India Sergio Gorr announced that a meeting of the Quad foreign ministers was scheduled to take place in the Philippines.

The last Quad Foreign Ministers meeting was held in New Delhi in May. (PTI)

AI should not be solo performance but symphony of global collaboration: Xi

KJM VARMA n Beijing/Shanghai

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday said the development of AI should not be a "solo performance" by one country, but a "symphony of global collaboration".

Xi made these remarks while addressing the opening of the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference (WAIC), China's largest annual AI industry event, in Shanghai.

"With AI advancing at a staggering speed, we must ensure its development is positive, for the good and for humanity," he said. "We human beings must answer



Chinese President Xi Jinping arriving for a group photo with other attendees before the opening ceremony for the World AI Conference in Shanghai

the questions posed by our times: How to get along with thinking machines? How to ensure security when an algorithm is part of decision making? How to tackle ethical challenges by technologies through adaptive governance? How to realise AI for all when the divide keeps widening? These questions demand serious consideration and real answers from the whole international community," he said.

China wants all countries to take a people-centric approach and develop AI. "We should ensure that AI is an important driver for shared prosperity and common security. We should

join hands to build a just and equitable system for global AI governance," he said.

To further support AI development in the next five years, he said China will provide developing countries, including members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Arab League, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the African Union, Latin American and the BRICS member countries with 5,000 research projects in AI, as well as training.

Earlier, 29 countries signed an agreement in Shanghai to establish the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation (WAICO). (PTI)

Landslide in China buries homes, 1,100 evacuated

ASSOCIATED PRESS n Beijing

A landslide on Friday in the south-western Chinese city of Chongqing buried residential buildings, forced more than 1,100 people to evacuate and trapped others, state media reported.

State broadcaster CCTV said at least 10 people were rescued from the debris and that search and rescue operations were ongoing. CCTV said the landslide occurred at around 9.08 am in Chongqing's Pengshui County. Massive amounts of rocks and soil washed down slope, burying more than 10 residential buildings.

Images by CCTV showed part of a mountainside collapsing onto a residential area. Several buildings were located next to the collapse site, while rescue crews combed through the debris. Rescue efforts were hindered by the unstable terrain and the risk of another landslide, according to the broadcaster.



Rescuers conduct search and rescue operation on the site of the landslide in Pengshui County in southwestern China's Chongqing on Friday

Images shared on social media showed orange-clad rescuers using excavators to dig through the rubble. A team of rescuers pulled a victim out of the debris.

Large slabs of rock had slid beside buildings into a water-way below. Two buildings that looked about five and 15 storeys high were damaged but still stand-

ing. The rain-triggered landslide occurred near a section of the Wujiang River, which cuts through karst mountains peppered with small towns and terraces.

Authorities said they sent more than 8,000 disaster relief items to Chongqing, including tents, folding beds and family emer-gency kits.

China rejects Trump's election meddling claims as smear

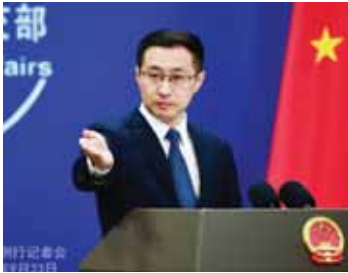
KJM VARMA n Beijing

China on Friday hit back at Donald Trump for accusing Beijing of meddling in American elections, dismissing the US President's claims as fabricated and a malicious smear and urging him to stop making baseless allegations.

China has always upheld the principle of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs and has neither any interest in nor ever interfered in US elections, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing while answering a question on Trump's allegations.

In contrast, the international community knows full well who habitually interferes in other countries' internal affairs, indiscriminately conducts long-term surveillance of Governments, businesses and ordinary citizens around the world, and steals foreign citizens' data on a massive scale, Lin said.

"We urge the US side to reflect on its own conduct, stop making baseless accusations against China, refrain from using China as an elec-



Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian

tion issue, and do more to promote China-US relations," Lin said. Asked whether Trump's allegations against China would affect Chinese President Xi Jinping's plans to visit the US in September, Lin said, "We urge the US to stop making an issue of China in its elections and do something conducive to China-US relations".

Trump visited China in May and held talks with Xi, following which the Chinese President said both sides reached important common understandings on maintaining stable economic and trade ties, expanding practical cooperation in various fields.

Russian strikes kill 4 in Ukraine as Zelenskyy's defence shake-up sparks anger

ILLIA NOVIKOV n Kyiv

Russian attacks on Ukraine overnight killed at least four civilians and wounded 20 other people, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, as he faces a political crisis after firing his popular defence minister.

Zelenskyy's major reshuffle of his Government on Thursday, which included the appointment of a new prime minister, unsettled the country's military leadership and trigged a public outcry. It was an unwelcome difficulty after Ukraine has gained traction in its fight



against Russia's more than 4-year-old invasion. The surprise departure

from the defence ministry of Mykhailo Fedorov, a youthful and popular member of the

Government, saw thousands of people demonstrate against his dismissal in cities across Ukraine on Thursday. Further street protests were expected on Friday.

Fedorov, 35, who was in the post for just six months, is widely seen as the driving force behind Ukraine's swift and successful technological innovation and other measures, such as fighting military corruption, that have brought fresh hope in the war for Ukrainians.

Relations between Fedorov and Gen Oleksandr Syrskiy, the commander of Ukraine's armed forces who

started his military career in the former Soviet Union, had broken down, according to Zelenskyy, and made Fedorov's position untenable. Zelenskyy said he had asked Maj Gen Yevhen Khmara, acting head of the state's security service and a highly regarded special operations expert, to take over the defence minister's duties.

Zelenskyy said late Thursday he would ask Parliament to formally approve Khmara's appointment as defence minister, as required by law. That step could be held up by bureaucratic hurdles, however.

Ukrainian law requires the defence minister to be a civilian, so a serving soldier or security service officer must leave active service before being formally appointed. Also, lawmakers will be on summer recess through mid-August.

Khmara has been in charge of the SBU security service since January. He had previously led the SBU's elite Alpha special forces unit and is known for being an architect of Operation Spiderweb, one of Ukraine's most spectacular attacks when it struck Russian air bases last year.

Pak, China FM's discuss AI, trade in Shanghai

SAJJAD HUSSAIN n Islamabad

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Friday held talks with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on ways to advance ties in trade, investment, digital economy and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The two leaders met on the sidelines of the World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai.

They "reviewed the broad canvas of Pakistan-China bilateral relations and reaffirmed their shared commitment to further deepening the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership," Radio Pakistan reported.

