

Concerned citizens to hold ‘Black Harela’ rally

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Concerned citizens, including social activities and various groups, will stage a demonstration, dubbed ‘Black Harela’, at Parade Ground at 5 PM on July 15. It is meant to raise awareness against the indiscriminate felling of trees under the guise of widening the Rishikesh-Bhuniyawala highway. They further said that many other trees have been cut down in the name of development.

Speaking of the upcoming demonstration, a member of Citizens For Green Doon (CFGD), Himanshu Arora said that a sham takes place in the name of the annual Harela festival. “On one hand, they

are cutting down 100-year-old trees in the name of development, and on the other hand, they plant trees for just one day, which is nothing but a hypocritical formality. Moreover, they seem to have no concerns about the maintenance of the trees planted on the occasion.”

Arora said that in recent years, many trees have been axed in the name of development and the recent tree felling along the Rishikesh-Bhuniyawala highway is a matter of great concern for all. “This is why we have decided to observe the day of Harela as a Black Harela to vent our anguish over the continuing two-

facedness being shown by the authorities,” he added.

He emphasised that concerned citizens, social activists and other participants will wear black clothes, black ribbons or other similar items to symbolise the theme of the protest.

While speaking of the seriousness of the issue, he urged local residents to join the protest. “Things are serious, for they lead to climate changes, resulting in mounting temperatures, landslides and other issues. Further, ailments like asthma have also risen among residents due to these environmental changes,” he added.

STIP to make U’khand a development model for nation: Dhami

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Developing local and scientific solutions to local problems will enable Uttarakhand to become a development model for the nation. The State’s first Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP) has been prepared with this intention in mind.

In addition to this, the Science City being built in Dehradun will provide modern facilities to the youth which will lend wings to their dreams. Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said this while inspecting the Science City works and participating in a dialogue on STIP at the Uttarakhand State Council for Science and Technology (UCOST) here on Monday.

Addressing the gathering, Dhami said that in the future, the Science City here will emerge as a leading centre for science, innovation and research for the nation’s students, researchers and scientists. Under the Vigyan Setu initiative, the CM also inaugurated Vigyan Vani community radio (88.8 megahertz), Vigyan Drishyam and Vigyan Dhara on the occasion, stating that these efforts will extend the reach of knowledge from laboratories to the remote areas of the State. Referring to the ongoing Harela week, he said that at a time when the world is facing

the challenges of global warming and environmental problems, Harela sends a message of development and nature complementing each other. “The world is passing through a period of unprecedented technical changes. Robots are

is a step in this direction. This policy is aimed at developing a self-reliant ecosystem which enables the youth to become a job creator through innovative ideas. This policy will not limit science to laboratories but become an effective medium to



now working in fields ranging from factories to hospitals. Human intelligence is reaching new heights with the help of artificial intelligence while emerging technologies like data science, semiconductors and biotechnology are deciding the world’s direction and condition. The CM said that the State government is working to develop Uttarakhand into a global hub of science, technology and modern research. The implementation of the State’s first Science, Technology and Innovation Policy

connect to the life of the general public. “The State’s geography presents many challenges but the Himalaya is also our biggest strength while our biodiversity, precious medicinal herbs, perennial water sources, organic agriculture and a rich cultural heritage are our real wealth,” he said.

Science and Technology minister Pradeep Batra, Sahaspur MLA Sahdev Singh Pundir, UCOST director general Durgesh Pant and others were also present on the occasion.

Annual Jagannath Rath Yatra in Doon on July 16

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The eighth annual Shri Jagannath Rath Yatra will be organised in Dehradun on July 16 by the Chaitanya Mahaprabhu Namahatta Shri Jagannath Temple Seva Trust. Addressing the media on Monday, the trust’s president Lokanath Das said that the annual festival aims to spread the message of love, equality, brotherhood, selfless service and Harinam Sankirtan.

He said that the programme will commence at 11 AM with Mangalacharan, Harinam Sankirtan and the inaugural ceremony at Litchi Bagh followed by the distribution of Shri Jagannath Mahaprasad at noon. The Rath Yatra will be flagged off at 2 PM from Litchi Bagh and proceed towards Johdi village.

He said that devotees along the route will witness Hari-

nam Sankirtan, devotional bhajans and the darshan of Lord Jagannath. About 5,000 devotees are expected to participate in the procession this year. Appealing to devotees, youth, families and social organisations to join the event, he said that Lord Jagannath’s Rath Yatra symbolises the lord coming among the people to bless everyone equally, irrespective of caste, creed or background.

CS directs officials to present trekking policy in cabinet by August

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Chief secretary Anand Bardhan directed officials to soon prepare and implement a trekking policy in the State. Chairing a meeting on ecotourism with Forest department officials here on Monday, he set a target to present the trekking policy in the cabinet by August. Stating that new peaks should be opened for trekking, Bardhan directed officials to immediately start the procedure for securing necessary permissions and approvals for this. Directing the Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board to expedite the audit of identified peaks, he directed officials to present the report soon. Bardhan directed that all types of bookings for mountaineering, trekking, tourist sites and forest rest houses under the Forest department should be made online. This will prevent booking beyond capacity. He also said that the nine sites being developed on the lines of the Jhabarkhet model should be inaugurated by October this year. Stating that formal

nature guide training should be started in the State, the chief secretary said that a permanent training centre should be established and the curriculum should be finalised. Merging additional material with the Central government curriculum, a certification course should be started soon, he said, adding that the course should be started during the Wildlife Week commemorated in October. Bardhan also directed that either the Forest department or the Uttarakhand Forest Development Corporation (UFDC) should be chosen for operation of forest rest houses and 31 trekking sites along with eco-camps and eco-hubs, adding that the plan should be presented in one month. Stressing on the need for strengthening the UFDC, he said that a proposal for this should be submitted soon to the administration so that further action can be taken. Head of forest force Kapil Lal and other officials were also present in the meeting.

Police nab accused, recover weapon used in Raipur firing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Raipur police arrested on Monday a wanted accused in connection with the firing incident that took place in the Raipur area earlier this month. The arrested accused was identified as Om Prakash alias Ompal alias Kapil. Police also recovered a .315 bore country-made pistol allegedly used in the crime. Three other accused involved in the case had already been arrested and sent to jail. The incident occurred on the night of

July 3 when complainant Divakar Khanduri was standing outside a liquor shop on Ring Road with his friends Naveen Rana and Rohan Kumar. According to the police, three to four men arrived and opened fire due to an old rivalry. One bullet hit Rana on the shoulder, while another struck a passer-by, Kamendra Sharma, in the leg. A case had been registered at Raipur police station and special police teams were formed on the di-

rections of the senior superintendent of police (SSP), Dehradun, Pramendra Dopal to arrest all those involved. During the investigation, police identified Prakash as one of the accused. As he remained on the run, the SSP announced Rs 15,000 as reward for his arrest. Following continuous surveillance and raids, police finally arrested him and recovered the weapon used in the firing. Further investigation is underway, police added.

Police encounter: Sharpshooter injured, 2 criminals held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Rudrapur

The sharpshooter Jitendra Chaudhary alias Virat Chaudhary was injured in a police encounter on late Sunday night and later he was arrested along with two of his associates, while one accused escaped under the cover of darkness. Police claimed that the accused were planning to attack a rival gang when the encounter occurred.

Notably, a special team had been formed under the direction of the senior superintendent of police, Uddham Singh Nagar, Ajay Ganpati following receipt of intelligence inputs that Jitendra, the main accused in the Gaba Chowk and Pulbhata firing incidents, along with his associates, was planning to commit a major crime in the Dibdiba area. As per the inputs, they were travelling in a car sans a number plate. Upon receiving the information, the po-

lice set up a cordon near Jafarpur and attempted to stop the vehicle.

Police said that as the accused fled with the vehicle, they chased them. During the chase, the car collided with a barbed wire fence on a dirt road near Unity Law College and stopped. The accused then fled into fields and orchards, and, taking cover behind trees, opened fire on the police team. Police initially warned the accused to surrender, but when the firing continued, they resorted to retaliatory firing. In the encounter, the main accused, Jitendra was shot in the leg.

The injured accused, Sumit Rathore and Chandan Lal, were arrested at the scene, while Niranjana Takuli, alias Neeru Takuli, escaped. Police are now looking out for him, raiding several possible hideouts. The injured accused were

admitted to the District Hospital, Rudrapur.

Police recovered three pistols (315 bore), eight live cartridges, two empty cartridges, the car they used and three mobile phones.

Police further said that Jitendra, a notorious sharp-

shooter, was wanted in several cases of attempted murder and assault aside from the Gaba Chowk and the Pulbhata firing incidents. He has nearly a dozen criminal cases registered against him in various police stations in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, said the SSP Ganpati, adding that strict action



would continue against the gangsters.

MDDA demolishes 100 bighas of plotting, dispute breaks out in Dalanwala, 4 held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Mussoorie Dehradun Development Authority (MDDA) demolished illegal plotting on around 100 bighas of land in Sahaspur and sealed several unauthorized buildings in Dalanwala and Paundha on Monday. A dispute also broke out between a landowner and flat owners during the sealing drive in Dalanwala, prompting police intervention. Subsequently, four persons, including a woman, were arrested, charged under the sections related to creating disturbances in public places.

In Krishna Colony, Dalanwala, the MDDA officials reached the site with police to seal unauthorised portions of

Sanhita (BNSS) for disturbing public order.

Yadav alleged that some flats had been sold illegally by one of his partners in 2024 without his consent and that he had not received his rightful share. On the other hand, flat owners claimed they had legal rights over the properties. Police said further legal action would be taken based on complaints from both sides.

According to the MDDA officials, the biggest action was taken in Jatowala, Sahaspur, where around 100 bighas of land were allegedly being developed into an illegal colony without approval. The authority demolished roads and



two apartment buildings. During the operation, the fourth floor of one building was sealed. While the action was underway, a dispute erupted between landowner Rajeev Yadav and members of the other party. The argument soon turned into a physical fight, but police quickly controlled the situation. The arrested persons have been identified as Anuradha Singh, Chandra Pratap Singh, Rajeev Yadav and Sagar Kumar under the relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha

other structures built for the plotting. In Paundha, two multi-storey buildings on Phulsaini Road were sealed for allegedly violating the approved building plan. The MDDA vice-chairman Banshidhar Tiwari said that illegal plotting and unauthorised construction would not be tolerated. He urged people to verify the legal status and approvals of any property before purchasing it. “Our drive against illegal constructions will continue across the district,” he added.

Project GROW 2.0 concludes at UPES

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

UPES concluded Project GROW 2.0, a collaborative initiative led by the School for Life (SFL), SFL Ambassadors and the Human Resources team. Designed to strengthen English language proficiency and communication skills among women housekeeping staff, the programme created meaningful opportunities for personal growth while fostering experiential learning among students, UPES said. The programme was

women housekeeping staff at the Kandoli campus through structured language-learning sessions tailored to practical, everyday communication needs

The vice-chancellor, UPES, Sunil Rai said that project GROW 2.0 reflected their commitment to building an inclusive university ecosystem where every individual has access to opportunities for growth, confidence and self-development.



inaugurated on March 6 and over seven weeks, 27 participants engaged in interactive learning sessions delivered by 10 student facilitators representing different schools and departments across UPES.

Building on the success of Project GROW 1.0, the second edition expanded its focus to empower

At the conclusion of the programme, certificates were presented to both participants and student facilitators by Atri Nautiyal, Gaurav Misra and members of the School for Life faculty team, to recognise their dedication and commitment throughout the programme.

U’khand to set to State Cyber Crime Coordination Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Uttarakhand government has decided to set up a State Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (SCCC) in the State. Informing about the decision, the chief secretary said that a notification for the centre will soon be issued. The CS held a meeting with the home secretary and senior officers of police on cybercrime at the State secretariat on Monday.

He said that the setting up of SCCC will facilitate mutual cooperation between the Centre, State and the districts so that the victims of the cybercrime get quick relief. He said that all the cyber police stations in the State should also be strengthened. The CS said that the 1930 helpline should also be strengthened. He said that the manpower of the 1930 call centre should be

increased to reduce the response time of 1930. The CS also stressed on strengthening the e-zero FIR system in the State. He directed that the conversion of e-zero FIR into 100 per cent FIR and its integration with CCTNS should be expedited.

The CS said that after being subjected to cyber fraud most people are unable to file a timely complaint or take advantage of the money restoration module to get their money back due to lack of information. He called for the police department to be proactive in providing assistance to victims. He said that continuous communication should be made among

the public through media and social media to create awareness about the complaint redressal module and the money return module, so that the public can avoid cyber fraud and the victim can get information about what to do in case of fraud.

The CS said that complaints received on the Grievance Redressal Module (GRM) should be resolved within the stipulated time frame. He directed capacity building of officers and employees in the police department, as well as increasing the number of cyber commands, in view of increasing cybercrime.

Secretary Shailesh Bagauli, ADG V Murugesan, IG Nilesh Anand Bhanne and SSP STF Ajay Singh attended the meeting.

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, DEHRADUN Government of India, Ministry of Finance, (Department of Financial Services) 2nd Floor, Paras Tower, Mazra, Saharanpur Road, Dehradun, UK- 248171

PUBLICATION NOTICE In O.A. No. 15 OF 2026 SUMMONS UNDER SUB-SECTION (4) OF SECTION 19 OF THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS AND BANKRUPTCY ACT, 1993, READ WITH SUB-RULE (2A) OF RULE 5 OF THE DEBT RECOVERY TRIBUNAL (PROCEDURE) RULES, 1993 AS AMENDED FROM TIME TO TIME)

Dy. No. 677/2026 Dated: 01.07.2026 ICICI Bank Ltd. V/s Anuj Bansal & Anr.

To, 1. Anuj Bansal S/o Vishnu Kumar Bansal, R/o 29-D, Cross 9, Tapovan Enclave, Raipur Road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand- 248001 Alt. Address: Khatauni Khata No. 90 (1422 to 1427 Fasal) Khassra No. 618 Ka, S, Aamwala Tarla, Pargana Parwaddow, District Dehradun, Uttarakhand- 248001 Alt. Address: 54-A, Cross-8 Tapovan Enclave, M Raipur Road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand- 248008 2. Priyanka Joshi W/o Anuj Bansal, R/o 29-D, Cross 9, Tapovan Enclave, Raipur Road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand- 248001 Alt. Address: 54-A, Cross-8 Tapovan Enclave, M Raipur Road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand- 248008.

Whereas the above named Applicant Bank has instituted OA No. 15 of 2026 against you for recovery of debts of Rs. 43,42,129/- in which Hon'ble Tribunal was pleased to issue Summons/Notice U/s 19(4) of the Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act, 1993 and was listed before the Hon'ble Presiding Officer on 24.06.2026.

Whereas, it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by way of this publication directing you to appear in person or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner before the Tribunal on 24.09.2026 at 10:30 A.M. Further, you are required to show cause as to why the relief(s) prayed for in OA should not be granted and to file reply, if any, in your defence in a paper book form in sets and produce all the documents and affidavits under which your defence or claim for set off, counter claim, in this Tribunal personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner within 30 days from the date of the publication of this notice. Take notice that in case of default of your appearance on the specified day and time before the Tribunal, the case shall be heard and decided in your absence.

Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal on this the 01st day of July, 2026.

By order of Tribunal Assistant Registrar Debts Recovery Tribunal, Dehradun

The Pioneer CLASSIFIEDS PUBLIC NOTICE

In my Husband Service record my name is mistakenly recorded as NUJHAT PERWIN whereas my correct name is NUJAHAT PRAVIN as mentioned in other all documents. Army no.- 14423910K Rank-EX NK Name- M.D PRAVEZ ALAM, R&O VILL.- ROHAI P.O-BARANATHU DIST.- ARWAL BIHAR PIN-804419 UTTARAKHAND. I want to change my name in my husband service record vide affidavit dated 13.07.2026 before Dehradun Court

I, No.6496729K Rank Hav Deepak Singh R/o Village Pokharsari P.O. Rudraprayag Distt Rudraprayag Uttarakhand 246171. In my Army Documents my wife's name is wrongly entered as Poonam Jegi whereas correct name Poonam as per Aadhar card pan Card. It should be updated.

IBINAY CHANDRA CHAUDHARY S/o Late Kailash Chandra Chaudhary resident of Edge Hill Mallital Nainital. BINAY CHANDRA CHAUDHARY and VINAY CH. CHAUDHARY both names belong to me, the same person. In future I should be known as Binay Chandra Chaudhary

As per my Army records, my daughter's incorrect name is recorded as Vandana Nishad whereas her correct name is Vandana Nishad D/o No. 15203298W Hav Chhabhi Lal, Vill.- Kundel, Post.- Kundel, Teh.- Magarlod, Distt.- Dhamtari, Chhattisgarh -493662

As per my husband's Army records, my incorrect name recorded as SRAVANTHI S whereas per my Aadhar No. 7546 7442 8744 my correct name is VANARASA SHRAVANTHI W/o No. 15203478Y HAV (GNR) VANARASHA NAGESH, Vill. & Post-Chelgal, Tehsil & Distt-Jagtil, Telangana-505455

मेरे पुत्र के सैन्य अभिलेखों के अनुसार मेरा गलत नाम रामा सामी दर्ज है जबकि मेरे आधार नं.4117 4539 2779 द्वारा सही नाम रामासामी करियन F/o आर्मी नं. 21009225P लांस नायक मणिवन्नन आर, ग्राम -सुंदकपट्टी, पोस्ट -मोतूर, तहसील व जिला - कृष्णागिरि, तमिलनाडु है।

मेरे पुत्र के सैन्य अभिलेखों के अनुसार मेरा गलत नाम वैजयंती दर्ज है जबकि मेरे आधार नं. 9803 9567 5426 द्वारा सही नाम वैजयंती रामासामी M/o आर्मी नं. 21009225P लांस नायक मणिवन्नन आर, ग्राम -सुंदकपट्टी, पोस्ट -मोतूर, तहसील व जिला - कृष्णागिरि, तमिलनाडु है।

मेरी नाबालिग पुत्री के आधार कार्ड नं. 810900352971 में त्रुटिश्च उसका रोजी नवाज (ROZI NAWAZ) गलत दर्ज हो गया है, जबकि मेरी पुत्री का वास्तविक नाम AIZANAWAZ है। जोकि उसके जन्म प्रमाण पंजीकरण संख्या B-2023-5-0783200698 में भी दर्ज है। भविष्य में मेरी पुत्री को उसके वास्तविक नाम AIZA NAWAZ D/o SHAHNAWAZ के नाम से जाना पहचाना व पुकारा जाए। SHAHNAWAZ S/o ABDUL RAZZAQUE निवासी मन्-० 242, नजदीक गोयल ट्रेडर्स, पीठ बाजार, हवाराबाद, हरिद्वार, उत्तराखण्ड-249402.