They underscored the importance of advancing CPEC 2.0 — the upgraded second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor - and enhancing collaboration in trade, investment, science and technology, the digital economy and artificial intelligence, the report said.

The two sides also exchanged views on the latest regional and global developments and reaffirmed their resolve to coordinate on issues of mutual interest, it said.

On Thursday, Dar, who is also the deputy prime Minister of Pakistan, signed an agreement in Shanghai to establish the World Artificial



Intelligence Cooperation Organisation (WAICO).

"Pakistan looks forward to working closely with fellow WAICO member States in efforts to help bridge the global AI divide and to promote equitable access to AI to advance development for all," Pakistan's Foreign Office said in a statement on X. As many as 29 countries - including China, Russia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Laos and Indonesia — have signed the agreement to establish WAICO. It is supposed to be an independent inter Governmental organisation headquartered in Shanghai, which will uphold the purposes of the UN Charter, be committed to consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit and adhere to a people-centred approach, China's State-owned Xinhua news agency reported.

Pakistan has reaffirmed its commitment to advancing international cooperation in artificial intelligence, particularly from the perspective of the Global South, its Foreign Office said.

24 terrorists killed in operations in Pakistan's KPK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Peshawar

Twenty-four terrorists were killed during a series of intelligence-based operations in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the army said on Friday.

The operations were launched in and around the restive Bannu district over the last 24 hours, the military's media wing said in a statement.

It said 24 terrorists were killed during the operations, and a cache of weapons and ammunition was recovered from them.

The slain terrorists were involved in multiple terrorist activities and the killing of civilians, the statement said.

Meanwhile, President Asif Ali Zardari lauded the security forces for the "successful operations", according to



a statement issued by his office.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also praised the security forces for the operations. According to a statement issued by the Interior Ministry, Naqvi

described the intelligence-based operations as essential for restoring peace and stability in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and termed the security personnel "our true heroes".

20 children, 1 adult killed in Uganda elementary school bus crash

ASSOCIATED PRESS n Kampala

An elementary school bus carrying pupils back from an educational tour to a scenic waterfall in Uganda veered off the road and overturned, killing at least 20 children and one adult, police said on Friday.

The bus crashed Thursday night in the Kapchorwa District in eastern Uganda while returning from a visit to the region's Sipi Falls, the Uganda Police Force said in a statement posted on X.

Survivors including three adults and several children



were taken to several hospitals, according to police, who did not immediately give an exact number of people who were injured.

At least nine children were hospitalised in critical condition, while the adult who died appeared to be the founder and head of the school, Ugandan Minister of Local Government Balaam Ateanyi said on X. Residents of the village where the crash occurred acted as first responders and helped transport injured children to hospitals while trying to save some victims, Barugahara said. The bus belonged to the King

David Junior School, an elementary school situated in the capital Kampala, police said.

The driver reportedly lost control of the bus, which veered off the road, struck a rock and overturned, according to the police statement, which added that the information was preliminary and the cause of the crash was under investigation.

A police photo showed the bus lying on its side with the entire roof ripped off and the seats exposed, including some that were mangled. Luggage and clothing lay strewn on the road. Road accidents are common

in Uganda and often are blamed on poorly maintained vehicles, speeding and poor road conditions, which are problems across Africa.

Africa has the worst road safety record in the world, with more than 300,000 annual road deaths and around 26 deaths per 100,000 people.

In Europe, which has far more road traffic, there are around 20,000 deaths yearly and nine deaths per 100,000 people, according to the World Health Organisation and the United Nations.

Europe's early heatwave linked to over 10,000 excess deaths

ASSOCIATED PRESS n London

Heat that hit Europe exceptionally early and hard this year appears to have led to a spike in deaths, with well over 10,000 more people dying at the height of the heat wave than would normally have been expected, according to figures that are still emerging across the continent.

Measures of what researchers call "excess mortality" — the difference between the normally expected number of deaths and the actual number - spiked in late June, when parts of Europe experienced record temperatures.

Experts caution that it takes a while for a full picture to emerge, and that many heat-related deaths will never formally be recorded as such. For example, a heart attack,



which can be triggered by extreme heat exposure, especially in people who are older or have underlying health issues, may be listed on a death certificate simply as a heart attack.

It's an alarming start to the summer. Several heat waves have killed thousands of people in the past few years in Europe. Still, 2003 stands as

the deadliest year in Europe for heat, with about 70,000 deaths. The frequency and intensity of heat waves are supercharged by climate change, which comes from the burning of fuels like coal, oil and gas.

The EuroMOMO mortality monitoring hub, which receives data from two dozen countries, gave an estimate of

14,260 for excess mortality from all causes in the week ending June 28, more than 12,000 of those deaths being among people age 65 and older. That's out of a total 84,583 deaths that week. Figures in the preceding and following weeks were far lower.

Lasse Vestergaard of Denmark's Statens Serum Institut, which coordinates EuroMOMO, said that "we attribute this to the heat wave affecting quite a lot of countries in Europe, and we do that because there is no other obvious explanation that could explain such a high excess mortality happening at the moment."

Such a high excess in a single week is "highly unusual," he added. EuroMOMO doesn't give absolute numbers for individ-

ual countries, but found the highest rates of excess in France, Belgium and Germany.

Nations that bore the brunt of the heat have issued their own estimates - which don't always follow the same methodology or timelines. Here is a snapshot of heat-related deaths being reported by various countries.

Germany's disease control center, the Robert Koch Institute, directly attributed 6,830 deaths to heat this year through early July, 6,470 of them among people 65 and older. Temperatures in Germany late last month hit their highest levels since records began, peaking with a measurement of 41.7 degrees Celsius (107.06 Fahrenheit) on June 28, according to the German Weather Service.

Oli slams PM Balendra Shah over fascist drift



SHIRISH B PRADHAN n Kathmandu

Nepal's former premier KP Sharma Oli on Friday criticised Prime Minister Balendra Shah for trying to suppress youth-led protests while accusing his Government of heading towards "Fascism."

Hundreds of Nepalese youth staged a demonstration in Kathmandu last week protesting the Government's move to evict landless squatters without providing an alternative resettlement arrangement.

"The Government doesn't even tolerate if some youths stage a protest on the street," Oli said at the launch of the new edition of the CPN-UML's website and apps at the party's central office at Chyasal in Lalitpur district."A

youth activist was badly beaten by the police and then put under detention just because he went to see the conditions of the evicted squatters in one of the holding centres in Kathmandu," Oli pointed out.

He was talking about an incident of police baton charging youth who tried to visit a Government holding centre in Kathmandu's Kirtipur, where around 150 squatters were living.