मेरी पुत्री ANSHIKA SAINI के हाईस्कूल वर्ष 2023 अनुक्रमांक 25128524 एवं इण्टरमीडिएट वर्ष 2025 अनुक्रमांक 25630734 में त्रुटिश्च पिता का नाम SATISH SAINI गलत दर्ज हो गया है जबकि पिता का वास्तविक नाम SATISH CHAND SAINI है। जोकि पुत्री ANSHIKA SAINI के जन्म प्रमाण पत्र पंजीकरण संख्या B-2017-5-900699-006244 एवं पुत्री के आधार कार्ड नं. XXXXXXXX3953 एवं पिता के आधार कार्ड नं. XXXXX2807 में भी दर्ज है। भविष्य में मेरी पुत्री को ANSHIKA SAINI D/o SATISH CHAND SAINI के नाम से जाना पहचाना व पुकारा जाए। SATISH CHAND SAINI S/o NAKLI RAM SAINI निवासी-सलेमपुर राजपुताना, रुड़की, हरिद्वार, उत्तराखण्ड-247667.

मेरे आधार कार्ड नं. XXX8384 में त्रुटिश्च हिन्दी एवं अंग्रेजी में मेरा नाम दिलवर सिंह (DILVAR SINGH) के स्थान पर दिलबर सिंह (DILBER SINGH) गलत दर्ज हो गया है। जबकि मेरा वास्तविक नाम दिलवर सिंह (DILVAR SINGH) है जोकि मेरे हाईस्कूल वर्ष-1998 अनुक्रमांक 1667209 एवं पेन कार्ड संख्या XXX787P में भी दर्ज है। भविष्य में मुझे मेरे वास्तविक नाम दिलवर सिंह (DILVAR SINGH) S/o INDRAJEET SINGH के नाम से जाना पहचाना व पुकारा जाए। निवासी-मन्-० 553, ब्रह्मावाला, सहस्त्रधारा रोड, पो-०८० कंडोली, देहरादून, उत्तराखण्ड-248001.

मेरे आधार कार्ड नं. XXXX2540 में त्रुटिश्च मेरा नाम राहुल (RAHUL) गलत दर्ज हो गया है। जबकि मेरा वास्तविक नाम राहुल कुमार (RAHUL KUMAR) है जोकि मेरे हाईस्कूल वर्ष-2016 अनुक्रमांक 5310187 एवं स्थाई निवास प्रमाण पत्र संख्या UK22ES0100197589 में भी दर्ज है। भविष्य में मुझे मेरे वास्तविक नाम राहुल कुमार (RAHUL KUMAR) पुत्र देवेंद्र सिंह के नाम से जाना पहचाना व पुकारा जाए। निवासी-नियर शिव मंदिर, राजौव नगर, देहरादून, उत्तराखण्ड-248001.

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BKTC employee Nautiyal arrested for alleged theft of Badrinath offerings

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun/Chamoli

The Chamoli police have arrested a temple committee employee for allegedly stealing cash and other offerings from the ‘Thali Bhaint’ counting room at the Badrinath Temple – one of the four Dhams, Uttarakhand houses. The arrest was made after an investigation based on CCTV footage

Sunday, police further said, adding that he has been produced before the court and further legal proceedings are underway.

Police informed that the case had come to light on July 2 during the counting of Thali Bhaint offerings at the temple. “A preliminary inquiry found

Kedarnath Temple Committee, filed a written complaint at Badrinath police station on July 8.

Based on the complaint, police had registered a case under appropriate sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The Chamoli superintendent of police Surjeet Singh Panwar had thereafter formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) under the supervision of the circle officer Madan Singh Bisht to investigate the matter.

During the investigation, police inspected the counting room, recorded statements of the complainant and other witnesses and carefully examined CCTV footage. The footage allegedly showed the accused hiding cash and other offerings under his mobile phone and inside his pockets before taking them out of the room. Police said that the accused had allegedly taken Rs 500 currency notes, packets of gold and silver coins, a Shaligram Shila and a packet of saffron at different times.



and other evidence, police said.

Based on the evidence collected during the investigation, the SIT arrested Pramod Nautiyal from his residence in Dehradun at around 10 PM on

that temple committee employee Nautiyal had taken the temple donation and other offerings for his personal use. Following this, Yuddhveer Pushpan, the in-charge temple officer of the Badrinath

Dhami flags off special pilgrimage train to Somnath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami flagged off a special train Yatra from Harrawala Railway Station, Dehradun to Veraval (Somnath) in Gujarat on Monday. The Yatra is being organised to commemorate the Somnath Swabhiman Parv. Extending his best wishes to the pilgrims, Dhami said that it is not just a

ter of great pleasure that about 700 devotees from various walks of life were participating in this special six-day pilgrimage. He commended the Culture department for this initiative and prayed to Lord Somnath and Baba Kedar for a safe, prosperous and pleasant journey for all pilgrims.

He said that this pilgrimage

otirlingas, symbolizes India's unwavering faith, indomitable belief and resurgence. Despite numerous attacks and destruction, Somnath has given the message to the entire world that India moves forward with greater strength and determination after every challenge, he said.

Dhami said that the Somnath Swabhiman Parv is a special occasion to experience national consciousness and cultural pride. The CM said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country is undergoing an unprecedented cultural renaissance. He said that the State government is working to establish Uttarakhand as the spiritual capital of the world. He added that in the field of education, reformative steps have been taken and more than 250 illegal Madaras have been sealed and the Uttarakhand State Minority Education Authority has been established in place of the Madrasa Board.

Local MLA Brij Bhushan Gairola, Mayor Dehradun Saurabh Thapliyal and others attended the programme.



religious journey, but a powerful medium to connect with the nation's self-respect, cultural consciousness and eternal traditions.

The CM said that it is a mat-

is an opportunity to connect with India's thousands of years old eternal tradition, glorious heritage and national pride. Dhami said that the Somnath Temple, one of the twelve Jy-

Somnath Swabhiman Yatra flagged off

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Rudrapur

As part of the ‘Somnath Swabhiman Parv, being organised by the Union Ministry of Culture, the additional district magistrate Pankaj Upadhyay flagged off a group of selected devotees from

He said that the Parv is being organised to commemorate the 1000th anniversary of the first recorded attack on the Somnath Temple and the 75th anniversary of the temple's reconstruction.



Udham Singh Nagar district for the Somnath Dham in Gujarat.

He explained that diverse groups of women, young professionals, students, senior cit-

izens, volunteers, beneficiaries of various government schemes, academics, scientists, technical experts and social workers have been included in the yatra.

He further stated that during the pilgrimage, devotees will participate in Somnath Temple Darshan, Somnath Sankalp Samvad, light and sound shows, bhajan evenings, flag marches, maha aarti, discourses and cultural programmes.

The ADM stated that extensive arrangements have been made for the pilgrimage, prioritising the convenience, safety, and health of the pilgrims. Medical teams and essential medicines have been arranged for the pilgrims.

Rare Indian Giant Flying Squirrel spotted after 12 yrs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Ramnagar

In a significant boost to wildlife conservation, the rare Indian Giant Flying Squirrel has been spotted once again in the Ramnagar Forest Division adjoining Corbett Tiger Reserve after a gap of nearly 12 years. The nocturnal mammal was rescued after it wandered into a villager's house, with wildlife experts describing the sighting as a positive indicator of the region's rich biodiversity.



It was found inside a house in Teda village under the Kosi Range of Ramnagar Forest Division, the Forest officers said, adding that its large size and distinctive appearance had

surprised local residents, who immediately informed the Forest Department. Rescue experts Ashish Kashyap and Rajesh Kashyap reached the spot and safely rescued the animal.

After examination, forest officials confirmed it to be an Indian Giant Flying Squirrel, a species known for its remarkable ability to glide between trees. Although commonly referred to as a ‘flying squirrel,’ it does not actually fly like a bird. Instead, it uses a membrane of skin, known as the patagium, stretched between its fore and hind limbs to glide through the air for distances of nearly 60 to 80 metres.

According to the Forest department officials, the last recorded sighting of this rare species in the Ramnagar area was in 2014 in the Dhikuli-Garjia forest belt. Its reappearance after about 12 years is being viewed as an encouraging sign for wildlife conservation and the ecological health of the region, the wildlife enthusiasts said.

A wildlife expert Sanjay

Chhimwal said the species is also known as the Malabar Giant Flying Squirrel, as it is widely distributed in the Malabar region of the Western Ghats. In Uttarakhand, it is primarily found in the dense forests of Ranikhet, Lansdowne, Pithoragarh, Chakrata and Mussoorie. Its rediscovery in the Shivalik foothills around Ramnagar and Corbett is considered a rare and exciting event. Speaking of the matter, the sub-divisional forest officer Ankit Badola said that the species is strictly nocturnal and is therefore rarely seen during the daytime. Following the rescue, the squirrel underwent a health examination and will soon be released back into its natural habitat. The sighting will also be officially documented in the department's wildlife records.

Experts believe that the return of the Indian Giant Flying Squirrel highlights the fact that the forests of Ramnagar continue to provide a safe habitat for several rare and elusive wildlife species, reflecting the success of ongoing conservation efforts in the landscape.

Godiyal demands removal of BKTC chairman in offering theft case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Ganesh Godiyal has said that the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami should take immediate cognizance of the issue of offering theft in Badrinath Dham and remove the chairman of Badrinath Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) from his position. Interacting with the media persons at the headquarters of the State Congress on Monday, the PCC president said that the BKTC chairman Hemant Dwivedi should not shirk away from his responsibility in the issue which has hurt the sentiments of the millions of followers of Sanatan Dharma.

He said that the personal assistant of the BKTC chairman was transferred from Dehradun and was deputed in the work of counting of donations. Godiyal claimed that the person arrested by the police in the offering theft case has threatened to divulge everything and now efforts are being made to protect the influential people in the case. He said that it has come to his notice that the arrested person is being pressured to keep quiet on the assurance that he too will be let off the hook after sometime. The PCC president said that it is clear that influential people are involved in the case. He said that the facts that CM

Dhami has failed to take action against the BKTC chairman and it took more than five days to arrest the person directly involved in theft prove that efforts are being made to hush up the issue. Godiyal said that a person occupying the position of chairman of BKTC should be transparent in his actions and deeds. He also challenged Dwivedi for a public debate on the issue.

Responding to the comment of BJP State president Mahendra Bhatt in which he said that the people of a particular caste should not be questioned in such cases, Godiyal said that the criminals have no caste or religion.

U’khand’s people don’t want tourist politicians: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Targetting Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's proposed Uttarakhand visit, Bharatiya Janata Party State spokeswoman Honey Pathak said that the people of Uttarakhand want leaders who serve the public and not “tourist politicians”. She said that Gandhi's visit is not for the people but is rather an attempt to unite the few remaining workers of the Congress in the State. “Rahul Gandhi tends to re-

member Uttarakhand during the elections. He remains absent for five years and remembers the mountains before the polls. This is political tourism rather than public service. The people of Uttarakhand are well aware of such drama. The Congress has completely lost its public base in the State. The party organisation is non-existent, the workers are scattered and the leaders simply post on X while sitting in Delhi. Rahul

Gandhi should focus on saving his party.

On the one hand the double-engine government is working with the model of development, employment and good governance while on the other hand, the Congress has nothing more than allegations, confusion and lies. Rahul Gandhi is welcome in Uttarakhand but he should not come with empty hands to deliver hollow speeches,” she said.

U’khand to get its first Place of Safety for adolescent under-trials

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Haridwar

Uttarakhand will soon have its first Place of Safety for adolescents aged 16 to 18 years who are facing trial for serious crimes. The Women Empowerment and Child Development (WECD) minister Rekha Arya on Monday laid the foundation stone for this state-of-the-art facility in Roshnabad, Haridwar, which has been funded with an investment of Rs 5.55 crore.

During the event, she emphasised that the true measure of a sensitive government is its responsibility toward the most vulnerable, misguided and neglected segments of society. “This building will not just be a structure of bricks, stones and cement, but rather a reformatory and safe centre designed to provide new directions for misguided adolescents,” she said.

Arya highlighted that the purpose of the Juvenile Justice Act (Kishore Nyay Adhiniyam) is not merely administering punishment but rather to help the reform of these children and their integration into mainstream society. “Many

children turn to crime between the ages of 16 and 18 due to adverse circumstances, negative influences, or lack of proper guidance,” she said.

She further said that keeping these juveniles in the same environment as convicted criminals could be detrimental to their future. “This is why the State government has established a separate Place of Safety for the under-trial juveniles,” Arya said.

The WECD minister directed officials to ensure that the campus serves not only as a residential centre but also fosters an environment conducive to positive changes in the personalities and mindsets of the teenagers.

“Effective arrangements for education, digital literacy and skill development will be made at this facility, along with the provision of psychologists and counsellors. This way, every teenager who leaves the centre can reintegrate into society with confidence, skills and a commitment to being a responsible citizen,” the minister said.

Several parties rally, demand Rs 4,600 grade pay for police personnel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Several political parties organised a march on Monday to the Uttarakhand Police headquarters in support of the demand of a higher grade pay for police personnel. The parties, which participated included Congress, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD), while Jan Adhikar Party convened it. Several social organisations also gathered outside Parade Ground before marching towards the PHQ.



They demanded the state government to immediately issue the order to implement the promised Rs 4,600 grade pay for police constables. According to the protesters, although the chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami had announced the grade pay earlier, the decision has not yet been implemented.

It is learnt that the protest

march was organised on the call of advocate and convener Sandeep Chamoli. Speaking during the protest, Chamoli said that police personnel from the 2001–02 batch have completed more than 20 years of service and deserve the promised Rs 4,600 grade pay. “The government should fulfil its commitment at the earliest,” he added.

The protesters later tried to march towards the Secretariat, but police stopped them with

Suggestions for new sports policy to be received till July 30

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Sports department is inviting public suggestions until July 30 for the drafting of the State new sports policy. Players, coaches, sports experts, sports associations, parents, teachers, sports enthusiasts and ordinary citizens can submit their suggestions through an online portal, email or postal mail.

inclusion in the new sports policy and those providing particularly insightful suggestions will be honoured. She emphasised that the government aims to create a sports policy that addresses the State's needs and promotes the overall development of athletes.

“To ensure public par-

sions will be reviewed and relevant ideas will be incorporated into the new sports policy,” Arya said, adding that a sports policy to be developed with community involvement will provide a new direction for sports development in Uttarakhand.



After a meeting on Monday, the Sports minister Rekha Arya stated that valuable suggestions will be considered for

participation in policymaking, suggestions have been solicited from the community. All submis-

MCD officials ordered to act promptly on public complaints

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Dehradun municipal commissioner Alok Kumar Pandey on Monday reviewed sanitation, waterlogging, drain cleaning, dengue prevention and monsoon disaster preparedness in the wards of the Municipal Corporation of Dehradun (MCD). He directed the officials to ensure prompt action on public complaints, strengthen sanitation measures during the monsoon and keep all major and internal drains clean to prevent waterlogging and ensure smooth rainwater drainage.

Pandey instructed chief sanitation inspectors and sanitation inspectors to ensure timely disposal of complaints and regularly inspect their respective wards. He said that every complaint should be addressed without delay and officials should closely monitor civic services on the ground.

Reviewing dengue prevention measures, Pandey directed the officials to continue anti-larva spraying, fogging and source reduction activities in all wards as per the action plan. He instructed teams to inspect waterlogged areas, construction sites, vacant plots, tyres, coolers and other potential mosquito breeding spots while also conducting public awareness campaigns to prevent water stagnation

Congress gears up to make RaGa’s programme in Doon, a success

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Uttarakhand Congress has plunged itself to make the ‘Chhatraon Ki Goonj’ programme of leader of opposition (LoP) in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi a grand success. The programme is scheduled on July 17 in Dehradun.

In this context, a meeting of senior leaders of Dehradun Mahanagar Congress was held

not receiving the desired results, forcing them to commit suicide. Rahul Gandhi has understood this suffering of the youth and has taken up the responsibility of fighting for their cause,” he said.

Godiyal claimed that the ‘Chhatraon Ki Goonj’ programme will be historic and efforts will be made to convey its



at the Congress Bhawan on Monday. The meeting was chaired by Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Ganesh Godiyal.

Addressing the meeting, Godiyal said that on July 17, LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, will interact with students in Dehradun and urge them to fight for youth and student interests. He said that the country's youth are bearing the brunt of the failures of the BJP's governments at the centre and State. “Despite years of study and hard work, they are

message to every youth. He also urged all young colleagues to participate in the program.

Former cabinet minister Navprabhat, State vice president Suryakant Dhasmana, treasurer Aryendra Sharma, general secretary Godavari Thapali, Surendra Rangad, Pradeep Pokhriyal, Naveen Joshi, Yakub Siddiqui, Mahendra Singh Negi, Mahila Congress president Jyoti Rautela, Mahanagar president Jaswinder Singh Gogi and others attended the meeting.

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, DEHRADUN
Government of India,
Ministry of Finance,
(Department of Financial Services)
2nd Floor, Paras Tower, Mazra,
Saharanpur Road, Dehradun,
UK - 248171

PUBLICATION NOTICE
IN O.A. No. 443 OF 2025
SUMMONS UNDER SUB-SECTION (4) OF SECTION 19 OF THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS AND BANKRUPTCY ACT, 1993, READ WITH SUB-RULE (2A) OF RULE 5 OF THE DEBT RECOVERY TRIBUNAL (PROCEDURE) RULES, 1993 AS AMENDED FROM TIME TO TIME)

Dy. No. 602/2026 Dated: 01.07.2026

ICICI Bank Ltd. V/s Aman Kumar To,
Aman Kumar S/o Virendra Pal Singh R/o 493/1-2, Shimla Bypass Road, Opp Prakash Lok, Sewla Kalan, Dehradun, Uttarakhand - 248171.