The centre was hit by floods and its inhabitants had to be evacuated with the help of security personnel. Later, police arrested 26 people who staged a sit-in at the main gate of Morang District Police office in the Koshi province on Sunday as they protested the mistreatment of the Gen Z activists by the police.

Sri Lanka's former police chief allegedly commits suicide



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Colombo

Sri Lanka's former police chief, who served between 2020 and 2023, has allegedly committed suicide on Friday, according to police.

Chandana Wickremaratna, the former inspector general of police, has committed suicide by shooting himself, police spokesman FT Wootler said here on Friday.

Wickremaratna used a personal weapon to kill

himself around 7.30 this morning at Athurugiriya, an eastern suburb of the capital Colombo, he said.

Wickremaratna, 63, was police chief between 2020 and 2023. From 2019, he had acted as the acting police chief. The reasons for his suicide have not been made public yet. He was declared dead when brought to the hospital. Two police teams have been deployed to carry out investigations, Wootler said.

Gangster Nitish held in Vermont: FBI

SAGAR KULKARNI n Washington

The FBI has arrested gangster Nitish Kaushal, allegedly involved in murder, kidnapping and drug trafficking in the US, days after adding him to its list of most wanted criminals. "Nitish Kaushal has been arrested in Vermont," the FBI said in a post on X.

Kaushal, an Indian national, allegedly carried out acts of violence on behalf of the Bhagwanpuria organised crime group, including, but not limited to, kidnappings and assaults, the FBI said.

The FBI had added Kaushal to its most wanted list. The FBI was on the lookout for Kaushal for his alleged involvement with a transnational criminal organisation engaged in, among other things, acts involving murder, kidnapping, drug trafficking, extortion, weapons trafficking, money laundering, and human smuggling.

It said the Jaggu Bhagwanpuria Organised Crime Group originated in the Punjab state of India and operated in the Central District of California and elsewhere.

The US District Court of the Central District



of California, Los Angeles, issued a federal arrest warrant for Kaushal on June 25 after charging him with racketeer influenced and corrupt organisations conspiracy. The FBI action followed Operation Hard Ball, a coordinated international enforcement action targeting the Bhagwanpuria gang.

The operation involved raids and law enforcement action across the US, Canada, and Europe, highlighting the growing international focus on dismantling transnational criminal syndicates with roots in India.

PROSPECT



Lt General Neeraj Shukla, GOC, 4 Corps, Indian Army, called upon CM Himanta Biswa Sarma at Lok Sewa Bhawan, Dispur

REC Limited signs MoA to establish 20 smart classrooms in West Bengal Govt schools



REC Limited, a Maharatna CPSE under the Ministry of Power and a leading NBFC, has signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with Career Forum for the implementation of a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) project titled "Establishment of 20 Smart Classrooms in Government Schools of Alipurduar, West Bengal."

The MoA was signed on July 14, 2026, by Arun Kumar Tyagi, Executive Director (CSR), REC Limited, and Anant Chauhan, Chairman, Career Forum, in the presence of LB Nautiyal, HoD (CSR), REC Limited, along with other senior officials of REC Limited.

Under this CSR initiative, 20 smart classrooms will be established in Government schools across the Alipurduar district of West Bengal. The project is expected to benefit more than 1,500 students by providing access to technology-enabled, interactive learning tools that foster greater classroom engagement and improve learning outcomes. The initiative is aimed at strengthening digital education infrastructure in rural and tribal areas of West Bengal by integrating modern teaching technologies into government schools. It reflects REC Limited's continued commitment to bridging the digital divide, promoting inclusive education, and empowering students with access to quality, technology-driven learning opportunities.

GAIL, KABIL sign pact for critical minerals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

GAIL (India) Limited signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) on Friday to collaborate in the field of critical and strategic minerals, supporting India's long-term resource security.

The MoU has been signed by Sanjeev Kumar, Executive Director (R&D & E&P), GAIL, and Sunil Kumar Singh, Chief Executive Officer, KABIL, in the presence of RK Singhal, Director (Business Development), GAIL, and other senior officials from both organisations.

The partnership provides a framework for cooperation in identifying and evaluating opportunities in critical and strategic minerals, facilitating the exchange of technical expertise, capacity building, and exploring joint initiatives across the mining value chain to help strengthen India's long-term supply of



these vital resources and clean energy transition.

About GAIL (India) Limited GAIL (India) Limited, India's integrated energy major, is a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. GAIL has a diversified presence across the entire natural gas value chain, including natural gas transmission and marketing, LNG sourcing and regasification, LPG transmission, petrochemicals, city gas distribution, renewable energy, and upstream exploration & production.

About Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL) is a joint venture of three Central Public Sector Enterprises-National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO), Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL), and Mineral Exploration & Consultancy Limited (MECL).

KABIL was established to identify, acquire, develop, and secure overseas critical and strategic mineral assets to support India's long-term economic growth, industrial development, and energy transition.

APL: Dibrugarh Warriors announces singer Neel Akash as brand ambassador

TONY DAS
n Guwahati

The Dibrugarh Warriors franchise of the Assam Premier League (APL) has officially announced Assam's singing sensation Neel Akash as its brand ambassador.

Alongside this premier signing, the franchise launched its high-energy official anthem song. Designed to capture the resilient spirit of Upper Assam, this powerful anthem is set to rally fans and electrify stadiums across the state. On the occasion, the franchisees also felicitated their official advisor Bhaskar Papukon Gogoi, who is the current vice president of the Dibrugarh District Sports Association.

To lead their debut campaign, the Dibrugarh Warriors introduced their powerhouse coaching and support staff. The team will be spearheaded by head coach and former cricketer of Assam Dhiraj Goswami,



supported by assistant coach Nilesh Sharma. Former first-class cricketer Sujay Tarafdar is the bowling coach, while Bhargav Sarma takes charge of strength and conditioning coaching, among others.

"We are incredibly thrilled to finally step into the Assam Premier League arena, an initiative we believe will completely revolutionise the regional sporting landscape," stated the franchise management.

"The APL is the perfect launchpad to uncover raw,

Military veterans empowered through entrepreneurship workshop

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Guwahati

Military veterans explored new pathways to self-employment and business success during an entrepreneurship workshop organised by NER Chapter PHDCCI.

The workshop aimed to equip veterans with the knowledge, skills and confidence to transition from military service to entrepreneurship. Sessions covered business planning, financial management, access to government schemes, marketing strategies, digital business opportunities and startup funding. Participants also interacted with successful entrepreneurs and industry experts, who shared practical insights and experiences.

Addressing the participants, AVM Sanjib Bordoloi, AVSM (Retd), emphasised that the leadership, discipline, resilience and problem-solving abilities developed during military service provide veterans with a strong foundation



for entrepreneurial success. The speaker encouraged participants to leverage these strengths to create sustainable enterprises and contribute to local economic development.

Representatives from NER Chapter PHDCCI, Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), MSME Development & Facilitation Office, Guwahati, and The National Small Industries Corporation Ltd (NSIC) highlighted the various support mechanisms available to ex-servicemen, including training, mentoring, financial assistance and networking opportunities to help establish and grow their businesses. The workshop witnessed enthusiastic participation from more than 100 military veterans, who engaged actively in interactive sessions, discussions and networking opportunities. Participants appreciated the practical guidance provided and expressed confidence in applying the knowledge gained to pursue entrepreneurial ventures.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks, reaffirming the organiser's commitment to supporting military veterans in achieving economic self-reliance through entrepreneurship.

VIT-AP University hosts IC4AI-2026

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE n Amaravati

VIT-AP University successfully inaugurated the 1st International Conference on Advances in Architectures, Algorithms & Applications for Artificial Intelligence (IC4AI-2026) at its Amaravati campus. The conference brought together renowned academicians, researchers, industry experts, and students from across the globe to deliberate on the latest developments in artificial intelligence and its multidisciplinary applications.

The inaugural ceremony commenced with a warm welcome address by Prof S Sudhakar Ilango, convener of IC4AI-2026 and dean, School of Computer Science and Engineering (SCOPE), VIT-AP University. In his address, he welcomed the distinguished guests, delegates, researchers, faculty members, and students, highlighting the importance of collaborative research and innovation in shaping the future of AI.

The event was graced by Prof Bidyadhar Subudhi, Director, NIT Warangal, as the guest of honour. He emphasised the growing significance of artificial intelligence in addressing real-world challenges and encouraged young researchers to focus on impactful, interdisciplinary research that contributes to society.

Another guest of honour, Rajiv Sharma, founder and CEO of AgVysor Innovations LLP, shared valuable insights on the role of AI in transforming agriculture and industry. He highlighted how emerging technologies can bridge the gap between academic research



and industrial applications, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.

Addressing the gathering, Prof P Arulmozhiarman, Vice Chancellor of VIT-AP University, reiterated the university's commitment to excellence in research, innovation, and global collaboration. He appreciated the efforts of the organising committee in bringing together eminent researchers and industry leaders on a common platform to discuss emerging AI technologies.

The Chief Guest, Dr Rajkumar ER, Enterprise Tech Architect, Vice President/Senior Manager — Industry X, Supply Chain Engineering, Accenture, Bengaluru, delivered an inspiring keynote emphasising the transformative role of artificial intelligence in digital enterprises, intelligent manufacturing, and next-generation supply chain engineering.

He encouraged participants to develop AI solutions that are ethical, scalable, and socially responsible.

DAILY SUDOKU

9 6 7 8

6 7

2 8 4 6 3

7 1 4 9 8 7

4 2 5 9 7

8 2

1 7 4 6

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 (17.7.26)

1 7 8 2 5 6 4 9 3

9 3 5 4 7 1 2 8 6

2 6 4 3 8 9 1 7 5

4 8 3 9 2 5 6 1 7

6 9 7 8 1 4 3 5 2

5 1 2 7 6 3 9 4 8

7 4 6 1 3 8 5 2 9

3 2 9 5 4 7 8 6 1

8 5 1 6 9 2 7 3 4

DOUBLE CROSSWORD

SATURDAY | JULY 18, 2026

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38

ACROSS

3 Raise one amid many (5)

8 Rose and dressed (3,2)

10 Should be a bit of a rough time (5)

11 He may well be suspended (3)

12 One heartens a poet to become an inventor (5)

13 Move coal out of a mine to somewhere important (7)

15 Terry may describe it (5)

18 Retiring to copy a piece of poetry out (3)

19 This villain is angry, on the quiet! (6)

21 Immediately present, but without a place (7)

DOWN

1 Not yet having taken a knock (2,3)

2 If you polish up a dud coin, it's the point of no return! (7)

4 Where to egg on the Surrey team (4)

5 The kind, that is, for outgoing soldiers (6)

6 Historic tour roaming around the capital of Denmark (5)

7 These may be used to make paper (5)

9 To finish up best (3)

12 You've had it, man! (7)

14 Pull a shirt tail with a loud cry (3)

16 Woolly headed friend, nominally? (5)

17 At extremities, money one doesn't borrow! (5)

19 Leaps and capers wildly around a pole

22 Do evening work at the laundry (4)

23 Make steady progress with an old composition for piano (4)

24 Properly suited to audio use? (7)

26 Boxed up and carted around (6)

29 A sound line from the prompter (3)

31 Hellish exclamation by little Desmond (5)

32 Carries around for sale (on a bike?) (7)

34 Capital place to get plastered? (5)

35 Augustinian's familiar name (3)

36 Figures out points of material significance (5)

37 Some doctors consume it (5)

38 The look of an old Indian Army man? (5)

(7)

20 The dog breeder's complaint? (5)

21 Person of no fixed address (5)

23 Left with uncle, as promised (7)

24 For me, wild seas can have magic significance (6)

25 It's no good turning up another time (3)

27 Can you win them if you have the right cards? (5)

28 Warm as the water when the tide changes around Peterhead

30 With which to start brushing some scattered leaves? (5)

32 Sort of gin with which to fix a cocktail! (4)

33 Courtly lord (3)

Plantation drive conducted in Ecotech-3 industrial sector

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Greater Noida

As part of the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign, a roadside plantation drive was conducted on Friday in the Ecotech-3 industrial sector by the Greater Noida Authority and the Industrial Business Association.

Greater Noida Authority ACEO Saumya Srivastava planted saplings alongside his wife, Surbhi Srivastava. Along with them, ACEO Srilakshmi VS, ACEO Sumit Yadav, OSD Archana Dwivedi, DGM (Horticulture) SK Jain, and Senior Manager Ajit Bhai

Patel also planted saplings. Saplings of Peepal, Neem, and Amaltas were planted.

ACEO Saumya Srivastava appealed to all residents of Greater Noida to participate in this massive plantation drive and to plant and nurture at least one sapling. Present on the occasion were Manager Prashant Samadhiya and Assistant Manager Gaurav Baghel, along with Industrial Business Association President Amit Upadhyay, Vice President Dr Khushbu Singh, Sunil Dutt, Rakesh Agarwal, Naresh Chauhan, SK Sharma, Sudhir Tyagi, and other office-bearers of the association.

Early financial planning gives children freedom to choose their future: SBI Life

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

Every child dreams of building a successful future, whether through higher education, entrepreneurship or pursuing a passion.