Whereas the above named Applicant Bank has instituted OA No. 443 of 2025 against you for recovery of debts of Rs. 22,13,405/- in which Hon'ble Tribunal was pleased to issue Summons/Notice U/s 19(4) of the Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act, 1993 and was listed before the Hon'ble Presiding Officer on 22.06.2026.

Whereas, it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by way of this publication directing you to appear in person or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner before the Tribunal on 22.09.2026 at 10:30 A.M. Further, you are required to show cause as to why the relief(s) prayed for in OA should not be granted and to file reply, if any, in your defence in a paper book form in sets and produce all the documents and affidavits under which your defence or claim for set off, counter claim, in this Tribunal personally or through your duly authorized agent or legal practitioner within 30 days from the date of the publication of this notice.

Take notice that in case of default of your appearance on the specified day and time before the Tribunal, the case shall be heard and decided in your absence.

Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal on this the 01st day of July, 2026.

By order of Tribunal
Assistant Registrar
Debts Recovery Tribunal
Dehradun

Requirement of Premises for Bank of India

Bank of India invites offers for premises on lease, at the following locations

1. Rudrapur (District Udham Singh Nagar)- Last date for submission of applications is 20.07.2026 by 04:00 PM

Detailed information is available on the Bank's website <https://www.bankofindia.co.in/tender>.

Any corrigendum/addendum/notification will be published on the said website only.

Zonal Manager, Dehradun Zone

IN FOCUS



Blue tiger butterflies perch during monsoon in Bhopal

PTI

69 roads closed in Himachal Pradesh after torrential rainfall

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Shimla

Light to moderate rainfall was witnessed in parts of Himachal Pradesh on Monday, with the weather office issuing an alert for heavy rain at isolated places in the State on Saturday and Sunday.

As many as 69 roads—38 in Kullu, 13 in Mandi, six in Sirmaur, five in Shimla, four in Kangra, two in Una and one in Lahaul-Spiti districts—are closed following torrential rainfall, while 80 water supply projects are disrupted, according to the state emergency operations centre (SEOC).

So far, 25 landslides have been reported in the current monsoon season during the month of July,



Students seeking shelter as they walk amid rain in Kolkata

PTI

which received 125 mm of rain against a normal of 94.5 mm, an excess of 32 per cent. Kasauli in Solan district received 62 mm rainfall in the 24 hours since Sunday evening, followed by Olinda (60 mm), Dharampur (54.6 mm), Nangal Dam (48.2 mm), Brahmani (42.4 mm) and Una (35.4 mm).

Thunderstorms were witnessed in Shimla, Sundernagar, Bhuntar, Kangra, Jot and Murari Devi while gusts with wind speed ranging between 37-50 kmph lashed Bilaspur, Neri, Shimla, Kufri, Hamirpur, Sundernagar and Tabo. Keylong in Lahaul-Spiti was coldest in the state on Monday, recording a low of 8.4 degrees Celsius, while Neri was hottest with a maximum of 35 degrees Celsius.

Rajaji tree felling intensified amid national highway protests

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Saat Mod

Amidst public agitation against the proposed Rishikesh-Bhaniyawala four-lane National Highway project, which passes through a sensitive elephant corridor in Rajaji National Park, the felling of trees was intensified on Monday.

Bina Verma, who has been travelling about 30 km daily from Dehradun to reach Saat Mod over the past few days, said, "Natural heritage cannot be destroyed in the name of development. Lush green trees are being cut down continuously. I fear that in the future, we might have to tell our children that a dense forest once existed here."

Under this widening project, there is a plan to cut around 3,000 trees in the 'Saat Mod' area of the Doon



Valley. For the past several days, environmentalists, social activists, students, and local citizens have been staging protests and sit-ins, demanding the protection of the forests and the wildlife inhabiting them.

As a reminder of the 'Chipko Movement' led by Gaura Devi decades ago, the protesters hugged trees in an effort to save them. However, amidst the intense protest, the police forcibly removed them and took them away from the site.

PM to inaugurate redeveloped Mangalagiri railway station virtually on July 17

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Amaravati

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually dedicate the redeveloped Mangalagiri railway station to the nation on July 17.

Mangalagiri Railway Station, a Non-Suburban Grade category station under Guntur Division, has been redeveloped for Rs 12.5 crore with upgraded passenger amenities and modern infrastructure, a press release said on Monday.

The redevelopment is aimed at improving passenger safety, accessibility and travel experience, it added. "As part of the Government of India's transformative Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, the redeveloped Mangalagiri Railway Station under Guntur Division will be dedicated to the nation by PM Modi through a virtual inaugura-



tion on July 17," it said. The redevelopment works include the comprehensive renovation of the existing station building and the construction of a modern second-entry station building with a booking office, waiting halls and a VIP lounge.

The project will feature an aesthetically enhanced station facade, a spacious

entrance porch, upgraded waiting halls, modern toilets, improved platform surfacing, durable seating, standardised passenger signage and extensive landscaping.

To ensure seamless accessibility for all passengers, the station has been equipped with two lifts and accessible facilities, including tactile pathways, ramps and acces-

sible toilets, the press release said. New platform shelters have been provided on Platforms 1 and 4, while the front and rear circulating areas have been redeveloped with dedicated parking, pedestrian pathways, street lighting, lane markings and landscaping.

Access control measures, including boundary walls and wider entry and exit gates, have been put in place to ensure smooth passenger movement.

The inauguration of the redeveloped station marks another milestone in the modernisation of railway infrastructure under the ABSS, the release said.

It added that the project reflects Indian Railways' commitment to enhancing passenger comfort, accessibility and operational efficiency while preserving the unique identity of railway stations.

Mamata tells EC: No more time for Ritabrata faction

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE n New Delhi

Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee has written to the Election Commission, urging it not to give more time to a rival faction led by Ritabrata Banerjee to submit claims on authorised signatories and organisational polls.

An ongoing tussle within the party intensified on July 2 when the rebel faction approached the EC to claim to be the "real" All India Trinamool Congress (AITC).

The faction said it had informed the commission after a special session it held on June 22 and sought recognition of the organisational changes it claimed to have carried out.

Following the claim, the poll body sent letters to both Mamata Banerjee and Ritabrata Banerjee, asking them to submit their responses by 5.30 pm on July 6. While the Mamata Banerjee-led group submitted its response on July 6 before the deadline, the Ritabrata-led faction got an extension till 5.30 pm, July 10, to submit its response.

In her letter to the poll panel dated July 12, Mamata Banerjee, a former West Bengal chief minister, said, "Though it is well past 10th July 2026, and it has



been about 2 days therefrom, there has not been any communication made to the undersigned from the end of Shri Ritabrata Banerjee concerning such reply." She said that they have not received any response from the Ritabrata Banerjee-led faction so far.

According to TMC sources, the EC had asked both sides to keep each other informed about the response.

"Hence, it can be inferred, in the absence or the failure to communicate to the undersigned, despite the precondition imposed by the Election Commission of India, that the Election Commission has also not been provided with the said reply within the extended time period," she said.

Tahir Hussain convicted for Ankit Sharma murder

Ankit Sharma, a central intelligence officer on leave, was attacked and killed by the mob in Khajuri Khas on February 26, 2020.

Tahir Hussain was convicted for his alleged role in supplying arms during the riots. As an elected AAP councillor, he had local influence. The court found that he allegedly used his position to arm those involved in the attacks. This conviction challenges the belief that the 2020 violence was only spontaneous.

Ankit Sharma, an IB staffer on leave, was reportedly attacked and killed by a mob on February 26, 2020, in Khajuri Khas, North East Delhi. His body had multiple injuries typical of mob violence. The incident occurred amid widespread clashes in areas such as Khajuri Khas, Jaffrabad, Maujpur, and nearby neighbourhoods.

The Northeast Delhi riots began in February 2020 after protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). The unrest soon escalated into large-scale communal violence between Hindu and Muslim communities.

The violence lasted for several days, leading to more than 50 deaths, hundreds of injuries, and widespread property damage. Delhi Police filed many FIRs, and investigations found both spontaneous and planned violence. Ankit Sharma's murder became a key case for the Delhi Police's Special Investigation Team (SIT). Tahir Hussain was arrested soon after the riots and remains in custody, facing other charges related to murder, rioting, arson, and conspiracy.

Tahir Hussain was a well-known local politician and former AAP councillor from Mustafabad ward. Along with him, Mohd Abid Khan (Fauzi), Parvez Ahmed (Parvez or Babloo), Mohd. Shadab (Shada or Chintu) and Shah Alam (Shahzada or Shada) were tried together for Ankit Sharma's murder.

The trial ended on Friday, with the court convicting the accused after reviewing evidence, including witness statements and documents. The defence argued for an acquittal, but the court found that the prosecution had proved guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. This case is part of the wider legal response to the 2020 riots. The Delhi Police have investigated many cases, resulting in arrests, charge sheets, and ongoing trials. Some accused have been convicted, while others are still on trial or have been acquitted.

Tahir Hussain's conviction is part of his ongoing legal battles in several riot-related cases. The AAP leadership has not yet given a detailed public response to this verdict. Sentencing is scheduled for July 16.

The court's decision is an important outcome in a sensitive case from the 2020 Delhi riots. It shows the justice system's ongoing effort to hold people accountable for the violence that affected Delhi six years ago. This case highlights the complexity of the riots, with communal tensions and claims of targeted conspiracy in some incidents. Prosecuting large-scale mob violence years later remains a challenge. More updates are expected after the sentencing on July 16, 2026.

Suspended BKTC staffer arrested in Badrinath...

The complaint, filed by BKTC in-charge Temple Officer Yudhvir Pushpwan (also referred to as Farswan in some reports), alleged misappropriation and theft of devotees' offerings.

A preliminary internal inquiry by the BKTC had earlier found prima facie evidence of irregularities during the counting of cash offerings at the temple around July 2. Nautiyal was suspended following the inquiry.

CCTV footage from the offering and counting area reportedly shows Nautiyal hiding cash notes, packets of gold and silver coins, Shaligram shilas, and kesar packets. When police searched his home in Dehradun, they found a Shaligram stone and a laptop. No large amount of cash has been found yet. Investigators are now seeking a police remand to trace the money and determine whether others were involved.

Nautiyal approached the Uttarakhand High Court. Nautiyal has gone to the Uttarakhand High Court to challenge his suspension and the FIR. The court has asked the BKTC to respond, and the next hearing is set for July 16. This case is part of a wider investigation into financial irregularities at the Badrinath and Kedarnath temples. Earlier, the Uttarakhand Government ordered a probe into claims of unauthorised advance payments from temple funds for VIP guests at Kedarnath.

A Government inquiry found early signs of irregularities involving several officials. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami had directed a detailed investigation after allegations of donation mishandling surfaced.

Police said Nautiyal will be produced before a court in Gopeshwar after interrogation and medical examination. The investigation is being monitored by senior police officers, with the Special Investigation Team (SIT) also involved. Further arrests cannot be ruled out, sources said. The BKTC manages the affairs of the Badrinath and Kedarnath temples under the Shri Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee Act, 1939.

Mediation bid fails for 3 UP shrine cases

The Gyanvapi issue in Varanasi is an ongoing civil court case involving conflicting claims over the religious status of Gyanvapi mosque, which lies adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple.

The Hindu side claims that the mosque was built after Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb destroyed parts of the ancient temple in the 17th century.

The Muslim side maintains that the mosque predates Aurangzeb's reign and is a legitimate Waqf property.

In the Sambhal Shahi Jama Masjid-Hari Har temple dispute, mosque committee's counsel Shakeel Ahmad Warsi said the issue involved religious faiths and was too sensitive to be resolved through compromise.

"This is a sensitive matter involving Hindus, Muslims and religious beliefs. Whether it is a temple or a mosque should be decided by the court, not through mutual settlement," Warsi told

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PTI. He said the Muslim side had informed the court that while anyone could seek to intervene in the proceedings, such attempts should not be driven by mala fide intentions as the matter concerned a religious place.

Hindu side counsel Gopal Sharma said he was not aware of any proposal for mediation in the Sambhal case.

The Sambhal dispute is similar to the Varanasi issue, where there are conflicting claims over the religious character of the site.

Hindu petitioners have alleged that the 16th-century Jama Masjid was built at the site of an ancient Hari Har Mandir, a claim disputed by the Muslim side.

In the Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Eidgah dispute, mediation proceedings held before the District Legal Services Authority in Mathura earlier this month failed after no representative of the Muslim side attended the meeting, Hindu side's counsel Hareram Tripathi said.

He said both parties had been invited twice to participate in the conciliation process, but the Muslim side did not appear, following which the mediation proceedings were closed.

According to Tripathi, the Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi Trust had proposed that if the Muslim side relinquished its claim over the disputed site, the trust could consider facilitating land for construction of a mosque elsewhere.

He said the Muslim side had conveyed that it was not willing to settle the dispute through mediation and preferred adjudication through regular court proceedings.

The Allahabad High Court has fixed July 17 for further proceedings in the matter, while the Supreme Court may take it up during the Special Lok Adalat in August as part of the mediation initiative.

Attempts by PTI to contact Shahi Eidgah Intezamia Committee secretary and Muslim side counsel Tanveer Ahmad for comment did not elicit a response.

Hindu litigant Mahendra Pratap Singh said the Hindu side continued to maintain before the court that the disputed site was the birthplace of Lord Krishna and would pursue the matter through the judicial process.

The Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah dispute in Mathura arose after the Hindu side filed a petition alleging that the mosque was built in the 17th century on the exact spot where Lord Krishna was born.

India's women conquer Lord's with historic win

Rana bowled a beauty to finally get rid of Ecclestone, triggering on field celebrations and in the Indian dressing room.

Both India and England had endured disappointment in the preceding T20 World Cup and with Lord's hosting a Women's Test 142 years after it conducted the first men's Test, there was a lot at stake for both teams.

The foundation of the win for India was laid by Smriti Mandhana and Yastika Bhatia, who scored a memorable hundred on day three, before Kranti Gaud headlined the bowling performance with a five-wicket haul and her name

on the Lord's Honours Board.

The Indian batters showed a lot more application than their English counterparts on a pitch that offered seam movement and by day three the odd ball was keeping low.

Pacers Gaud and Sayali Satghare outbowled their opponents, using the slope effectively to generate plenty of seam movement. Off-spinner Rana too was able to maintain the pressure created by the seamers.

With the massive win, India also maintained their superior record against England in the longest format. In the 16 Tests both teams have played, India have won four games, England one while the remaining 11 matches were drawn.

India's only defeat to England came way back in 1995. The Indian team had got a pep talk from the great Sachin Tendulkar before the start of day's play. ICC chairman Jay Shah was also watching the action from the stands with Tendulkar, who later shook hands with the players.

It was also a farewell game for England veteran Tammy Beaumont and former captain Heather Knight.

High alert ahead of PM's Punjab-Haryana visit

The email's reference to Diljit Dosanjh is tied to the controversy surrounding the film Satluj, in which he plays Jaswant Singh Khalsa. The movie centres on Khalsa's investigation into the alleged illegal cremation of thousands of bodies in Punjab between 1984 and 1994 during the height of militancy. Released on ZEE5 on July 3, the film was pulled from the platform in India within 48 hours on security grounds.

A Government committee has recommended keeping the ban in place under the IT Act. Some critics, such as Union Minister Ravneet Singh Bittu, say the film gives a one-sided view and downplays militant violence during the insurgency.

Punjab, Chandigarh and Haryana Police, along with cyber cells and railway security, have launched a full-scale probe. Technical teams are tracing the email's origin while security has been tightened at schools, railway stations, Government buildings and other sensitive sites.

Officials are assessing the threat's credibility even as no corroborating intelligence has surfaced so far. The repeated pattern from the same claimed source has forced a strong precautionary response.

The episode shows how fringe separatist elements continue to weaponise historical grievances and recent cultural controversies through anonymous digital threats. Security agencies are not taking chances ahead of the Prime Minister's high-profile engagements", a well-placed official said on Monday.

Birthday bloodbath: Delhi cop shoots wife

The constable allegedly shot her near LBS Hospital and fled on the scooter.

Priyanka, 34, was a teacher at a private school in Ashok Vihar. The couple had married in 2023. Neighbours told police that arguments between

the couple were frequent. Priyanka's family has alleged that she was subjected to dowry harassment from the time of her marriage and that Manish had been demanding money from her family.

The family said a complaint was filed earlier with the Women's Cell, but the matter was settled following counselling and intervention by relatives. The family's allegation, if substantiated, would bring the case under the provisions covering dowry harassment alongside the murder charge.

Police said the family's allegations are being verified as part of the investigation, and appropriate legal action will be taken based on the evidence collected. A murder case has been registered. Investigators are examining the couple's marital relationship, any past complaints on record, and other possible motives for the killing. The body has been sent for post-mortem. Forensic experts have examined the crime scene.

The case has an additional layer that makes it particularly concerning for the police institution. The accused is a serving Delhi Police constable, which means he had access to a service weapon, and he is alleged to have used that weapon to kill his wife. The same weapon used in his official capacity to prevent crime appears, according to the preliminary evidence, to have been turned on a family member in a domestic dispute that escalated on a public road in the early hours of Monday.

Bhati has been absconding since the shooting, and investigators are working to trace him despite the CCTV footage that provides a clear visual record of the incident. Police have said his arrest and interrogation will be necessary to establish the complete sequence of events and the motive.

US to charge ships for Hormuz passage: Trump

The US and others dispute that, citing international law on freedom of navigation, and the American military has tried to establish an alternative route outside of Iranian control.

Iran and the US are nearly halfway through the 60-day period in which they were supposed to negotiate a permanent end to the war and an agreement on Iran's disputed nuclear program. Instead, a series of attacks over the strait have raised fears of a return to all-out war and further disruption to the global economy.

Oil prices jumped nearly 5 per cent on Monday before falling back. US benchmark crude, which had risen to nearly USD 120 a barrel at the height of the war, was trading at around USD 72.92. Markets were mixed.