According to Rajiv Shrivastava, Zonal Director – West, SBI Life Insurance, parents can help turn these aspirations into reality by starting financial planning early.

He said that many key milestones in a child's life, such as higher education and career choices, require long-term financial preparation. Starting early allows parents to gradually build a meaningful corpus through disciplined savings, manage future financial commitments more comfortably and prepare for important life goals with greater confidence.

Shrivastava added that a child insurance plan can support long-term goal-based financial planning by

combining savings with financial protection. Depending on the plan, parents may benefit from guaranteed maturity benefits, waiver of premium in case of unforeseen events, continuation of the policy and flexible payout options aligned with future financial needs.

He advised parents to assess the milestones they want to prepare for, the time available to achieve them and the financial corpus required to support their child's aspirations.

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BRIEFLY

Argentine President won't attend World Cup final



Argentine President Javier Milei said on Thursday he won't be attending the World Cup final because of superstition, instead choosing to view Sunday's match between Spain and Argentina from home – where he has watched the defending champion's previous seven games, all victories, in the tournament.

In a bid to help his nation's beloved soccer team secure its second consecutive title, Milei added, he'll be wearing the same heavy jacket, too. Fans and players around the world cling to superstitions they believe can bring good luck to their team – or misfortune to their opponents. But in Latin America, and particularly in Argentina, so-called “cabalas,” or ritualistic beliefs and habits, carry unusual weight, reflecting the intensity with which many here watch their national team. (AP)

Merlier wins crash-marred 12th stage of Tour de France



Belgian rider Tim Merlier earned another stage win at the Tour de France while several riders fell as they sprinted to the line on Thursday. Defending champion Tadej Pogacar avoided the crash and kept his significant overall lead over second-place Jonas Vingegaard after 12 stages.

It was Merlier's third stage win on this year's Tour and sixth of his career. Dutch rider Olav Kooij finished second and Jasper Philipsen of Belgium was third.

With riders fighting for position on the home straight, Colombian Fernando Gaviria went down after clipping the wheel of another cyclist and fell to his left, bringing Norwegian rider Soeren Waerenskjold – Wednesday's stage winner – down with him. (AP)

Pele's jersey from 1958 WC final fetches \$4.9M at auction



A Number 10 jersey worn by Brazil icon Pele in the 1958 World Cup final has been sold for \$4.9 million, Sotheby's said on Thursday.

Pele, who died in 2022, was 17 when he scored twice in Brazil's 5-2 win over hosts Sweden at the Rasunda Stadium and still remains the youngest player ever to score in a World Cup final.

Sotheby's said the jersey worn by the Brazilian star is the second-most valuable soccer shirt ever sold. Diego Maradona's "Hand of God" jersey sold in 2022 for \$9.3 million.

The previous most valuable item of Pele memorabilia was \$976,000 for a 1958 trading card last month, the auction house said. (AP)

English media, ex-players criticise Tuchel after team's WC letdown



JAMES ROBSONAP n Atlanta

England hired a German coach to end 60 years of hurt but will exit the World Cup in the most English of ways. Another defeat in the semi-finals. Another defeat from a winning position. The English media was predictably critical of coach Thomas Tuchel after Wednesday's 2-1 loss to Argentina. "Same old story" read one headline. Another declared that "Tuchel just shrank."

Tuchel, a title-winning coach with Borussia Dortmund, Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Bayern Munich, was hired to put a second star on England's jersey and end the decades-long wait for a first trophy since the World Cup in 1966. The wait goes on.

Former England captain Gary Lineker raised the question about Tuchel's future, saying he was "brought in specifically to take us over line." (AP)

Messi has a message for WC critics of Argentina: Nothing was handed to us



DEBORA REY/LUIS ANDRES HENAO n Atlanta (US)

Lionel Messi has a message for Argentina's detractors: "Nothing was handed to us."

The Argentina superstar responded to critics who have been bashing the reigning World Cup champions over perceptions of beneficial officiating and favoritism by the soccer establishment. He said the team's ability to overturn late-game deficits, most recently the semi-final victory over England, is the result of championship pedigree and nothing more.

After trailing 1-0 going into the 85th minute, Argentina rallied for a 2-1 win over England on Wednesday to reach the World Cup final. The victory led tens of thousands to flood the streets of Buenos Aires in ecstatic celebrations, and marked another remarkable comeback that showed the perseverance of a team that is now one win from a back-to-back titles. Argentina faces Spain in Sunday's final.

Argentina earlier survived by beating Cape Verde and Switzerland in extra time, and rallied for an improbable 3-2 victory over Egypt after coming back from being



down 2-0 with 11 minutes of regulation time to play. But both the Swiss and Egyptian coaches criticised the refereeing. Egypt's Hossam Hassan went as far as to say that his team was the victim of a

soccer establishment that favored Messi and Argentina.

The comments fueled criticism sparked by fans who argue that the FIFA bracket favored La Albiceleste, and unfounded allegations on social media claiming that the soccer governing body wants Argentina to once again become World Cup champion.

"We've been the best over these past four years, either you like it or not, and no matter what anyone says," Messi said after the win over England. "Once again, we've established ourselves among the top two teams in the world. That proves that everything we've done is no fluke and that nothing was handed to us." (AP)

Aurele Amenda joins Coventry for club's Premier League return



ASSOCIATED PRESS n Coventry (England)

Switzerland defender Aurele Amenda came home from the World Cup to sign for newly promoted Premier League club Coventry. Coventry said the 22-year-old Amenda signed a four-year contract without stating the transfer fee paid to Eintracht Frankfurt, which was reportedly 18 million euros (\$20.6 million).

Amenda has played seven times for Switzerland though did not get called from the bench during the team's impressive run to the World Cup quarter-finals. Switzerland lost to Argentina 3-1 after extra time.

Amenda helped Young Boys win Swiss league titles in 2023 and '24 before moving to Frankfurt, where he played in five Champions League games last season.

NZ beats West Indies by 6 wickets in 3rd ODI to take 2-1 series lead

ASSOCIATED PRESS n Providence (Guyana)

West Indies collapsed from 67-1 to be all out for 140, handing New Zealand a six-wicket win in the third one-day cricket international Thursday and a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

The collapse mirrored that of the second match in which the West Indies fell from 63-0 to 138 all out as New Zealand won by five wickets, leveling the series after losing the first match by seven wickets.

New Zealand's run chase was cautiously paced at 3.5 runs per over and ended in the 40th over at 141-4, with 63 balls remaining. Henry Nicholls made 24 and Will Young 23 in a solid partnership for the first wicket, Daryl Mitchell made 28 in the middle of the innings and Tom Latham and Dean Foxcroft saw New Zealand home in an unbroken partnership of 52 for the fifth wicket.

Latham again was reliable, making 31 from 53 balls while Foxcroft made 22 from 28.

Left-arm wrist spinner Vitel Lawes put some pressure on the Kiwis with three early wickets but the target was too small to



maintain that pressure. West Indies lost eight wickets in just over 20 overs in the face of excellent spin bowling from left-armer Jayden Lennox who took 4-52 to go with his 5-19 in the second match of the series. Mitchell Santner took 2-15 from 8.1 overs and Michael Bracewell 2-33 on another turning pitch at Providence Stadium.

Lennox has been player of the match in the last two internationals. All of his nine wickets have been bowled or lbw.

"There's obviously not secret to

it, it's keep the stumps in play," Lennox said in a post-match television interview. "You have to let the pitch do what it does. We can't control that but if we put the ball in the right area we're obviously going to get some rewards."

West Indies opener Campbell injured:

Things began to go awry for West Indies when opener John Campbell was carried from the field on a stretcher in the sixth over after tearing a hamstring while running between wickets.

West Indies was 25-0 at that point and 38-1 when Campbell's opening partner Ackeeem Auguste was brilliantly caught by Santner off the bowling of Jacob Duffy to provide a rare wicket for the seamers.

Spain practices outside as smoke fills air in northern New Jersey

STEPHEN WHYNO/SETH BORENSTEIN n New Jersey (US)

With the sun obstructed by haze, Spain's players practiced Thursday ahead of the World Cup final outside in northern New Jersey while air conditions are hazardous because of smoke from Canadian wildfires.

It was not clear how fast-paced a practice Spain held. Media members are only able to observe the first 15 minutes of what was scheduled to be a hourlong session in East Hanover beginning at 11 a.m. EDT.

Argentina remained in the Atlanta area to work out less than 24 hours after rallying to beat England and reach the final for a second consecutive tournament. Marietta, Georgia, is far enough south to avoid the effects of the fire, which are being windblown to the southeast from northern Ontario, triggering warnings from the US Midwest through the Northeast.

Officials urged people to stay inside or wear masks outside as air quality reached unhealthy to hazardous levels, meaning it's unhealthy for anyone, regardless of health conditions. Experts expressed concern over holding practice outdoors.



"These are high-level athletes who are moving a lot of air through their lungs during every practice in every game, and really they shouldn't be practicing outside if the air quality levels are at hazardous sort of ranges for wildfire-related air pollution," said Dr. Courtney Howard, an emergency room physician and Global Climate and Health Alliance official.

"That's time to schedule a practice inside. You could put an N95 mask on them, but trying to make sure that everybody's mask is well-fitted, I suspect that's not the best choice. I would go find an air-conditioned indoor facility that's a clean-air shelter." (AP)

Shubman Gill rues middle-order collapse after defeat

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Cardiff

India captain Shubman Gill blamed his side's middle-order collapse after England chased down a modest 234 with four wickets in hand in the second ODI here on Thursday to level the three-match series 1-1.

Joe Root anchored the chase with a patient 99 not out as England chased down the target in 44.1 overs.

Gill admitted India were well short of the total they had targeted at the halfway stage of the innings.

From 178 for 3 at one stage,



India slumped to 193 for 7 in a space of 26 deliveries and never recovered.

"We thought 300-

310 would be a good total after 25 overs when we were in a good position, but we lost too many wickets in the middle overs," Gill said.

The skipper expected greater

Messi can match Maradona if Argentina win 2026 WC: Bhutia

PHILEM DIPAK SINGH n New Delhi

Former India captain Bhaichung Bhutia rates Diego Maradona above Lionel Messi in their World Cup performances but said the current Argentine skipper would reach the status of the 1986 Cup-winning hero if the South American country wins the 2026 edition title on Sunday.

Argentina face Spain in the 2026 World Cup final in New York on Sunday. Messi also led Argentina to title in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

Maradona led the 1986 Argentina side to victory and was also the captain of the team that lost to Germany in the final in 1990.

For Bhutia, Maradona's exploits



of single-handedly winning the 1986 World Cup for Argentina would put him above Messi. But he said a second World Cup trophy for Messi on Sunday will take him on equal standing with Maradona.

"It's difficult to compare. But for me, it's Maradona because he



single-handedly won the 1986 World Cup which I don't think any player in history has done that. I watched him in 1986 World Cup and other matches as well," Bhutia told PTI in an interview,

when asked to rate Maradona and Messi in the World Cups.

"I think Messi is almost near. If he can win this World Cup, I think he will obviously reach the status of Maradona. He (Messi) has already won one World Cup but to overtake Maradona I think he needs one more World Cup to win," said the former India striker.

"Messi is a great player but he's got a great team around him who really works for him. For Maradona he had to work for everybody and also create those goal-scoring opportunities (for himself)," (PTI)

Max Verstappen leaves his F1 future open

JAMES ELLINGWORTHAP n Brussels

Max Verstappen has left his future in Formula 1 open again ahead of the Belgian Grand Prix and praised his "really good" relationship with Red Bull team principal Laurent Mekies.

Verstappen has yet to commit to staying with Red Bull for next year after he was linked to McLaren and suggested he'd consider leaving F1.

"I don't want to go here, say yes, and no, and this and that about my future. I said already many times that if there was something new I would say it myself," the four-time world champion said on Thursday.

Open and transparent' with Mekies: Mekies is marking a year in charge of the team after replacing long-time boss Christian Horner midway through 2025, and Verstappen had warm words for him.

"It's been really good. I get on very well with Laurent. We speak a lot on track, but also off track," he said. "I think the relationship that he has also within the team is great."

"Everything for me feels very positive and I think it's always nice when you can discuss a lot of things with your team boss. So from that sense, yeah, very happy. It's all very open and trans-



parent." After faults with the rotating rear wing pitched Verstappen into the barriers at high speed two weeks running in Austria and Britain, Red Bull is reverting back to an old wing design for Belgium this week.

"It's quite obvious, no, why? So we'll go back on the old one and then see whenever the latest or new one is ready again to be used for us," Verstappen said.

He crashed out of the British Grand Prix and delivered an expletive-laden rant at the car over the radio before branding it "dangerous" to drive.

A history of uncertainty: It's the third year running that Verstappen has kept his future open, only to recommit to Red Bull halfway through the season. Last year, he didn't pledge to stay with the team until the Hungarian Grand Prix on July 31. (AP)

AIFF invites retired players for SOM roster under new sports law

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
n New Delhi

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Friday invited applications from retired players for inclusion in its Sportspersons of Outstanding Merit (SOM) roster, a key requirement under the National Sports Governance Act which the AIFF adopted at its Special General Body Meeting in May.