Meanwhile, the US military said it struck dozens of sites in the strikes on Monday, including air defence systems, radar sites, missile and drone equipment, and small boats. It said Iran does not control the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump suggested last week that the interim deal in the war was "over." But mediators, including Pakistan, Qatar and Egypt, have continued efforts to reach a final agreement to end the war. (AP)



The Pioneer launches Keralam edition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Thiruvananthapuram

The Pioneer marked a significant milestone in its journey with the launch of its Keralam edition at a function held at the Hycinth Hotel in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday evening, reaffirming the newspaper's commitment to credible, independent and impactful journalism in the State.

The Keralam Edition was formally inaugurated and released by Chief Minister VD Satheesan, who delivered the inaugural address, highlighting the vital role of a free, responsible and people-centric media in strengthening democracy.

"This is a time when we cannot say anything new," he said. "What we say is being twisted. We have to think very seriously about how it will affect society. But if we are convinced that what we do is right, then no matter what controversy comes up, the Government should go ahead and do it courageously. "The beauty of democracy is in discussion. We need to have positive discussions about the state, about the next generation, and about children. The media has a huge role to play in that," Satheesan added.



Keralam Chief Minister VD Satheesan releasing the Keralam edition of *The Pioneer* by handing it over to Deputy Speaker Shanimol Usman in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday. CPI State secretary Binoy Viswam, Kerala Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala, *The Pioneer* Keralam Editor Bandi Sudhakara Goud, *The Pioneer* group of newspapers and magazines Chairman Prashant Tewari, Gururatnam Jnana Tapasy and Palayalam Imam VP Suhaib Moulaivi also graced the occasion

AV MUZAFAR

The inaugural copy of the edition was received by Deputy Speaker of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, Shanimol Usman.

Welcoming the gathering, J Gopikrishnan, Associated Editor of *The Pioneer*, New Delhi, outlined the newspaper's editorial vision and its commitment to delivering

accurate, balanced and public-interest journalism to readers in Kerala.

Presiding over the function, Bandi Sudhakara Goud, Managing Director and Editor of *The Pioneer* Keralam edition, described the launch in the Capital city as an important step in the publication's expansion and

reaffirmed its commitment to journalistic excellence, editorial independence and credible reporting.

Ramesh Chennithala, Minister for Home Affairs, Government of Kerala, attended the programme as the Guest of Honour and addressed the gathering. He appreciated *The Pioneer's*

decision to launch its Keralam edition. He recalled that *The Pioneer* carried out several turbulent stories in the country. He also recalled his decades-long friendship with Sudhakara Goud from the time when both of them were Youth Congress leaders. He wished the Pioneer to be a strong pres-

ence in the Kerala media landscape. He noted that it is only the print media that is willing to correct itself, whereas the visuals don't correct wrong news. Congress Media and Publicity Chairman and Rajya Sabha MP Pawan Kherra graced the occasion.

In his felicitation address, Prashant Tewari, Chairman & Managing Director of *The Pioneer* group of newspapers and magazines, New Delhi, congratulated the team on the launch of the Keralam Edition and conveyed his best wishes for its success, expressing confidence that the new edition would uphold *The Pioneer's* legacy of credible, independent and impactful journalism.

The function was also attended by several distinguished personalities, including Binoy Viswam, State Secretary of the CPI; Swami Gururethnam Jnana Thapaswi, General Secretary of Santhigiri Ashram; Dr VP Suhaib Maulavi, Imam of Palayam Juma Masjid; and KP Reji, State President of the Kerala Union of Working Journalists.

The programme commenced with a prayer and concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Saritha S Balan, Deputy Bureau Chief, *The Pioneer*, Thiruvananthapuram.

Centre approves `14,300 crore Budget for Puducherry



Puducherry CM Rangasamy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Puducherry

The Union Home Ministry has conveyed the Centre's approval of the Puducherry Government's proposal for a `14,300 crore Budget for the fiscal 2026-2027.

In a letter to the Chief Secretary of the Puducherry administration on Monday, the Under Secretary to the Home Department said the proposal was examined in consultation with the Finance Ministry.

He said the President of India had accordingly approved the laying of the annual financial statement for 2026-2027 before the Legislative Assembly of Puducherry.

The AINRC-Bharatiya Janata Party coalition Government was formed in May, in the wake of the Assembly polls on April 9. The Assembly is likely to meet later this month, when the budget for the new fiscal year will be presented by Chief Minister N Rangasamy, official sources said.

Row erupts as Govt plans to shift mosque inside NSI airport

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
n Kolkata

There was political controversy after the Government suspended indefinitely the offering of *namaz* at Bakra Mosque (Gouripur Jame Masjid), which is situated inside the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport at Dum Dum in Kolkata.

Rejecting the Government's claim that a running mosque inside an international airport and barely a few hundred

metres from the runway with regular public access was a security concern, senior Trinamool Congress MP Sougato Roy on Monday said that he was always for doing things on the basis of consensus and not arbitrarily. "The fact is that they want to extend the runway... there is no question of security or safety ... If at all a change has to take place, then let it be on the basis of consensus and not by force as this BJP Government is doing it," Roy



said, while there was no statement from the Left.

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari had earlier said that it was indeed a

security concern and the mosque should be shifted from the area "because nowhere you will find a public place inside an airport and so near the run way... this is a security sensitive issue... remember we are near international border ... China and Bangladesh are nearby... an international airport which receives top VVIPs and dignitaries everyday besides handling scores of flights cannot be kept open like this for common entry... it has to be

shifted from there because national security is supreme... National security and the security of the airport will gain priority over everything else... I cannot say more as a Chief Minister."

Senior BJP leader and Union Minister Sukanta Majumdar too said that he had heard since his childhood that the runway of the airport could not be extended because the mosque came in the way. All this was because of appeasement politics.

3 BJP RS nominees file papers

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
n Kolkata

Three BJP nominees, Sukhendu Shekhar Roy, Sushmita Dev and Prakash Chik Baraik, on Monday filed their nominations for the three Rajya Sabha seats from Bengal.

All three candidates were sitting Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha members but resigned their posts and left their party soon after the Bengal Assembly election results last May. The three leaders joined the BJP a couple of days ago.

Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari accompanied the BJP nominees to the returning officer's enclosure after they met him in his chamber in the Assembly.

While Roy refused comments regarding his quitting the TMC and joining the BJP,



saying it was not ideal for a candidate to talk when the model code was in effect. Dev, on the other hand, expressed his gratitude to the BJP leadership and offered to work for both Assam and Bengal because "I have connections in both the States." A caste Bengali Dev is from Assam.

On alleged discontent in the BJP rank and file over nominating three leaders

just after they left their party and joined the saffron outfit, Dev said she valued their grievances because "many of them sacrificed a lot for the party during their struggle against the TMC rule" and vowed to assuage their feelings. "I will try to work harder for the party and the people of Bengal... raise more issues so that I can justify my nomination," she said.

TMC accuses ED of targeting Opposition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) on Monday alleged that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is being used as a "political weapon" against opposition parties and questioned why the agency had not acted on allegations of financial irregularities in the Ram Temple Trust.

Addressing a press conference here, TMC leaders Sagarika Ghose and Mahua Moitra alleged that while the ED froze the bank accounts of Opposition parties, it failed to initiate action over allegations against the Ram Temple Trust.

"If the ED is truly impartial, why has it not acted in cases involving allegations against leaders in BJP-ruled States?...



If serious allegations have emerged against the Ram Temple Trust, why has the ED not initiated action? If such allegations had arisen in an Opposition-ruled State, the ED would have immediately registered a PMLA case," Ghose said.

Moitra reiterated the party's demand for a court-monitored investigation, saying millions of devotees donated to the temple in

good faith. "If the authorities can freeze the bank accounts of Opposition political parties, they should also be prepared to freeze the funds connected with the Ram Temple Trust while the allegations are investigated. There cannot be one standard for the Opposition and another for institutions associated with the ruling establishment," she said.

She alleged that if there had been any misuse of donations, "it is not merely financial wrongdoing — it is a betrayal of the faith of ordinary devotees."

Ghose alleged that constitutional institutions such as the Election Commission and the ED were being used to weaken the Opposition.

"The BJP wants to create a one-party state by eliminating every Opposition party... The ED is no longer functioning as an impartial agency. Since 2014, around 95 per cent of ED cases have been registered against opposition leaders," she claimed. Speaking on West Bengal politics, Moitra alleged that the BJP Government's implementation of welfare schemes would result in a sharp reduction in beneficiaries under the Lakshmir Bhandar scheme.

Jal Shakti ministry releases 3 key water management documents

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi



Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil

Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, was chaired by Patil in the presence of Minister of State for Jal Shakti Raj Bhushan Choudhary.

Secretary of the department V L Kantha Rao, senior secretaries from all states and Union Territories, and officials of the Ministry of Jal Shakti attended the conference. Around 200 participants took part in the event.

The conference deliberated on eight priority agenda items, including the status of the Modernisation of Command Area Development and Water Management (M-CADWM) scheme, the special one-month nationwide Catch the Rain campaign, revised draft project appraisal guidelines for irrigation, multipurpose and flood management projects.

Ram Temple trust sets July 18 deadline for first CEO applications

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Ayodhya

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust has set July 18 as the deadline to submit applications for the position of the first chief executive officer (CEO) of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

According to a post on X, the trust will accept applications until 4 pm on July 18. This appointment is significant as it follows allegations of embezzlement of temple donations, prompting the trust to create the CEO position to strengthen administrative and financial management.

The trust's notification states that the CEO will be appointed on a three-year contract, extendable based on satisfactory performance.

The position is based in Ayodhya. Salary and benefits will be determined through mutual discussion, as detailed by the trust on X.

Applicants must have at least a Bachelor's degree from a recognised university, be between 50 and 70 years old, and possess a minimum of 20 years of managerial experience in a



large public organisation, institution, Government department, or company.

Candidates should have experience overseeing administration, finance, accounts, human resources, public relations, information technology, security, and legal affairs.

"Preference will be given

to candidates who have served as Chief Administrative Officer or have experience managing a temple or Hindu religious institution. Retired officers who meet the eligibility criteria may also apply," it added.

The notification further stated that applicants must be

"actively practising Hindus," and that "being a devotee of Lord Ram belonging to the Vaishnava tradition will be considered desirable."

Candidates must have a working knowledge of both Hindi and English.

On Sunday, Ram Temple Construction Committee chairman Nripendra Mishra

stated that the trust will determine the responsibilities and powers of the first CEO, with no Government interference in the trust's or the CEO's operations.

"The primary responsibility of the CEO will be to uphold the faith of devotees in the trust," Mishra had told reporters.

He stated that the CEO will oversee the temple's financial arrangements, ensure necessary facilities for devotees visiting Ayodhya, and serve as an assistant to the trust while remaining accountable to it.

Mishra added that the trust will determine the extent of authority delegated to the CEO, who will be free to appoint necessary staff. At the same time, overall administration will remain under the trust's control.

The notification states that the CEO will report to the trust's general secretary and be responsible for statutory, administrative, and financial affairs.

The CEO will also oversee institutional systems, organisational development, regulatory compliance, transparency in financial transac-

tions, asset management, and implementation of policies approved by the Board of Trustees.

Key responsibilities include ensuring the smooth conduct of religious rituals, festivals, and ceremonies; maintaining security in coordination with local, State, and central authorities; ensuring the safety and convenience of pilgrims; arranging visits for dignitaries and saints; and strengthening the trust's reputation while promoting Sanatan traditions.

Earlier this month, the trust formed a three-member panel consisting of retired Justice Pramod Kohli, retired Lieutenant General Vishnukant Chaturvedi, and former NIT Raipur chairperson Suresh Haware to review applications and recommend suitable candidates.

Mishra clarified that he will not be on the panel and will decide whether to attend the trust's July 22 meeting after reviewing the agenda. He stated that committee members associated with the temple's construction are ex officio members of the trust without voting rights.

■ Nation Focus ■



FADNAVIS MEETS PAWAN KALYAN IN MUMBAI HOSPITAL

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday visited Andhra Pradesh Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan at Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital where the latter is recovering after undergoing surgery. Fadnavis said he wished Kalyan a speedy and complete recovery. "Visited Andhra Pradesh DCM Pawan Kalyan ji at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital in Mumbai, where he is recovering after a surgery. Wishing him a speedy and complete recovery," Fadnavis said in a post on X. In a statement on Sunday, the hospital said Kalyan was diagnosed with a right shoulder rotator cuff injury, comprising an extensive tear of the supraspinatus and infraspinatus tendon with an associated avulsion fracture of the greater tuberosity bone. He underwent successful arthroscopic repair of the injury at Kokilaben Hospital. (PTI)



MP GOVT PANEL ON UCC SUBMITS REPORT TO CHIEF MINISTER

The committee constituted to draft a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) for Madhya Pradesh has recommended exclusion of tribals from its scope in its report submitted to CM Mohan Yadav on Monday, an official statement said. The report of the Government-appointed multi-member panel, which was headed by retired SC Judge Ranjana Prakash Desai, has been forwarded to the Law Department, it said. After revision and process (consideration) of the Senior Secretary Committee, a bill on UCC is likely to be tabled in the Assembly during the upcoming monsoon session after approval by the Cabinet, said the statement. The five-day monsoon session of the State Assembly will be held from July 20. CM Yadav thanked all panel members, including the chairperson, for submitting the report within the stipulated time, said the statement. Committee members Prof Gopal Sharma, Budhpal Singh, Shobha Paithankar, and Member Secretary Ajay Katesaria were present. (PTI)



States Focus BJP slaps `100 cr defamation notice on Omar Abdullah



DMK SUBMITS HORSE-TRADING EVIDENCE TO TN GOVERNOR

DMK Organising Secretary RS Bharathi on Monday said that his party "submitted evidence on horse-trading in Tamil Nadu" to Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar. "The material evidence" included the statement made by MDMK chief Vaiko on the horse-trading of MLAs and a public remark by former AIADMK legislator MR Vijayabaskar, which were submitted to the Governor, Bharathi said. The evidence was submitted to DVAC as well to corroborate the systematic practice of horse-trading in the State, he added. "We submitted the evidence as supplementary to our complaint dated July 1, on the systematic practice of horse-trading by the ruling TVK," Bharathi told reporters. The party had included the statement made by Vijayabaskar.

(PTI)



KARNATAKA TO SET UP 10,000 BHARAT JODO YUVA SANGHAS

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister G Parameshwara on Monday said the Government has issued an order to establish 10,000 'Bharat Jodo Yuva Sanghas' (youth clubs) statewide, aimed at boosting leadership, sports, culture, scientific temper and social harmony. This was among the first few initiatives announced by the DK Shivakumar-led Cabinet, soon after it took charge of governing the State on June 3. "We have issued an official order to establish 10,000 Bharat Jodo Yuva Sanghas across Gram Panchayats and urban wards to promote sports, culture, scientific temper and social harmony among young people," Parameshwara posted on 'X'. He said, "One Sangha will be formed in every Gram Panchayat; one for every 4,000 people in Town Panchayats; every 6,000 people in Municipalities; every 8,000 people in City Municipal Councils; and every 10,000 people within Municipal Corporation and GBA limits." The initiative will be implemented by the Department of Youth Empowerment and Sports, with support from the Departments of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Urban Development, Revenue and Education, he added.

(PTI)

MOHIT KANDHARI
n Jammu

The Jammu and Kashmir unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday served a legal notice to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah demanding that he either substantiate or withdraw his serious allegations that the national party had attempted to bribe National Conference legislators with cash and ministerial berths in a bid to topple his Government.

The notice, which includes a demand for a written retraction and an unconditional public apology within seven days, threatens civil and criminal defamation proceedings, including a `100 crore damages suit, if the Chief Minister fails to comply.

In response to the legal notice, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah took a light-hearted yet defiant tone, calling the communication a "love letter" from the BJP.

Interacting with the media persons at the party head-

quarters in Srinagar, on the sidelines of a homage ceremony, Omar said that he felt "honoured" to be the only politician in Jammu and Kashmir to receive such attention, signalling that the notice only underscored his growing relevance as a political force the saffron party could not ignore.

The chief minister, while addressing National Conference (NC) workers at Hazratbal last week, alleged that the BJP is trying to bring down his Government by engineering a split in his party. He also claimed that an NC MLA from Jammu told him that he was offered `20-30 crore and a ministerial berth to switch sides to the saffron camp.

The notice has been issued through advocate Parimoksh Seth on the instructions of BJP J&K Unit president and Rajya Sabha MP Sat Paul Sharma. It contends that the chief minister's statements have caused serious damage to the reputation and public standing of



Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah

the BJP and its office-bearers.

According to the three-page notice, Abdullah alleged that BJP functionaries had approached certain National Conference MLAs from the Jammu region with offers of `20-30 crore, ministerial berths and restoration of Statehood in an attempt to persuade them to switch allegiance to the BJP. It refers to the chief minister's allegation that a senior BJP office-bearer, who is also

a lawyer practising in the Supreme Court, allegedly played a role in offering the inducements. Rejecting the allegations, the BJP has described them as "entirely untrue, malicious and without any factual basis."

The notice states that the allegations were deliberately made to tarnish the party's image and have been widely circulated, thereby causing substantial reputational harm.

1,679 illegal immigrants sent back: Himanta

TONY DAS
n Guwahati

More than 1,600 illegal immigrants from Bangladesh have been repatriated from Assam in the last two years, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday.

Replying to a question from AIUDF legislator Badruddin Ajmal, Sarma laid in the Assembly that the State follows the Central Government's directives in the matter of citizenship, and enough safeguards have been ensured so that human rights violations do not take place while implementing laws in this regard.

"A total of 1,679 illegal immigrants have been repatriated (deported/sent back/expelled) from Assam to Bangladesh in the last two years," Sarma, who also holds the Home and Political Department, said. Sharing the list in the



House, he said the repatriation took place between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2026, after identification of the illegal immigrants.

While some of the illegal immigrants were 'sent back', others faced 'expulsion', while

a few were returned to their home country through the process of 'deportation'.

Sarma said no identified illegal immigrant is repatriated if any appeal is pending in the High Court or the Supreme Court.

Asked about the procedure followed by the Government to 'push back' the infiltrators, the CM said that the subject of citizenship is a matter under the Central Government.

The State Government follows the existing provisions of law as well as the directions issued by the Centre from time to time while taking action against illegal immigrants.

The Assam Government does not deal directly with any other foreign country, bypassing the Centre, he said.

"The State Government implements the provisions of law as well as directions issued by the Centre pertaining to the citizenship matter. While implementing such laws and directions, enough safeguards are put in place so that the human rights of an individual are not violated," Sarma added.

Ladakh to get hill councils for all 7 districts: Chief Secretary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Leh

The Union Territory Administration will constitute an Autonomous Hill Development Council (AHDC) in each of Ladakh's seven districts, Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra announced on Monday.

The official described the move as a major step towards strengthening grassroots governance and balanced development across the region.

Ladakh moved from two districts to seven in April 2026, when Sham, Nubra, Changthang, Zaskar, and Drass were notified as new districts. Elected representation until now has remained with the two existing councils, one each in Leh and Kargil. "Ladakh Administration



Chief Secretary Ashish Kundra

has decided to constitute an Autonomous Hill Development Council in each of the seven districts. It is a major step towards democratic decentralisation and grassroots governance," Kundra told reporters. He said Section 3(1) of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Act already provides for a council for every district, to be constituted from a date the Government notifies in the Gazette.

Vietnam boat tragedy: Survivors slam lack of medical aid

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Hyderabad/Amaravati

Survivors of the Vietnam tourist boat tragedy expressed outrage over the absence of timely medical preparedness and trained personnel at the site of the accident that claimed several lives, saying they were forced to perform CPR in a desperate attempt to save fellow passengers pulled from the sea.

A total of 20 tourists from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana who survived the Vietnam boat tragedy arrived in Hyderabad on a flight late on Sunday after being repatriated from Vietnam.

A tourist speedboat carrying 32 Indian tourists, three crew members and an attendant capsized near Hon May Rut Ngoai off Phu Quoc Island on Saturday while returning to An Thoi Port in Vietnam. Fifteen Indian tourists were killed, and 21 others were rescued, with two survivors remaining in critical condition.

Govinda, a native of Rajahmundry and an employee of the mobile company that organised the trip, recounted the desperate moments on the island.



"There was no proper medical team on the island. We did whatever we could with the little knowledge we had. We performed CPR and tried to keep people alive, but many slipped away before our eyes. Had trained doctors, oxygen support and even basic emergency facilities been available, some of them could have survived," he said.

According to him, 35 people were on board, and many were rescued from the sea, but there were no trained doctors on the island

to administer CPR or provide emergency treatment. He said the Boat's crew, jet ski operators and members of their own group rushed to rescue passengers immediately after the vessel overturned. However, professional medical assistance arrived much later. "Everyone tried to help. We managed to save some people, but official medical help arrived much later. We requested an air ambulance, but were told one was not available. Ambulance boats

came only after some time, and the critically injured were shifted later," he added.

Of the 29 tourists from Andhra Pradesh who were part of the trip, 26 survived while three lost their lives.

Govind was travelling in the second boat when the accident occurred about 400 metres away. "The first boat had already left while we were preparing to start. Suddenly, we saw it tilt before capsizing. We heard people screaming for help and rushed towards them immediately," he said.

Quoting survivors from the capsized boat, he said strong waves forced the captain to slow down, triggering panic among the passengers.

As frightened passengers moved to one side, the boat became unstable, tilted further and eventually overturned.

"We ourselves tried to revive those who had stopped breathing. We saved one or two people, but many were in a critical condition. If qualified medical personnel had been there, at least five or six more lives might have been saved," he said.

For many, the tragedy was deeply personal.

Govind shared the experience of watching his long-time associates perish. Among the three deceased from Andhra Pradesh were Sudheer, a businessman he had known for a decade and Jayalakshmi, the wife of Gelle Kishore, a close friend for 20 years.

"Watching people you have known for years die in front of you, while feeling completely helpless, is something I can never forget," he said.

Harihar Srinivas, another survivor from West Godavari district, narrowly escaped the tragedy because he was waiting to board a separate boat nearby when the accident unfolded.

The ill-fated first boat had travelled barely 100 metres after leaving the island when the strong water currents caused it to tilt to one side and capsized.

"It all happened within moments. We could only watch in horror as the boat suddenly overturned," said Srinivas, who witnessed the incident from a distance of around 100 metres.

Brewers body calls for Bihar liquor policy reset

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Brewers Association of India (BAI) has urged the Bihar Government to undertake a comprehensive review of the State's liquor prohibition policy, arguing that the law has failed to eliminate alcohol consumption while creating severe social, economic and administrative consequences.

In a letter to Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, BAI Director General Mr Vinod Giri has stated that Bihar stands at a critical policy crossroads and has an opportunity to replace "an ineffective prohibition model with a socially responsible and economically sustainable regulatory framework."

BAI, the apex body representing India's largest beer manufacturers, including AB InBev, Carlsberg and United Breweries, said the evidence accumulated over the last decade suggests that prohibition has merely shifted alcohol consumption from regulated and taxed channels to an underground and unregulated economy.



Representing India's largest beer manufacturers, including AB InBev, Carlsberg and United Breweries, BAI pointed out that over 11.3 lakh cases have been registered and more than 17 lakh people have been arrested under prohibition laws since 2016, while illegal liquor seizures continue to rise year after year.

The Association argued that the policy has diverted enormous police and judicial resources toward enforcement while organised bootlegging networks have expanded across the State.

Calling the fiscal implications of prohibition "staggering", BAI estimated that Bihar has foregone up to `60,000 crore in excise revenues over the last decade, in addition to losses suf-

fered by hospitality, tourism, logistics and ancillary industries.

BAI has proposed a phased and carefully regulated approach focused on moderation and harm reduction. Its recommendations include introduction of low-alcohol beverages such as beer and wine as the first step, limited rollout in urban areas and economic zones with good regulatory oversight, adoption of alcohol-content based taxation models to encourage lower-strength beverages, creation of dedicated funds for de-addiction programmes and rehabilitation services and mandating allocation of over 50 per cent of the factory floor jobs to women to support their economic empowerment amongst others.

Kerala: No rift with BJP leadership on Thazhamon issue, says KS Radhakrishnan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Kochi

Senior BJP leader KS Radhakrishnan on Monday asserted that there was no rift between him and the party's State leadership over his demand to end the hereditary claim of the Thazhamon family to the post of Tantri (chief priest) of the Sabarimala temple, saying the party's stand was to protect the sanctity of temple traditions.

Responding to questions from the media on whether his remarks had put him at odds with the State leadership, Radhakrishnan said the BJP had a clear and consistent policy on safeguarding the ritual purity and customs of all temples.

"The BJP does not have a stand limited to any one temple. The party's policy is



to protect the sanctity of traditions in all temples. Since the BJP has a strong and clear policy on temple affairs, there is no need to discuss such issues within the party every now and then," he said.

Asked about BJP leaders visiting Sabarimala Tantri Kandararu Rajeevaru after he was released on bail in the Sabarimala gold loss case, Radhakrishnan said such visits were

made out of personal relationships. "There may be personal relationships. Anyone may visit a person on that basis," he said.

Reiterating his demand to end the hereditary practice, Radhakrishnan alleged that the present Tantri, Kandararu Rajeevaru, was an accused in two cases related to the Sabarimala gold loss incident.

He said the post of Tantri should not automatically pass from father to son and that only those who were qualified and competent should be appointed.

"The courts have observed that the sons of Tantris should be legitimately competent to hold the post. Tantric knowledge has to be systematically acquired. This is not family property to be inherited merely because the father held the post," he said.

Karnataka issues SOP for State-run temple donations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Bengaluru

The Karnataka Government has issued an SOP aimed at ensuring the security, transparency, and accountability of donations at State-run temples.

The SOP makes it mandatory to install CCTV or web cameras, promotes digital payment systems through QR codes for donations, and prescribes several other measures.

The Standard Operating Procedures were issued days after Chief Minister DK Shivakumar last week directed officials to install CCTV cameras in all major temples associated with the Hindu Religious Institutions and



Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar

Charitable Endowments (Muzrai) Department across the State, following allegations of embezzlement of donations received at the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

"It has come to the notice of the authorities that incidents of theft from temple donation boxes (hundis) have been reported in various States across the

country and have been widely covered in different media," the Government circular said.

"Further, cases of theft and misuse of cash and valuables during the counting of hundi collections and maintenance of accounts in temples under the jurisdiction of the Department of Religious Endowments in

the State have also been observed," it said.

In this context, officials concerned have been directed to implement precautionary measures to protect movable assets belonging to temples across the State.

The measures include identifying suitable locations within temple premises, installing hundis in places clearly visible to the public, and providing adequate security. It is mandatory to install CCTV/web cameras covering the Hundis from all four directions.

The recorded footage shall be securely stored on a server. The CCTV feeds shall be monitored by the Muzrai section in the offices of the DC and sub-divisional officers.

India, Japan review defence ties at Tokyo policy dialogue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

India and Japan on Monday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral defence ties and discussed ways to deepen cooperation in emerging domains, including defence industrial collaboration, technological innovation, cyber security, space and other areas of shared strategic interest, the defence ministry said.

The key meeting followed soon after Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's visit to India from July 1 to 3 for the 16th India-Japan annual summit. It was Takaichi's first official visit to India. Giving details of the latest parleys, the defence ministry said the talks were held under the aegis of the 8th Defence Policy Dialogue in Tokyo. The Indian delegation was led by Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, and the Japanese delegation was led by Vice Minister of Defence for International Affairs Kano Koji.

Both sides reviewed the significant progress made in bilateral defence cooperation since the previous Defence Policy Dialogue and reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership.

The two countries held comprehensive discussions



Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, right, and Japan's Vice Minister of Defence for International Affairs, Kano Koji, during the 8th India-Japan Defence Policy Dialogue in Tokyo, Japan PTI

on the prevailing regional and global security environment and exchanged views on issues of mutual interest.

The dialogue reviewed the whole gamut of bilateral defence engagements, including military-to-military exchanges, co-operation between joint headquarters, maritime cooperation, defence exercises, capacity building, defence equipment and technology cooperation, including maritime technology, and enhanced institutional interactions.

Both sides welcomed the steady expansion of defence cooperation and underscored the importance of maintaining regular high-level exchanges and dialogue mechanisms.

They discussed probable outcomes for the forthcoming Ministerial visits, including 2+2 later this year.

The two delegations also discussed ways to deepen cooperation in emerging domains, including defence industrial collaboration, technological innovation, cyber security, space, and other areas of shared strategic interest.

Both sides expressed satisfaction with the growing convergence between India and Japan on regional and global security issues and agreed to continue working closely in the Indo-Pacific. They reiterated their commitment to promoting a free, open and rules-based

Indo-Pacific region founded on respect for international law. Defence Secretary appreciated Japan's continued engagement with India in the defence sector and highlighted the importance of strengthening practical cooperation under the framework of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership. Kano Koji reaffirmed Japan's commitment to further expanding defence ties with India across priority areas.

Earlier in the day, Defence Secretary called on Japanese Minister of Defence Shinjiro Koizumi, and conveyed greetings of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. Both sides reaffirmed the growing momentum of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership. He also presented an invitation from the Raksha Mantri to the Defence Minister of Japan for his visit to India at the earliest opportunity.

Defence Secretary commenced his visit by laying a wreath at the Self-Defense Forces Memorial Stone in Tokyo, paying tribute to the members of the Japan Self-Defense Forces who have made the supreme sacrifice in the service of their nation.

The visit underscored the growing and deepening defence ties, mutual respect, and shared commitment of India and Japan towards peace, security, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

Varanasi gets reuse action plan for treated wastewater

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

Varanasi has joined the list of cities with its own reuse action plan for safe reuse of treated wastewater, with the National Mission for Clean Ganga describing it as a "landmark" moment in India's journey towards the reuse of treated wastewater.

The action plan for Varanasi was unveiled by Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil at the water resources secretaries' conference in New Delhi on Monday in the presence of Minister of State for Jal Shakti Raj Bhushan Choudhary and Water Resources Secretary VL Kantha Rao. The Mission said the action plans show how the national framework on safe reuse of treated wastewater (SRTW) gets translated into ground reality.

The plans map out exactly



where treated water can go, including thermal power plants, railways, urban landscaping and irrigation, matching supply from sewage treatment plants with real demand centres in each city.

"India generates approximately 72,368 million litres per day (MLD) of sewage every day from urban households. Only 44 per cent of that has treatment infrastructure, and much of what gets

treated is never reused. That's a resource going to waste, literally," the Mission said in a post on social media.

It said the SRTW initiative is a national push to stop treating used water as waste and start treating it as "Apna Jal" — Our Water", a resource to be safely reused instead of freshwater.

The Mission said the national framework on SRTW, released in November 2022, lays the foundation through uniform quality standards, State-level policies, financing mechanisms and a shift from "treat-and-dispose" to "treat-and-reuse".

Noting that India is the world's 13th most water-stressed country, the Mission said groundwater is over-exploited across much of the country and "every drop of treated water reused is a drop of freshwater saved for drinking, farming and industry".

3 kids die of Chandipura virus in Gujarat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Gandhinagar

Gujarat has reported seven confirmed cases of the Chandipura virus (CHPV) in the last few weeks, of which three patients have died, while four are under medical treatment, Health Minister Praful Pansheriya said on Monday.

All the patients were under the age of 10, he said.

The minister, who chaired a high-level meeting in Gandhinagar to review the CHPV outbreak in the State,



said blood sample reports of eight suspected patients of the virus are still awaited.

The health department is continuously working towards control of the virus, treatment of patients and

surveillance operations, he maintained. The Chandipura virus causes fever, with symptoms similar to the flu, and acute encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). The pathogen is a member of the Vesiculovirus genus of the family Rhabdoviridae. It is transmitted by vectors like mosquitoes, ticks and sandflies. "Blood samples of 27 suspected patients of the virus were earlier sent for testing. Of these, reports of seven came back positive, while 12 tested negative," he informed.

Dry Gujarat logs over 300 alcohol-linked assault calls daily

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Ahmedabad

Despite Gujarat's long-standing prohibition policy, alcohol-related violence continues to place a significant burden on the State's emergency response system, with official data indicating that police receive more than 300 calls every day involving assaults linked to intoxicated individuals.

According to emergency response statistics for the period between September 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026, the State's 112 emergency helpline registered 83,747 alcohol-related assault incidents, making it the third most common category of police emergencies after general assault cases and public disturbances.

During the ten-month period, the emergency service handled 8.30 lakh police-related calls, averaging 2,741 calls per day.



Vice President CP Radhakrishnan is briefed by Minister of State for Defence and senior Ministry of Defence officials on the National Cadet Corps and Sainik Schools in New Delhi PTI

VP urges States to strengthen NCC, expand Sainik schools

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan on Monday called for greater participation of States to strengthen NCC and expand Sainik Schools. He was briefed on the National Cadet Corps (NCC) and Sainik Schools by the Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth, along with officers of the Ministry of Defence in New Delhi.

Appreciating the NCC's contribution to nation-building, the vice president described the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat Camps as an excellent initiative for strengthening national integration. He also lauded the NCC's community service initiatives, including the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, and welcomed the establishment of the NCC Alumni Association.

Emphasising that strengthening the NCC is a shared national responsibility, Radhakrishnan called for greater infrastructure development, enhanced coordination with State Governments on issues such as land and training infrastructure, and assured all possible support in engaging with the States.

Radhakrishnan was also briefed on the functioning and expansion of Sainik Schools, including the existing and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models.

Suggesting that the growing demand among students and parents be addressed, the vice president observed that each State could aim to have three to five Sainik Schools.

He also proposed exploring the possibility of increasing the intake capacity of existing Sainik schools.

Bihar CM launches subsidised heli-tourism service

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE n Patna

Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary on Monday launched the subsidised 'Bihar Heli-Tourism and Air Tourism Service Scheme-2026' to provide affordable air services to the public for select tourist destinations in the State.

Bookings under the scheme commenced on Monday, while helicopter services will operate every Saturday and Sunday from July 18.

The scheme was launched at a function in the State Capital.

According to a statement by the Chief Minister's Office, "The CM launched the subsidised 'Bihar Heli-Tourism and Air Tourism Service Scheme-2026' to provide affordable air tourism services to the general public for select tourist destinations in the State. The initiative aims to establish Bihar on the global tourism map." Under the scheme, subsidised helicopter services have been introduced



Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary with others during the inauguration of Bihar Heli-Tourism and Air Tourism Service Scheme-2026 in Patna PTI

from Patna to Rajgir, Valmikinagar and Kaimur. The Government will provide a subsidy of up to ₹15,422 per ticket, the statement said.

"Expansion of the tourism sector will create new employment opportunities for local youth and promote

homestays, local handicrafts and rural tourism. Private investment in the tourism sector will be encouraged through the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. The CM urged the people of Bihar to become ambassadors of the state's brand and

showcase its historical, cultural, religious and natural heritage to the world," the statement said.

He said no other State in the country has such an extensive network of quality rural roads as Bihar. Villages across the State are now equipped with essential infrastructure, including roads, electricity and water supply, he added.

He said Bihar was no longer known only for its rich history and spiritual heritage but was steadily emerging as a major destination for modern tourism. "Bihar is the land of Lord Buddha, Lord Mahavira, the world-renowned Nalanda University and the ancient Magadha Empire — a cradle of great civilisation and culture. The State Government aims to give these historical, religious and cultural heritage sites greater recognition at the national and international levels and attract more tourists to Bihar," he said.

Datia bypoll: Narottam back BJP candidate Ashutosh Tiwari

GIRISH SHARMA n Bhopal

The campaign for the Datia Assembly by-election gathered momentum on Monday as the BJP and Congress put up a show of strength during the filing of nominations by their candidates, while emotional appeals and sharp political exchanges dominated the day's events.

Former Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra turned emotional while addressing a BJP public meeting, dismissing the Opposition's claims of divisions within the party. His voice choked with emotion as he pledged to campaign tirelessly for BJP candidate



BJP candidate Ashutosh Tiwari files his nomination papers in the presence of Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav and Narottam Mishra in Datia PTI

Ashutosh Tiwari. "Congress says there is a rift in the BJP. Look around, we are all standing together. I will bow before every household in Datia to ensure Ashutosh Tiwari's victory," Mishra said.