The federation said it will prepare separate rosters comprising 20 male and 20 female Sportspersons of Outstanding Merit, who meet the eligibility criteria prescribed under the new legal framework. A minimum of four SOMs with voting rights (two male, two female) are required to be inducted into the General Body.

According to the AIFF notice, applicants must be Indian citizens, at least 25 years of age, of sound mind, and must have retired from active competi-



tion, having not participated in any event leading to district, state or national selection for at least one year before submitting the application.

Applicants must also satisfy at least one of the tier-based eligibility criteria. The highest tier is for applicants who have been Olympic or Paralympic medal-

lists. Tier 2 is for participants in at least two separate Olympic or Paralympic Games. Tier 3 covers participants in at least one Olympic or Paralympic Games. Tiers 4 to 9 comprises those who have been medal-winners at the World Championships, Asian Games, and Commonwealth Games.

Tier 10 covers domestic champions who have won at least one gold, silver, or bronze medal in the National Games, or the National Championship. If the number of eligible candidates within a particular tier exceeds the available vacancies, seniority by age will be the deciding factor.

India pick proven performers for Women's Hockey World Cup



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
n New Delhi

There were no surprises on offer in the Indian women's hockey squad announced for next month's World Cup in Belgium and the Netherlands with the selectors naming the same 20-strong group that has been picked for the Asian Games in September-October.

The 20-member squad, announced on Friday, will be led by Salima Tete and chief coach Sjoerd Marijne has described it as a well-balanced group. The World Cup is scheduled to be held from August 15 to 30. The squad, which is currently training at the national camp in Bengaluru, features a mix of experienced campaigners and promising young players.

They were impressive during recent international assignments, most notably at the FIH Nations Cup in New Zealand last month, where the team lifted the trophy in an unbeaten campaign that promoted it back to the

elite FIH Pro League. Savita and Bichu Devi Kharibam are the two goalkeepers. The defensive unit comprises Ishika Chaudhary, Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Lalthantluangi, Jyoti and Shilpi Dabas.

Captain Salima, Nikki Pradhan, Sakshi Rana, Sunelita Toppo, Neha and Deepika Soreng will anchor the midfield. The forward line features Lalremsiami, Rutuja Dadaso Pisal, Navneet Kaur, Deepika, Ishika, Baljeet Kaur and Beauty Dungdung.

"We have chosen a well-balanced group of players who are ready for the big challenges we will face this summer. The team has worked hard in the lead-up to the tournament and we are confident in this group's abilities," Marijne said in a press release issued by Hockey India.

Dan Brown lights up British Open



STEVE DOUGLASAP
n Southport (England)

Dan Brown is lighting it up again at the British Open. One of the few smokers in golf, Brown went through "seven or eight" cigarettes during his 4-under 66 that left him tied for second place, one shot off the lead, after the first round at Royal Birkdale on Thursday.

After weeks of sunshine in this northwest corner of England, the fairways here are baked and parched - making them a potential fire hazard from discarded cigarettes.

"I've been making sure that they're out," the 31-year-old Englishman said reassuringly.

Not that he sounds too proud of a habit that makes him stand out on the circuit, but which he feels is needed to relieve some stress.

"Sorry, Mum," he said with a cheeky smile.

The burly and bearded Brown is an interesting character, not least because of the 10 tattoos on his body — three of which are of little birds — and his YouTube channel called "BeersForeBogeys" which has around 4,000 subscribers.

Brown first came into widespread consciousness in golf in 2024 when, as the world No. 272, he shot a 6-under 65 for the outright first-round lead in his British Open debut at Royal Troon. (AP)

Putting woes hurt Rory McIlroy at British Open



STEVE DOUGLASAP
n Southport (England)

There were no "I'm so bad at golf" exclamations from Rory McIlroy this time. The puzzled looks, shakes of the head and sagging shoulders said it all.

McIlroy was just 10 holes into his bid to win the British Open for the first time since 2014 and he was veering dangerously close to playing himself out of title contention. Missing one putt from four feet wasn't necessarily unusual. But doing it three times? In the space of four holes? That trio of bewildering close-range mishaps — on Numbers 7, 8 and 10 — came either side of McIlroy driving the green to make birdie on the 415-yard Number 9. Go figure.

And it pretty much summed up the world Number 2's wild late-afternoon ride in a 2-over 72 that included six bogeys and left him seven shots off the first-round lead, held surprisingly by 115th-ranked Jackson Suber on Thursday.

"Just too many stupid mistakes," McIlroy said — and he was specifically referring to his putting on greens he described as "very inconsistent"

"I missed a couple early on that looked like they were going to break

one way and they actually went another way, and then when you get the next one, you're over it and it's just very hard to trust that the ball is going to do what you think it's going to do. Then you maybe don't make quite as committed of a stroke."

McIlroy arrived at the Open after a seventh-place finish at the Scottish Open, where he went viral by shouting "I'm so bad at golf" following a poor approach shot late in his final round. The sixth player — and only European — to complete the career Grand Slam rarely hides his emotions and he cut a frustrated figure for most of his round Thursday, not least when he chipped through the green and into a bunker at the par-5 Number 17.

McIlroy managed to splash out to 8 feet while having one knee on the ground but a weakly struck par putt led to another dropped shot.

"It's just hard to judge the speed sometimes," he said. Making birdie at the tough last hole after a brilliant approach to 5 feet sparked shouts of "Rory, Rory" from spectators in the grandstands and at least gave him something to cling to. (AP)



If Lord's is Rohit's last, I hope he plays a knock to remember: Parthiv

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
n New Delhi

Amid speculation that the series-deciding third and final ODI against England would be Rohit Sharma's last international game, former India player Parthiv Patel has said that he expects the ex-captain to roar back to form with a defining hundred that would silence critics.

Rohit, it is learnt, has been told by the national selectors that he is not in the scheme of things for the 2027 World Cup in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. This has given rise to the possibility of Rohit either announcing retirement or being dropped for good after Sunday's game. He has already retired from Tests and

T20 Internationals. "If the Lord's ODI is indeed the last match of his career, Rohit Sharma would want to sign off with a century. He is more than capable of doing that. We've seen it throughout his career - after two or three low scores, he often bounces back with a match-winning knock in the very next innings," Patel told 'JioStar'.

"The difference between Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma has always been consistency. Rohit may not score heavily in every game, but when he does, he plays a substantial innings and often ends up winning the Player of the Match award. He didn't look comfortable in this game," he added referring to the last second ODI in which Rohit scored a 47-ball 26.

Patel acknowledged that Rohit was troubled by the variable bounce in Cardiff and never found his rhythm. Former India captain Anil Kumble, while steering clear of the speculation surrounding the senior batter, spoke about how similar his approach is to England star Joe Root and Virat Kohli.

'Kohli, Gambhir talk 10 times in a day'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
n Cardiff

India batting coach Sitanshu Kotak has denied a breakdown in communication between head coach Gautam Gambhir and star batter Virat Kohli, insisting that the two talk to each other "10 times a day" even though they appear distant during training sessions.

There is speculation that Gambhir and Kohli have not been on talking terms for quite some time and it has been suggested to the BCCI that a mediator can be used to make the duo sit across the table and sort out their differences.

Even during training sessions in Birmingham and Cardiff, the two weren't seen interacting. Kohli was seen talking to Kotak after a net session.

When asked if he is the "bridge" between Kohli and Gambhir, the former Saurashtra left-hander laughed.

"Virat Kohli and Gautam



Gambhir speak to each other at least 10 times a day. I don't think he (Kohli) needs a bridge to communicate with head coach," Kotak claimed, contrary to what is being spoken about in the corridors of power of Indian cricket. "You asked about communication, I don't know from where you hear these things but these are rumours," he further asserted.

Kotak reiterated his predecessor Abhishek Nayar's recent remark that unless the legend himself looks for advice on his batting, one should give him none.

"When Virat goes out to bat, what I have felt as a batting coach is that if he doesn't ask for inputs or there is something major that warrants attention, there is no point in disturbing him. You shouldn't give him unsolicited advice," he said.

Kotak reiterated his predecessor Abhishek Nayar's recent remark that unless the legend himself looks for advice on his batting, one should give him none.

Japan Open: Sindhu enters into her first Super 750 semifinal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
n Tokyo

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu sailed into her first Super 750 semifinal in nearly three years after former world champion Nozomi Okuhara withdrew ahead of their women's singles quarterfinal match at the Japan Open here on Friday.

The 31-year-old Indian, the 2019 world champion, will feature in the last four of a Super 750 event for the first



time since the Denmark Open in 2023. It is also her third semifinal appearance of the season, following impressive runs at the Malaysia Open Super 1000 and the Australian Open Super 500.

Ironically, Okuhara had herself benefited from a withdrawal in the pre-quarterfinals, progressing after South Korea's An Se-young pulled out with a left foot injury.

Sindhu's reward is a semifi-

nal clash against Tokyo Olympic champion Chen Yufei, who brushed aside South Korea's Sim Yu Jin 21-10, 21-12 to secure her place in the last four at the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium.

The fourth-seeded Chinese holds an 8-6 head-to-head advantage over world No. 12 Sindhu and has won each of their last four meetings, including a straight-games victory at this year's Indonesia Masters.

Root digs in as England level series with four-wicket victory over India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
n Cardiff

A steadfast Joe Root anchored England's series-leveling four-wicket win over India in the second ODI here after the visitors' batting once again seemed vulnerable with senior player Rohit Sharma's struggles triggering fresh speculation around his future.

Root delivered an unbeaten 99 off 133 balls to steer England home and keep them alive in the three-match series that will conclude at the Lord's on Sunday. That game could well be Rohit's final in India colours after he struggled to a 47-ball 26, adding to the pressure on him.

He looked out of touch as India were dismissed for 233 in 44 overs on Thursday. Virat Kohli (65) and Shreyas Iyer (66) ensured that the bowlers had something to fight with after other batters disappointed. In reply, Root's was a model innings that showed how to control a chase on a track that offered sharp bounce, making the Indian pace trioika menacing during the early part of the run chase. His 72-run stand for sixth wicket with Will Jacks (30) sealed the game after England had their own struggled after being reduced to 125 for five. The chase was completed in 44.1 overs. Root used the big square dimensions of the field to keep the scoreboard ticking. Since the target was a small one, England were never under scoreboard pressure which allowed Root to score runs at a slow pace.

He came tantalisingly close to a hundred but Gus Atkinson hit the winning boundary to deny him.

Earlier, Rohit once again found himself under intense scrutiny with every dot ball adding to the pressure. Opposition teams have decoded the flaws in his technique and left-arm seamers, who create awkward angles, are quickly introduced to pose problems for the former India skipper. Save a six off Atkinson, not one stroke from Rohit inspired any confidence. After six deliveries from Sam Curran went without a single, he was also unable to negotiate Adil Rashid. His misery was ended by Will Jacks when his nothing short of a lap sweep turned into a top edge dolly for Jos Buttler. While Kohli's confident innings reminded all and sundry of his salad days, Rohit's form only indicated that he is nearer to the end than ever before. Kohli's 66-ball-knock had eight delectable hits to the fence but none more aesthetically pleasing than the bowler's back-drive off Jofra Archer. However, it was painful to see one of India's greatest ODI



stalwarts struggle to a painstaking 26 off 47 balls which included nine dots in a row before he surrendered in a meek fashion. Together, Rohit and Kohli added 60 in 10 overs but everyone present in stands at the Sophia Gardens would agree there was nothing called a partnership. Only Kohli scored as Rohit gasped for breathing space. The middle-order caved in inexplicably with four wickets lost for 15 runs in a space of 26 deliveries as Jofra Archer (3/47 in 10 overs) breathed fire in each spell that he bowled. Saqib Mahmood (2/52 in 9 overs) and Atkinson (3/50 in 9 overs) were also among wickets.

Vice-captain Iyer turned out to be the batting hero for India as he countered the short ball well but didn't get much support from the other end. India nonetheless started their 233-run defence confidently as Bumrah got one to move a shade from length forcing Ben Duckett to nick one to Ishan Kishan behind stumps.

**COURT NOTICE**

COURT NOTICE
(U/o S Rule 20 CPC)
IN THE COURT OF Ms. Rajni Yadav
Additional District and Sessions
Judge, Rohtak
Suman W/o Sh. Manoj
Vs.
Lakhendra Kumar S/o Marchu Ram
CNR No. HRRH01-012486-2023
Next Date:- 27-08-2026

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Private Limited,
C/o Vijay Kumar Rai 18, Tej Mandir, Rai
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Paradesh.

In above titled case, the defendant(s)/respondent(s) could not be located. It is ordered that defendant(s)/respondent(s) should appear in person or through counsel on 27-08-2026 at 10:00 a.m. For details login to <https://highcourthd.gov.in/?trs=distrcourt¬ice&district=Rohtak>

Sd/-
Additional/District and Session Judge Rohtak
Dated, this day of 15-07-2026