CM Mohan Yadav sought to reinforce the message of unity, saying, "Narottam, we are entrusting our younger brother Ashutosh Tiwari to you. It is now your responsibility to ensure his victory."

Taking a swipe at the Congress candidate, Mishra described Ghanshyam Singh, popularly known as Raja Saheb, as "an expired homoeopathy pill that may be sweet but has no effect." He also contrasted the two candidates, saying one was born into privilege while the other had dedicated his life to public service from a young age.

Earlier in the day, Congress nominee Ghanshyam Singh filed his nomination in the presence of Pradesh Congress Committee president Jitu Patwari, Leader of Opposition Umang Singhar, former Chief Minister Digvijaya Singh, former MLA Rajendra Bharti and Samajwadi Party State

president Manoj Yadav. Later, BJP candidate Ashutosh Tiwari submitted his nomination papers accompanied by CM Mohan Yadav, BJP State president Hemant Khandelwal, Narottam Mishra and other leaders. Nayak expressed disappointment over being denied the party ticket despite assurances after the 2023 Assembly elections. He alleged that the state leadership had repeatedly overlooked him and said all political options remained open. Nayak claimed that during a recent meeting, Digvijaya Singh had acknowledged positive feedback about him but expressed concerns over his past association with the

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and his proximity to BJP MP VD Sharma. "I have no issue with Congress candidate Ghanshyam Singh, but the state leadership has treated me unfairly. Ashutosh Tiwari is like my younger brother. I am still considering my future course of action," he said.

Addressing the Congress gathering, Digvijaya publicly apologised to Nayak, acknowledging that he had opposed Nayak's candidature in 2023 because he had only recently joined the Congress from the BJP. He praised Nayak's commitment during the previous Assembly election campaign and apologised if his actions had caused any hurt.

INS Sudarshini joins Grand Parade of Sails in Boston

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Indian Navy's sail training ship INS Sudarshini has taken part in the Grand Parade of Sails in Boston, days after representing the country at a grand nautical event hosted in the New York Harbour to mark the 250th anniversary of the US' independence.

The ship arrived in Boston on July 12, India's defence ministry said on Monday.

After her successful participation in the Sail 4th 250 celebrations in New York, INS Sudarshini took part in the Grand Parade of Sails, marking the commencement of Sail Boston 2026, it said in a statement. Raghuram Sastry, Consul General of India in Boston, embarked on the vessel for



Indian Naval Sail Training Ship (STS) INS Sudarshini participates in the grand parade of sails at Boston in USA PTI

the Grand Parade of Sails and the ship's ceremonial entry into Boston.

Sailing proudly with the Indian tricolour, INS Sudarshini passed prominent landmarks including Castle Island and the Seaport District before berthing at

Boston Fish Pier, the ministry said. "Joining an international fleet of over 60 tall ships from more than 20 nations, INS Sudarshini is representing India as a maritime ambassador of goodwill during her ongoing Lokayan 2026 transoceanic

expedition," it said. Lokayan 2026 is the ship's 10-month transoceanic expedition, which reflects the Indian Navy's commitment to strengthening maritime cooperation, building international goodwill and deepening engagement with partner navies.

Reinforcing the Indian Navy's commitment to maritime diplomacy, international goodwill and cultural exchange, the ship will remain open to visitors from July 12 to 15, the statement said. Following successful port calls at Norfolk, Baltimore, and New York, INS Sudarshini's participation in Sail Boston 2026 "further strengthens the growing India-US maritime partnership and showcases India's rich seafaring heritage on the global stage," it said.

TN CM visits Perambur, launches grievance app

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Chennai

In his first official engagement in Perambur after the Assembly election, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay formally opened his newly renovated MLA office on Monday.

He also unveiled a technology-driven public grievance mobile application specifically for Perambur residents.

The upgraded facility in Sharma Nagar First Street in Vyasarpadi includes a dedicated workspace for the CM, CCTV surveillance, and a 10-member staff tasked with managing daily public petitions, according to official sources.

CM Vijay contested and won from both the Perambur and Tiruchy East constituencies, eventually vacating the Tiruchy East seat to retain



Perambur. The MLA office also houses an integrated common service centre (E-Sevai maiyyam) to expedite civic requests. Meanwhile, the newly launched app allows citizens to directly submit and track complaints

related to electricity, water supply, roads, sanitation, and access to government welfare schemes.

He is also expected to launch the State's new ration card distribution scheme; the CM will inspect a ration shop

in MKB Nagar. He is scheduled to hand over new ration cards to the first 50 eligible beneficiaries, along with essential commodities and land ownership patts.

The schedule includes a visit to an MTC electric vehicle (EV) charging station near the Vyasarpadi Metro and a review of commuter amenities at a local MTC bus depot.

Coinciding with his visit, the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has floated a Rs 48 lakh tender to prepare a comprehensive Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the constituency. The integrated area development plan aims to address longstanding urban challenges across Perambur's lower-income neighbourhoods, targeting flooding hotspots, drinking water issues, parking shortages, and the heavily polluted Captain Cotton Canal.



Editor's

TAKE

India finally arrives in the South Pacific

Prime Minister Modi's visit to New Zealand — the first by an Indian Prime Minister in four decades — resets bilateral ties after years of neglect

When Narendra Modi closed the final leg of a nine-day arc that began in Jakarta, in New Zealand, he did so by closing a much longer gap. No Indian Prime Minister had set foot in New Zealand in forty years; only Indira Gandhi in 1968 and Rajiv Gandhi in 1986 had come before him.

That the visit lasted barely a day, bookended by talks with Christopher Luxon and an address to the diaspora at Auckland's Spark Arena, only underlined how overdue it was.

The three-nation itinerary was not incidental. Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand together mark the arc of India's "Act East" outreach into the Indo-Pacific, a region where Delhi has spent a decade playing catch-up to China's economic and naval footprint. In Jakarta, Modi discussed heritage conservation at Prambanan; in Australia, the two countries struck a uranium export deal, feeding India's push towards 100 gigawatts of nuclear capacity by 2047.

New Zealand was the finale, smaller in scale but symbolically significant as the relationship's most underdeveloped corner. The challenges are real and long-standing. Trade talks, first launched in 2010, collapsed in 2015 over India's reluctance to open its dairy sector, to protect its millions of small farmers.

Even the Free Trade Agreement signed this April, ahead of Modi's visit, reflects that caution: bulk infant formula and select re-exports get duty-free access, but butter and cheese—the products New Zealand's dairy industry actually wants to sell—stay largely outside the deal, prompting open disappointment from its dairy lobby.

Separately, the presence of pro-Khalistan groups in New Zealand—including a 2024 referendum push by Sikhs for Justice that drew a formal protest from Delhi—remains a running irritant, echoing the friction that has strained India's ties with Canada. Against these frictions sit sturdier binding factors: a 200,000-strong Indian diaspora, growing convergence on Indo-Pacific maritime security, and a shared wariness of an assertive China across the Pacific. These pulled the two governments towards each other despite the trade impasse, and this visit turned that convergence into tangible outcomes. Modi and Luxon elevated the relationship to a strategic partnership and signed eighteen outcomes, including ten formal agreements: a four-year roadmap for cooperation, a reciprocal logistics support pact between the two navies, a maritime cooperation framework, and a pledge to jointly tackle transnational crime, from drug trafficking to cyber-enabled fraud.

They also set an aspirational target of doubling two-way trade to NZ\$7 billion by 2030. The real test now is follow-through. The FTA still needs ratification and entry into force, and its dairy carve-outs will keep testing New Zealand's patience unless Delhi shows more flexibility over time. And the defence commitments—naval exercises and cyber cooperation—need budgets and calendars behind them, not just communiqués.

Dual nationality and divided loyalties

The Dutch-Moroccan experience, shaped by decades of integration challenges, political controversy and competing visions of citizenship, offers a revealing case study of one of the defining social and political dilemmas confronting modern Europe



BHOPINDER SINGH

People of Moroccan origin constitute one of the largest immigrant-origin communities in the Netherlands, numbering approximately 450,000. For decades, the Moroccan-Dutch community has been at the centre of debates surrounding integration, identity and social cohesion. Issues such as religious extremism, youth unemployment, educational disadvantage, socio-economic segregation, and concerns about crime among a small minority of young men have received significant media and political attention.

Certain high-profile incidents intensified these debates. The 2004 assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by Mohammed Bouyeri, a Dutch citizen of Moroccan descent with Islamist extremist motivations, and the exposure of the Hofstad Network (2002-2005), a jihadist group whose members were involved in extremist activities, became defining moments in Dutch discussions about radicalisation and integration. Although these cases involved a very small number of individuals, they contributed to public anxiety and provided political ammunition for right-wing movements, particularly the Party for Freedom (PVV), led by Geert Wilders, which has repeatedly argued that the Netherlands faces what it describes as a "Moroccan problem".

One of the most contentious issues arising from these debates has been dual nationality. Dutch law permits dual citizenship in certain circumstances, but nationalist politicians in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe have questioned whether it can create competing loyalties. Their argument is rooted in the belief that citizenship should represent an exclusive commitment to one nation and that full integration requires a primary and unambiguous national identity.

From this perspective, dual nationality may create situations in which individuals face conflicting obligations if the interests of their two countries diverge. Critics argue that, while dual nationals may legally pledge allegiance to the Netherlands, their emotional or cultural attachment may remain divided. They contend that a cohesive nation requires a shared civic identity and that multiple national affiliations may weaken that sense of belonging.

This debate resurfaced during the FIFA World Cup when Morocco defeated the Netherlands in a tense knockout match



decided by a penalty shoot-out. The Moroccan national team, known as the Atlas Lions, has historically included many players from the global Moroccan diaspora. Meanwhile, the Dutch national team has long reflected the multicultural character of Dutch society, with legendary players of immigrant heritage such as Ruud Gullit, Frank Rijkaard, Clarence Seedorf and Patrick Kluivert.

The match highlighted a new dimension of the identity debate. Several members of Morocco's squad were born or raised in the Netherlands, including Noussair Mazraoui and Sofyan Amrabat, while others developed their careers within Dutch football structures. These players had eligibility options but ultimately chose to represent Morocco, the country associated with their family heritage.

There were undoubtedly sporting considerations involved. Morocco had established itself as a highly competitive international team, reaching the latter stages of major tournaments. A player's decision is influenced by many factors, including football opportunities, personal relationships, coaching environments and family connections.

Nevertheless, the symbolic significance of these choices was difficult to ignore. Ismael Saibari, closely associated with Dutch football through PSV Eindhoven, chose Morocco despite eligibility ties to Spain and Belgium. Explaining his decision, he said:

"Playing for Morocco was a choice from the heart." Similarly, Noussair Mazraoui explained that although he had discussions with Dutch coach Ronald Koeman, he had

already decided: "When I spoke with Ronald Koeman, I already had the feeling that I would choose only Morocco and nothing else."

For supporters of a more nationalist view of citizenship, such statements reinforce concerns about divided loyalties. Politicians such as Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, Nigel Farage in the United Kingdom, and Marine Le Pen in France argue that citizenship should involve a clear and primary allegiance to the nation-state. From this perspective, citizens born or raised in a country choosing to represent another nation because of their ancestral identity raises questions about national belonging.

Supporters of this view contend that a nation functions best when citizens share a strong civic identity. They argue that immigration and naturalisation policies should encourage newcomers and their descendants to develop a deep identification with their adopted country. However, critics argue that sporting representation should not be treated as a direct measure of civic loyalty. They point out that many people maintain multiple identities and that a connection to ancestral heritage does not necessarily diminish commitment to the country where someone lives, works and contributes to society.

The debate became more visible after Morocco's victory, when celebrations took place in several Dutch cities with large Moroccan-origin populations. Many were peaceful expressions of pride, though incidents of disorder and clashes with the police led to criticism and renewed discussion about integration and social cohesion.

Ultimately, the question of dual nationality reflects a broader European debate about belonging in an era of migration and globalisation. The challenge is finding a balance: allowing individuals to maintain their cultural heritage while ensuring a strong shared commitment to the civic values and institutions of the country they call home.

The responsibility rests on both sides. Host societies must create genuine opportunities for inclusion, while immigrant communities and their descendants must engage with and invest in the national identity of the societies in which they live. The future of multicultural democracies may depend on whether multiple identities can coexist alongside a common sense of citizenship.

The writer is a former Lieutenant Governor of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Puducherry, and a military veteran

The infrastructure we cannot afford to ignore



SIDDHARTH ROY

2ND OPINION

Whenever a new highway, bridge or airport is inaugurated, it becomes a visible symbol of India's progress. Such projects inspire confidence because they represent ambition translated into reality. Yet, there is another kind of infrastructure that rarely attracts headlines, despite determining whether these physical assets ultimately succeed. It cannot be seen, photographed or inaugurated. It is the invisible infrastructure of trust, accountability and institutional integrity.

Every nation invests in roads, railways and power networks because they create economic opportunities and improve quality of life. India has made remarkable strides in this regard over the past decade. However, physical infrastructure alone cannot transform a country into a developed nation. The institutions that maintain these assets,

enforce standards and inspire public confidence are equally important. Without them, even the finest engineering achievements eventually lose their value.

Consider any public service. A modern hospital cannot deliver better outcomes if patients distrust its doctors or administration. Likewise, digital platforms remain underutilised if citizens fear data breaches, and universities cannot strengthen the economy if employers lose confidence in their graduates. Infrastructure functions best when people trust the systems behind it. India has already witnessed the power of invisible infrastructure. The success of Aadhaar, the Unified Payments Interface and DigiLocker depended not only on technology but also on citizens believing these platforms would make life simpler, safer and more reliable. Trust transformed innovation into mass adoption. The same principle extends to economic growth. Investors seek stable regulatory environments where contracts are honoured and policies remain predictable. Entrepreneurs take calculated risks when institutions uphold fairness. Citizens are more willing to pay taxes when they believe public resources are utilised responsibly. Even disaster management becomes more effective when communities trust official warnings and cooperate with the authorities. In each case, confidence acts as a multiplier that enhances the benefits of every physical investment. As a civil engineer, I have learned that no structure remains durable without a robust maintenance ecosystem. Designing a bridge is only the beginning. Its longevity depends upon quality inspections, transparent

procurement, timely repairs and professional accountability. These invisible processes rarely receive public attention, yet they determine whether infrastructure remains safe and functional for generations. The same principle applies to nation-building itself.

India's aspiration to become a developed country by 2047 therefore demands a broader understanding of infrastructure. Alongside highways, ports and industrial corridors, equal emphasis must be placed on judicial efficiency, ethical governance, administrative competence, quality education and professional standards. These investments may not produce dramatic photographs, but they generate something even more valuable: lasting public confidence.

Invisible infrastructure is not created by governments alone. Every honest public servant, responsible business leader, dedicated teacher and conscientious citizen contributes to an environment where trust flourishes. Development is sustained when institutions and individuals reinforce one another through integrity and accountability. Concrete may connect cities, but trust connects people. India's future will not be defined only by the kilometres of roads it builds or the skylines it transforms. It will ultimately be measured by the strength of the institutions that stand behind those achievements. That invisible infrastructure will decide whether our development remains impressive on paper or truly endures across generations.

The writer, a civil engineer, is a consultant at Rashtriya Raksha University under the Ministry of Home Affairs

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sleep is the foundation of good health

Refer 'The Healing Power of Sleep' by Rajyogi Brahma Kumar Nikunj Ji. The article rightly reminds readers that sleep is not wasted time but the body's most vital period of restoration and healing. Modern medical research increasingly confirms what ancient wisdom has long recognised — that quality sleep is indispensable for physical, mental and emotional well-being. The outdated belief that "sleep is for the weak" deserves to be discarded. Longevity expert Bryan Johnson aptly describes sleep as a superpower because no supplement, energy drink or productivity hack can compensate for chronic sleep deprivation. Sleep is second only to oxygen in sustaining human life. During sleep, the brain consolidates memories, strengthens learning, regulates emotions, repairs tissues, balances hormones, boosts immunity and removes harmful metabolic waste. People who consistently enjoy adequate sleep are more productive, make better decisions and are less vulnerable to obesity, diabetes, heart disease and dementia.

Educational institutions must also rethink practices that glorify sleeplessness. Daytime submission deadlines would serve academic objectives without compromising health. Sleep is not a luxury but the very foundation of lifelong health, happiness and productivity.

HARSH PAWARIA | ROHTAK

Strengthening public trust in the police

The controversy surrounding *Satluji*, the recently banned film inspired by the life of human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khaira, has generated widespread debate across Punjab. Despite the restrictions, many people have reportedly viewed the film through digital platforms. While some believe it highlights the alleged excesses committed by the Punjab Police during the militancy years, others argue that it pays inadequate attention to the horrific violence perpetrated by terrorists, resulting in a one-sided portrayal of a deeply painful period in the state's history. Sensitive subjects involving terrorism, human rights and law enforcement deserve balanced treatment, as selective narratives can reopen old wounds and influence public perceptions.

If the authorities found the film objectionable, such concerns should ideally have been addressed during the certification process rather than after its completion and release. The Punjab Police can strengthen public confidence by promoting transparent, accountable and humane policing, expanding community engagement and demonstrating unwavering respect for human rights. A professional police force that enjoys the trust of the people remains the strongest guarantee of peace, justice and lasting social harmony.

RS NARULA | PATIALA

A voice that will echo forever

The demise of S Janaki Amma at the age of 88 marks the end of one of the most glorious chapters in Indian film music. For more than six decades, her extraordinary voice became the emotional heartbeat of millions, captivating listeners across generations with its remarkable range, versatility and expressive depth.

Whether rendering intricate classical compositions such as Singara Velane Deva, lively folk songs, playful comic numbers or even singing convincingly in a child's voice, she displayed a rare mastery that few singers have ever matched.

Her greatness lay not only in her vocal brilliance but also in her ability to transcend linguistic boundaries. Singing flawlessly in 18 languages, she became a beloved cultural icon across South India and beyond.

By declining the Padma Bhushan, believing the honour had come too late, she made a principled statement without diminishing her immense stature. She required no official recognition; the enduring love of her countless admirers had already crowned her. Though her voice has fallen silent, her immortal songs will continue to inspire generations.

S PADMANABHAN | KOCHI

PIC TALK



An artisan gives the final touches to an idol of Lord Jagannath ahead of the Rath Yatra festival in Nadia, West Bengal.

PHOTO: PTI

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE



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INDIA'S RISING STRATEGIC INFLUENCE IN A VOLATILE WORLD

Appropos the front-page report, "JPC endorses One Nation, One Election" (12 July), the proposal deserves serious consideration as a major electoral reform. If implemented, holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies could significantly reduce the enormous expenditure incurred on frequent polls. Estimates suggest that savings to the national exchequer could be substantial, allowing greater public resources to be directed towards development and welfare.

The reform could also benefit political parties, which currently spend considerable time and resources preparing for successive elections across different states. A common electoral cycle may encourage parties to focus on long-term governance, present more meaningful vision documents and forge stronger alliances where

necessary. Smaller parties, too, would have the opportunity to contest elections more strategically instead of engaging in continuous campaign mode.

Frequent elections keep governments in campaign mode, slowing policy decisions and governance at both the Centre and in the states. Simultaneous elections could enhance political stability, improve governance and create a more favourable environment for economic growth and investment.

While constitutional, logistical and federal concerns must be addressed through consensus, the proposal has significant potential. If Parliament enacts the necessary legislation, *One Nation, One Election* could become a major step towards more efficient governance and a stronger democracy.

VINOD JOHRI | DELHI

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

Five water stories from Dhanbad that can shape Jharkhand’s water future

As climate change makes rainfall more erratic and water increasingly uncertain, Jharkhand’s next generation of water governance must move beyond delivering water schemes to securing water systems



EKLAVYA PRASAD

Dhanbad is rarely associated with water. It is known as India’s coal capital, a landscape of mines, industries and expanding urban settlements. Yet, beneath this industrial identity lies another Dhanbad, one where aquifers sustain millions, ponds continue to recharge groundwater, streams silently carry the burden of urbanisation, and communities negotiate water every single day.

Over the past several years, my work with Megh Pyne Abhiyan (MPA) across rural and urban Dhanbad has convinced me that the district is much more than a mining region. It is a microcosm of Jharkhand’s water realities. The challenges that emerge here—groundwater depletion, contamination, urban flooding, disappearing recharge spaces and climate uncertainty—mirror those confronting the rest of the State. At the same time, Dhanbad has also become a testing ground for innovative solutions. Five stories from the district offer valuable lessons for reimagining water governance in Jharkhand.

The first story comes from rural Dhanbad. Across the blocks of Baliapur, Tundi and Purbi (East) Tundi, covering seven gram panchayats and thirteen villages, MPA’s groundwater assessment found what villagers had always known: groundwater is the backbone of everyday life. It supports drinking water, household needs and agriculture. More importantly, the assessment revealed that local communities possess an intimate understanding of their aquifers. They know when hand pumps begin to fail, which ponds once recharged wells, how mining has altered drainage, and how rainfall has become increasingly unpredictable.

What was striking was that villagers did not merely describe problems. They proposed solutions. Rainwater harvesting, aquifer recharge, the revival of traditional ponds, improved irrigation and safe drinking water emerged as their priorities. Their responses remind us that groundwater governance cannot depend solely on engineering designs and hydrogeological maps. It must also recognise local knowledge as a valuable planning resource. Communities are not passive beneficiaries; they are indispensable partners in water management.

A very different story unfolds in Bartand, Dhanbad, inside my mother’s home, called Uttarayan. Since 2018, this residence has quietly become a living laboratory for understanding groundwater. Rainfall has been measured every day, rainwater harvesting carefully documented, and groundwater levels in a dug well systematically monitored. During this period, nearly 5.8 million litres of rainwater have been harvested to recharge the shallow aquifer, while seasonal groundwater fluctuations have improved by almost eleven feet between May 2018 and May 2026.

The significance of Uttarayan extends far beyond one household. It demonstrates that water consciousness begins with measurement, not assumptions. When people measure rainfall, monitor groundwater and observe recharge, conservation becomes evidence-based rather than symbolic. Imagine if every school, college, government office and public institution in Jharkhand became a similar water observatory. Such citizen-generated datasets would not only deepen scientific understanding but also strengthen the Government’s Catch the Rain campaign through informed public participation.

The third story shifts from one home to an entire city. It began with an inspiring initiative called the Gang of Twenty, a group of students from Carmel School, Dhanbad, who started engaging with local water issues. Their enthusiasm sparked wider conversations about groundwater and eventually contributed to Dhanbad being selected as one of the pilot cities under the National Institute of Urban Affairs’ Shallow Aquifer Management (SAM) programme. Implemented by the Dhanbad Municipal Corporation in partnership with MPA, and mentored by Dr Himanshu Kulkarni of ACWADAM, Pune, and S Vishwanath of Biome Environmental Trust, Bengaluru, the initiative marked an important shift in urban water planning.

Instead of viewing groundwater as an invisible reserve beneath the city, the pilot treated the shallow aquifer as an asset that could be mapped, monitored,



protected and recharged. Recharge interventions and groundwater monitoring were undertaken at Jeevan Jyoti School and Bera Colony in Dhanbad Circle, Bhagatdih and Neeche Mohalla in Jharia Circle, and Laxmi Colony in Sindri Circle. Subsequent monitoring showed encouraging improvements, with groundwater remaining available for longer periods during the summer months. The experience demonstrates that even rapidly growing mining cities can improve groundwater security when urban planning begins with the shallow aquifer rather than ending with pipelines.

Urban groundwater, however, cannot be protected without addressing sanitation. This is perhaps one of Dhanbad’s most important lessons. In the absence of underground sewerage systems, drains, streams and rivers frequently become carriers of sewage. Stormwater drains meant to convey rainwater gradually turn into wastewater channels, contaminating surface water and threatening groundwater quality.

The lesson is straightforward but often ignored. Water supply, drainage, sanitation, rivers and groundwater cannot be planned separately. Healthy drains, streams and wetlands are not vacant land waiting for development. They are essential urban infrastructure that supports recharge, reduces flooding and protects public health. Sustainable cities will emerge only when sanitation and groundwater are planned together.

The final story takes us back to rural Dhanbad, where the challenge is not water availability but water safety. In Gharbar Panchayat of Baliapur Block, studies conducted by MPA in collaboration with the School of Environmental Studies, Jadavpur University, found widespread fluoride contamination in groundwater. In several habitations, more than half of the drinking water sources exceeded the permissible fluoride limits. Significantly, this situation persisted even after piped water supply had reached many villages because people continued to depend on groundwater for convenience, reliability and everyday needs.

This experience reminds us that water security cannot be judged simply by counting household tap connections. Safe drinking water depends equally on water quality, continuous monitoring and informed community behaviour. Addressing fluorosis requires an integrated approach involving hydrogeological investigations, groundwater quality surveillance, safe alternative water sources, rainwater harvesting, aquifer recharge, nutrition, public awareness and institutional convergence. There is no single technological fix.

Taken together, these five stories point towards a larger shift that Jharkhand must embrace. Groundwater remains the invisible foundation of water security across rural and urban landscapes. Traditional ponds, dug wells, wetlands and drainage channels are not relics of the past but living ecological infrastructure. Water challenges differ from one landscape to another, making hydrogeology and local context central to planning. Most importantly, water quantity, water quality, sanitation, climate resilience and community participation are inseparable.

Dhanbad therefore offers Jharkhand something far more valuable than isolated stories. It provides evidence that a different model of water governance is possible, one that begins with understanding aquifers, respects community knowledge, encourages citizen science, integrates institutions and protects the ecological systems on which all water security ultimately depends. As climate change makes rainfall more erratic and water increasingly uncertain, Jharkhand’s next generation of water governance must move beyond delivering water schemes to securing water systems. If these lessons from Dhanbad are scaled thoughtfully, they can help build a State that is not merely water-supplied, but truly water-secure.

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The notion India needs to be Viksit Bharat



AMITABH RANJAN

India stands at a historic inflection point. It is the world’s fastest-growing major economy, a digital innovation leader, and a geopolitical force of increasing consequence. Yet the journey from a rising power to a truly developed nation cannot be measured through GDP figures or infrastructure statistics alone. The defining question is: what guiding principle will sustain India’s transformation into a Viksit Bharat by 2047? The answer lies in a simple but profound idea: Rashtra Pratham — Nation First.

Rashtra Pratham is not a slogan. It is a governing philosophy that places the long-term interests of the nation above sectional, political, institutional and personal considerations. Every successful nation in modern history—post-war Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Germany—achieved development only when governments, businesses and citizens aligned around a shared civilisational purpose. India’s ambition requires no less: a national consensus that transcends electoral cycles, ideological divisions and short-term interests.

Beyond economics: The character question

Development is not merely an economic phenomenon. A developed nation emerges when excellence becomes the norm rather than the exception. India has excelled in technology, medicine, entrepreneurship and public administration—yet the translation of individual excellence into institutional excellence has remained elusive. The challenge has never been the absence of talent; it has been the absence of a culture that consistently places national and institutional interests above narrow personal gains.

The consequences are visible across sectors. Bureaucratic inertia delays nationally important projects. Political polarisation obstructs reforms whose benefits transcend party lines. Academic institutions remain constrained by administrative rigidity. Corporate R&D investment stays below potential. Citizens demand better public services while overlooking civic responsibilities. In each case, the underlying challenge is not capability but orientation. A Rashtra Pratham mindset asks one consistent question: What serves the long-term interests of the nation?

Three arenas for Nation-First action

Consider innovation. India aspires to become a technological leader, with impressive achievements in space, digital infrastructure and pharmaceuticals. Yet national R&D expenditure remains well below that of leading innovation economies. Private capital gravitates towards low-risk investments; universities remain disconnected from industry; and regulation inadvertently discourages experimentation. A Rashtra Pratham approach would reframe innovation not as a commercial activity but as a national imperative, rewarding risk, strengthening academia-industry collaboration, and recognising scientific excellence as a patriotic contribution to nation-building. The same principle applies to governance. India’s administrative institutions have been the backbone of democratic continuity, but a twenty-first-century economy demands greater agility, transparency and outcome orientation. Administrative reforms must be understood not as an internal bureaucratic exercise but as a national priority. When governance improves, its benefits ripple across every sector—business, education, healthcare and social welfare alike.

Corporate India must equally recognise that wealth creation and nation-building are complementary, not competing, objectives. India’s entrepreneurs have built globally respected companies and a thriving start-up ecosystem. However, nations become developed not simply by borrowing technology but by creating it. The ensuing phase of development calls for wholehearted commitment to advanced manufacturing, deep-tech and long-term capital creation. Corporate India has the wherewithal to drive this transformation. It may appear difficult, but choosing to do so would be among the most meaningful expressions of Rashtra Pratham.

Citizens as nation-builders

No national transformation can succeed without people’s active participation and contribution. A developed nation is built by millions of everyday decisions made by ordinary people: respecting public spaces, following rules, paying taxes honestly, recognising merit, conserving resources and participating constructively in civic life. The difference between developed and developing societies more often lies in civic culture than in government policies. Viksit Bharat, therefore, demands not only institutional reforms but also a paradigm shift in civic consciousness.

There is also a deeper civilisational dimension here. India is not merely a modern nation-state; it is one of the world’s oldest continuing civilisations. Concepts such as Lokasangraha (welfare of society), Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah (well-being of all) and Yogakshema (collective prosperity) highlight the idea that the flourishing of an individual cannot be viewed separately from the development of society as a whole. Rashtra Pratham is therefore not a borrowed political doctrine but a contemporary expression of the civilisational ethic that has long shaped India’s global perspective.

Purpose over potential

India is sitting on unprecedented opportunities. Demographic strength, technological capability, entrepreneurial energy and cultural confidence have created conditions previous generations could hardly have imagined. Yet history is replete with nations that possessed immense potential but failed to fulfil it because collective purpose yielded to fragmented interests. The countries that succeeded were those that cultivated a shared commitment to national advancement. The journey to Viksit Bharat will not be completed by government schemes alone, nor by economic growth in isolation. It will be achieved only when every institution and every citizen internalises one conviction: that the nation’s long-term interests must remain paramount. That is the essence of Rashtra Pratham.

And the most enduring lesson of development is that nations become great not when they merely dream of prosperity but when they organise themselves around a purpose larger than themselves. For India, that purpose is clear: Rashtra Pratham — Nation First.



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AI and the vanishing first job: India’s emerging mobility challenge



RAVI POKHARNA

The conversation around Artificial Intelligence (AI) often defaults to a narrative of mass job loss, but emerging evidence suggests a more nuanced shift. McKinsey research (2023, 2025) estimates that around 30 per cent of current work activities in the US, primarily within white-collar sectors, could be automated by 2030. Analysis by Anthropic (2026) and Stanford University (Brynjolfsson, Chandar and Chen; 2025) found that while AI-exposed occupations, such as computer programmers and customer service representatives, have not yet experienced significant rises in unemployment, hiring for younger workers in these roles has slowed measurably. This signals an important shift: firms are not eliminating jobs at scale, but they are reducing hiring at entry level. The layoffs may not come, but the offer letters may come more slowly.

The jobs are safe, the ladder is not

At first glance, India appears relatively insulated. Forty-three per cent of the workforce remains in agriculture, with large shares in construction (12 per cent), retail and transport (18 per cent)—sectors where physical presence and human judgement remain indispensable (PLFS, 2025). AI will not pour

concrete, repair a power line or manage a kirana counter anytime soon.

But India’s growth story has not been driven by these sectors alone. It has been powered by the steady expansion of formal services: IT-BPM, customer support, finance operations, analytics and the growing ecosystem of Global Capability Centres (GCCs). These sectors have historically functioned as engines of aspirational mobility, absorbing educated youth into formal employment. Yet these are precisely the domains where AI is now performing core tasks: writing code, handling customer interactions, processing data and managing workflows. The risk, therefore, is not where India is today, but where it is trying to go.

The most consequential shift is unfolding at the bottom of the pyramid. Entry-level roles in IT services, BPMs and analytics have traditionally operated as training pipelines. Firms hired fresh graduates with low initial productivity, invested in structured training, and scaled them into higher-value roles over time. AI is compressing this model. With AI assistants enabling developers to work faster and autonomous agents resolving most routine customer interactions, firms now require fewer entry-level workers to produce the same output. The result is not mass layoffs, but a structural decline in fresher hiring. In a country where 8-10 million individuals enter the workforce annually (World Bank, ILO), this is a systemic challenge.

Why this matters more for India

India’s youth labour market was already fragile before the AI transition. The graduate unemploy-



ment rate of 11.2 per cent is more than three times the overall unemployment rate of 3.1 per cent (PLFS, 2025). More than 45 per cent of employed graduates are overqualified for their roles (CMIE, India Skills Report 2025). Entry-level wages in IT-BPM have stagnated for over a decade, with starting salaries in the `3.5-4.5 lakh per annum range (TeamLease, 2024-25). AI risks amplifying all three trends: fewer formal-sector entry points, higher skill thresholds for hiring, and slower and more unequal wage progression. The first job is more than employment; it is an economic bridge. It shapes income trajectories, household aspirations and urban mobility. When that bridge narrows, the effects ripple across the economy. This is not a conventional jobs crisis; it is a mobility crisis.

A familiar technological moment

The advent of AI today is comparable to the arrival of computers in the late 20th century. Computers did not eliminate work; they transformed it. Every sector, every business and every activity

became computer-powered. Productivity surged, new industries emerged, and those who adapted gained disproportionately. India seized that moment. Tech services companies, in particular, helped position India as a global IT powerhouse. That wave created millions of jobs and gave India a competitive advantage in the global economy.

AI presents a similar inflection point, creating opportunities for India’s next generation of technology leaders to build for the world. But while AI opens new frontiers, it is also narrowing the entry ramp. For policymakers, the priority should be to incentivise entry-level hiring through apprenticeship-style schemes, tax credits or wage subsidies for firms hiring fresh graduates, while expanding the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) into white-collar sectors as part of a national “first job” guarantee.

Skilling policy must shift from degrees to task-level capability, moving beyond generic coding or AI literacy towards skills that complement AI (for example, problem framing, client management and domain expertise). Job creation must be accelerated in less AI-exposed, labour-intensive sectors such as healthcare, tourism, logistics and the green economy to absorb surplus educated labour. Finally, India needs a real-time labour market observatory that tracks hiring trends, wage movements and occupational demand. In addition to macroeconomic indicators such as the PLFS, high-frequency labour market intelligence is required. For businesses, the imperative is adaptation, not contraction. Firms should redesign entry-level roles by breaking jobs into AI-assist-

ed and human-critical components while retaining structured junior positions focused on judgement, coordination and client-facing tasks. This must be accompanied by institutionalising “AI + human” workflows, where employees are trained not just to use AI tools but also to supervise, validate and integrate them.

AI productivity gains must also be measured responsibly, avoiding their use purely as a cost-cutting lever and instead tracking whether adoption is strengthening or eroding organisational capabilities. Finally, deeper partnerships with academia are essential, including co-designing curricula, offering live projects and enabling early exposure to AI-integrated industry workflows.

AI is not eliminating work yet, but it is reshaping who gets access to it. The evidence from advanced economies offers India a narrow but valuable window. This disruption is not sudden; it is gradual, and it begins at the bottom of the ladder. By getting ahead of this curve through proactive policy, business adaptation and bold entrepreneurship, India can ensure AI augments its demographic dividend rather than renders it obsolete. The lesson from the IT revolution is clear: technological shifts reward early movers. This is the moment for the new-age Narayana Murthys to build the next generation of AI enterprises that serve the world while creating new career pathways for millions of jobseekers.

The writer is Executive Director, Pahle India Foundation. The article includes inputs from Kuntala Karkun, Senior Visiting Fellow, Pahle India Foundation

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Order Order

SC dismisses pleas of 360 Bengal madrassa teachers

The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a batch of petitions filed by about 360 teaching and non-teaching staff of madrassas in West Bengal, challenging the denial of regularisation and payment under the State Government's grant-in-aid scheme.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and A G Masih delivered the judgment after examining the cases of 13 petitioners out of more than 350 such employees to see whether any case was made out for grant of relief. Pronouncing the verdict, the bench said, "We proceeded on the basis that if any one of these 13 petitioners persuaded us to hold in his or her favour, we would examine the remaining cases as well. Unfortunately, none of the 13 petitioners could impress us."

Dismissing all the petitions, the bench said, "Therefore, we have not only rejected the claims of all 13 petitioners whose cases were scrutinised, but have also rejected the claims of all the remaining petitioners. All the writ petitions are devoid of merit and are accordingly dismissed." About 360 teaching and non-teaching staff employed in different madrassas of West Bengal filed around 48 petitions before the top court.

The dispute relates to the West Bengal Madrasah Service Commission Act, 2008, which created a statutory commission to recommend appointments of teachers in recognised madrassas. In 2014, the Calcutta High Court struck down the Act, a decision upheld by its division bench in 2015. However, the Supreme Court stayed the verdict in March 2016.

(PTI)

SC junks PIL on viewing pornography at public places

Observing that it was a policy issue, the Supreme Court on Monday junked a PIL seeking directions to the Centre to formulate a framework to prohibit the viewing of pornography at public places.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohna dismissed the plea and asked the petitioner to approach the Government authorities with a representation.

"Undoubtedly, the issue raised is of paramount importance. However, the subject matter does not involve a question of law requiring examination by this court. It concerns policy issues which need technological advancement and expert consideration. Such issues fall within the domain of experts, especially the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology," the plea said.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by social worker B L Jain, represented by advocate Varun Thakur, seeking directions to formulate a national policy and draft an action plan to curb the viewing of pornography, especially by those not attained the age of majority, and to prohibit the viewing of pornographic material of any form at public places.

"The internet pornography statistics show shocking data, wherein every second, 5,000 porn sites are watched. More than 2 crore porn videos/porn clippings are being launched through the internet..." Under Section 69 A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, the respondents have the power to issue directions for blocking public access of any information through any computer resource," the plea said.

It contended that widespread availability of the internet has made pornographic content easily accessible, leading to excessive consumption and addiction.

Increasing consumption of such content has contributed to the commission of sexual offences, it claimed.

(PTI)

Patna court grants anticipatory bail to Khan Sir

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Patna

A court in Bihar's Patna on Monday granted anticipatory bail to educator Faisal Khan, popularly known as Khan Sir, in connection with the coaching institute firing case. Three staff members of the coaching institute also got anticipatory bail, Khan Sir's lawyer said.

The case relates to a firing incident that occurred in early June after a group of 15-20 people allegedly vandalised Khan Global Studies Institute in the State Capital on June 2 night and hurled stones at its premises.

His two security guards have been accused of firing in the air during the incident. Khan was named in an FIR related to the firing incident. "Six people have been granted bail. The judge first



announced Khan Sir's anticipatory bail, followed by that of his three staff members," lawyer Arvind Kumar Mouar told reporters.

The Patna Civil Court also granted bail to two security guards, who were arrested in connection with the case, he said. "We presented our arguments, and the Public Prosecutor (PP) opposed them. However, the police had already recorded the findings in the case diary



Airfares: SC asks Centre to place rules before it

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Centre to place before it within two weeks the rules framed under the Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024, which is aimed at modernising India's aviation sector. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said the rules be placed before it in a sealed cover, irrespective of whether they have been placed before Parliament.

The apex court passed the order while hearing a plea filed by social activist S Laxminarayanan, who has sought a robust and independent regulator that ensures transparency and passenger protection across the civil aviation sector, and regulatory guidelines to control the "unpredictable fluctuations" in airfare and ancillary charges imposed by private airlines in India.

The counsel appearing for the Centre informed the bench that the draft rules are ready and they are in the process of translation. He said the rules have to be

placed before Parliament. "We grant two weeks' time to the respondents to place before this court in a sealed cover the rules which have been framed, irrespective of the fact whether they are placed before the Houses of Parliament," the bench said.

Senior advocate Ravindra Srivastava, appearing for Laxminarayanan, said till the time the new rules come into effect, the old rules are operating.

Flagging the "exorbitant airfares" being charged, Srivastava said, "The solution is that this court must consider having a robust and effective regulatory mechanism which is independent,".

The bench posted the matter for further hearing on August 3.

While hearing the plea on May 15, the apex court said there should be some rationalisation of airfares and asked the Centre to provide relief to flyers.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who was then appearing for the Centre, told the bench that the new enactment of 2024 had come into effect in January



2025 and the corresponding rules were in the process of being prepared.

On November 17 last year, the top court sought responses from the Centre and others on Laxminarayanan's plea seeking a robust and independent regulator that ensures transparency and passenger protection across the civil aviation sector.

On February 23, the Centre told the apex court that the Ministry of Civil Aviation was actively considering the issues raised in the plea.

While hearing the matter in January, the top court

said it would interfere with the "unpredictable fluctuations" in airfares and flagged the exorbitant rise during festivals. The top court had termed the exorbitant rise in airfares by the airlines "exploitation", and asked the Centre and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to file their replies on the plea.

The plea claimed that all private airlines have, without any credible justification, reduced the free check-in baggage allowance for economy class passengers from 25 kg to 15 kg, "thereby

converting what was earlier part of the ticketed service into a new revenue stream".

It said the "new policy of permitting only a single piece for check-in and the absence of any rebate, compensation or benefit to passengers who do not avail themselves of check-in baggage demonstrates the arbitrary and discriminatory nature of the measure".

The plea claimed that currently, no authority has the power to review or cap airfares or ancillary fees, allowing the airlines to exploit consumers through hidden

charges and unpredictable pricing. It also said the "unregulated, opaque and exploitative conduct of airlines manifesting in arbitrary fare hikes, unilateral reduction of services, absence of on-ground grievance redressal and unjustified dynamic pricing algorithms directly infringes upon citizens' fundamental rights to equality, freedom of movement and life with dignity".

The plea said the absence of regulatory safeguards results in arbitrary fare hikes, especially during festivals or weather disruptions, which disproportionately harm the poor and last-minute travellers.

It added that inaction by the state in regulating fare algorithms, cancellation policies, service continuity and grievance mechanisms constitutes a dereliction of its constitutional duty and calls for urgent judicial intervention. The plea also said that there is no rule to stop airlines from increasing prices based on demand and allowing them such freedom under essential services is unjustifiable.

Police's illegal entry into woman's bedroom amounts to violation of privacy: Bombay HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Mumbai



The police's forced entry into a woman's bedroom and seizure of her mobile phone without following legal procedures was an invasion of her privacy and dignity, the Bombay High Court observed, ordering the Maharashtra Government to pay compensation to a Nagpur resident.

The Nagpur bench, comprising Justices Urmila Joshi Phalke and Nivedita Mehta, stated that the right to privacy is an integral and inseparable facet of the right to life and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, which cannot be infringed.

A copy of the order passed last week was made available on Monday. The bench directed the state to pay '10,000 to the 26-year-old petitioner woman within two months, clarifying that the Government could recover the penalty amount directly

from the errant police officer responsible.

"Entry into the residential premises of a citizen, more particularly into the bedroom occupied by a woman, without adherence to the statutory safeguards and forcible seizure of her mobile phone constitutes a serious invasion of privacy and dignity," the court said.

Dismissing the police's contention that the search was undertaken as part of a probe into an offence, the court said this cannot justify a departure from the mandatory safeguards enacted by the

legislature. The investigating agency is expected to act strictly within the bounds of law, and the object of investigation cannot legitimise an otherwise illegal search or seizure, it said.

The bench concluded that the search conducted by the concerned police official and the seizure of the petitioner's mobile phone were illegal and violated her fundamental rights. Hence, she was entitled to compensation.

It further held that although monetary compensation cannot fully redress the invasion of privacy and dignity suffered by the woman, it would provide some measure of solace for the violation of her constitutional rights and serve as a reminder that investigative powers must be exercised strictly in accordance with law and not arbitrarily.

The petitioner, a resident of Saoner in Nagpur, claimed that the police illegally entered her residence, her

bedroom, under the garb of investigating a case and seized her mobile phone without following the statutory procedure laid down by law. The police had claimed that they had visited the petitioner's house to question her in connection with a car accident.

The woman, in her plea, alleged that the police had harassed her and her husband by visiting their residence repeatedly for questioning without issuance of notice and illegally seized and retained her mobile phone for two days without following the procedure prescribed under the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS).

The woman claimed that neither she nor her husband has been named as an accused in the case. The court, in its order, noted that in the present case, there has been a clear non-compliance with the statutory requirements of law.

SC stays Madras HC order on cow slaughter



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday stayed a Madras High Court order which directed the Tamil Nadu Government to ensure that no cow or calf is slaughtered on the eve of Bakrid or on any other day.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta passed the order while hearing a plea filed by the state Government challenging a May 27 order of the high court. The apex court agreed to hear the matter and issued notice to the respondents.

The Tamil Nadu Government challenged the May 27 order of the high

court, which directed the state authorities to ensure that no cow or calf is slaughtered across the state either on the eve of Bakrid or on any other day.

"We allow this writ petition with a direction to the state of Tamil Nadu to ensure that no cow or calf is slaughtered on the eve of Bakrid or on any other day," the high court had said.

In its petition, the state Government termed the order contrary to the Tamil Nadu Animal Preservation Act, 1958. The Act permits the slaughter of cows aged over 10 years that are unfit for work and breeding, on the basis of a certificate issued by a competent authority.

SC to hear pleas against MP High Court verdict on Bhojshala complex

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi



The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to list for hearing a batch of appeals challenging a Madhya Pradesh High Court order, which said the disputed Bhojshala complex in Dhar district was a temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohna was urged by senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi and advocate Nizam Pasha, appearing for Muslim appellants, that the pleas needed to be heard on an urgent basis.

The CJI asked the counsel for the appellants to remove defects from the petitions and assured them that they will be listed for hearing

before a bench soon. On May 15, the Madhya Pradesh High Court ruled that the disputed Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque complex in Dhar district is a temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati. It simultaneously quashed a decades-old ASI order that had allowed the Muslim community to offer Friday prayers at the site.

The high court had also said that the Centre and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) can decide on the Bhojshala complex's administration and management.

The Hindu community considers Bhojshala a temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, while the Muslim side calls the 11th-century monument the Kamal Maula Mosque. The disputed complex is protected by the ASI. The Muslim side has filed

appeals against the high court verdict.

Hindu parties have filed caveats in the Supreme Court, saying no orders be passed without hearing it on any appeal against the high court order in the Bhojshala complex dispute case. The high court's division bench of Justices Vijay Kumar Shukla and Alok Awasthi, in its judge-

ment, had said the religious character of the 11th-century monument was based on scientific evidence. The high court clarified that the Muslim side may approach the MP Government for separate land in the district to construct a mosque.

"The religious character of disputed area of the Bhojshala Complex and

Kamal Maula Mosque is held to be a Bhojshala with a temple of goddess Vagdevi (Saraswati)," the bench said in its order and also ordered that the area of Bhojshala "is held to be a protected monument" under 1958 Act with effect from March 3, 1904. Directing that the ASI shall have full supervisory control over the preservation, conservation and regulation of religious access, the court asked the Centre and the ASI to take a decision for the purpose of administration and management of the affairs of the Bhojshala temple and Sanskrit learning.

The high court had said the central Government "may consider" representations of some of the petitioners to bring back the 'Pratima' (idol) of Goddess Saraswati from the

London Museum and re-establish the same within the complex. This order nullified the April 2003 ASI order that permitted Hindus to worship on Tuesdays and Muslims to offer *namaz* on Fridays.

The high court's order had a mention about the background and legal arguments surrounding the Ayodhya dispute as many petitioners referred to the Supreme Court judgement. The court also asked the Madhya Pradesh Government to consider a plea from the petitioners for allocation of a land in Dhar district for construction of a mosque.

The court said from the archaeological and historical facts it is "crystal clear that the building in question is a Hindu temple and place of learning of Sanskrit language".

3 chargesheets filed in 7 ADAG FIRs: CBI tells SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The CBI on Monday told the Supreme Court that it has filed three chargesheets in as many cases out of the total seven FIRs concerning alleged large-scale banking fraud involving Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group and its firms.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohna was told by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for CBI, that the investigation in the other four cases was underway. The top court took note of the submission by Mehta and directed the CBI to file a status report on the progress in the investigation.

It also recorded that the Enforcement Directorate has also filed a prosecution



report, equivalent to a chargesheet, in related money laundering cases.

During the hearing, advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioner, former bureaucrat EAS Sarma, alleged that the kingpin Anil Ambani has not been arrested so far in the cases. He said though three chargesheets were filed

by June, the CBI has not filed any status report in the matter.

Bhushan submitted that though SEBI mentioned the "pivotal" role of Anil Ambani, there is nothing disclosed in the status report filed by CBI. He alleged that no action has been taken against Anil Ambani and only relatively lowly officers have been arrested.

"I am saying they should disclose to your lordships what they have found about his role. In a 2025 chargesheet, the CBI says he was kingpin. SEBI says he was kingpin," Bhushan said.

Solicitor General refuted Bhushan's submission and told the court that it is wrong to say that only lowly officers have been arrested.

Even managing directors and executives have been arrested, he said. The top

court said it would not be fair to direct anything and asked Bhushan to go through the chargesheet about the role attributed to Anil Ambani. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Anil Ambani, submitted that such a comment itself will cause prejudice to his party. "Once a chargesheet is filed, cognisance is yet to be taken. This is not the procedure this court has ever followed," Sibal said.

The top court said it was conscious that nothing should come from the bench which can be prejudicial to the parties.

Mehta, appearing for agencies, had earlier told the court that there are a total of nine FIRs, out of which seven are under investigation. "In the seven cases, the total loss caused is '27,337 crore," he had said.

PIOTECH

Truecaller row: TRAI seeks power under IT Act to act

Telecom regulator TRAI has sought to be designated as an 'authorised agency' under the IT Act, a status that would allow it to act against call management apps, and the matter is now being examined by the IT Ministry, according to sources.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Friday had asserted that no app can block phone calls originating from 1600 number series that are meant for communications by regulated entities and the Government to citizens.

TRAI's assertions had come amid an ongoing tussle with caller identification app Truecaller over the labelling and identification of calls from the dedicated number series.

On Monday, officials in MeitY (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology) said that the issue of regulatory jurisdiction is a technical one.

"Under the IT Act, there are rules as to some agencies that are authorised to take action, like the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C), etc., so that is done by the appropriate Government. So the question is who is the appropriate Government to authorise TRAI... Department of Telecom (DoT) believes it is MeitY and MeitY says it will examine and take a call," the official said, adding that the IT Ministry is not looking at the Truecaller issue per se. (PTI)

Flipkart says West Bengal to remain key investment hub



Flipkart on Monday said it would deepen its long-term investments in West Bengal, expanding its supply chain infrastructure, seller ecosystem and skills initiatives in the State, which houses the company's largest fulfilment centre in India.

The Walmart-owned e-commerce company said West Bengal is home to its largest fulfilment and logistics hub, located at Haringhata, and remains central to its long-term growth strategy.

The Haringhata campus has a storage capacity of 5 million cubic feet across six mezzanine levels and features automated storage and retrieval systems, robotic packaging arms, cross-belt sorters and a nine-kilometre conveyor network.

Flipkart said the facility is the first e-commerce fulfilment centre of its scale in India to receive the Indian Green Building Council's Platinum certification.

Across West Bengal, the company operates more than 300 fulfilment centres, mother hubs and last-mile delivery facilities, supporting more than 120,000 direct and indirect jobs across operations, technology, delivery and support functions.

The company said it also creates thousands of seasonal jobs during its annual Big Billion Days sale.

Flipkart has expanded its quick commerce business, Flipkart Minutes, in the state with 90 micro fulfilment centres, creating close to 10,000 employment opportunities. The company added that its sourcing network includes more than 500 farmers from West Bengal supplying fresh fruits and vegetables.

"West Bengal has long been one of India's great centres of enterprise, innovation and craftsmanship. Today, it is also emerging as a key hub for digital commerce. At Flipkart, we are proud to be a long-term partner in the State's growth journey. Our investments in infrastructure, technology and supply chains are creating jobs, empowering MSMEs, supporting farmers and enabling thousands of entrepreneurs to access markets across India. As home to our largest fulfilment centre in the country, West Bengal will continue to play a pivotal role in Flipkart's growth, and we remain committed to investing in the State's people, businesses and long-term potential," said Kalyan Krishnamurthy, Chief Executive Officer, Flipkart Group. (PTI)

Rajnath Singh: AI cannot replace human compassion

Artificial Intelligence is bringing rapid progress in medical sciences, but it cannot replace human compassion, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Monday, urging budding doctors to work with empathy towards patients and their families.

Addressing the 22nd convocation ceremony of King George's Medical University in his Lok Sabha constituency, Lucknow, the minister said new technologies such as artificial intelligence, synthetic biology, gene editing and precision medicine are transforming both the direction and the landscape of healthcare. Therefore, doctors must always continue the process of learning, he said. "Medical science is evolving rapidly today... Today is the era of Artificial Intelligence. No field remains untouched by it, including your own. "Yet, Artificial Intelligence cannot assure a mother that her child will recover (from illness). It cannot hold the hand of an elderly person, and say, 'Do not worry; we will set everything right'.

"Technology can be intelligent, but it cannot be compassionate. It can read medical charts, but it cannot, under any circumstances, understand the pain in a patient's mind," Rajnath Singh said. "Hence, you have to work with empathy and compassion."

The minister said that saving a life is the "highest duty. Fulfilling this duty does not always require vast resources or institutional support; all that is needed is sensitivity and firm resolve. "If one holds the feeling that saving a life is the supreme duty, then circumstances never become an obstacle," the minister said. (PTI)

The username wars: India's small fight over a very big question

The Government is asking why citizens should be allowed to talk without sharing phone numbers. In a democracy, that question runs the other way



NISHANT SAHDEV

Sometime on July 2, a letter left the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology carrying one of the strangest regulatory questions ever put to a technology company. Addressed to Telegram and Signal, it asked, in essence: why should Indians be allowed to talk to each other without exchanging phone numbers?

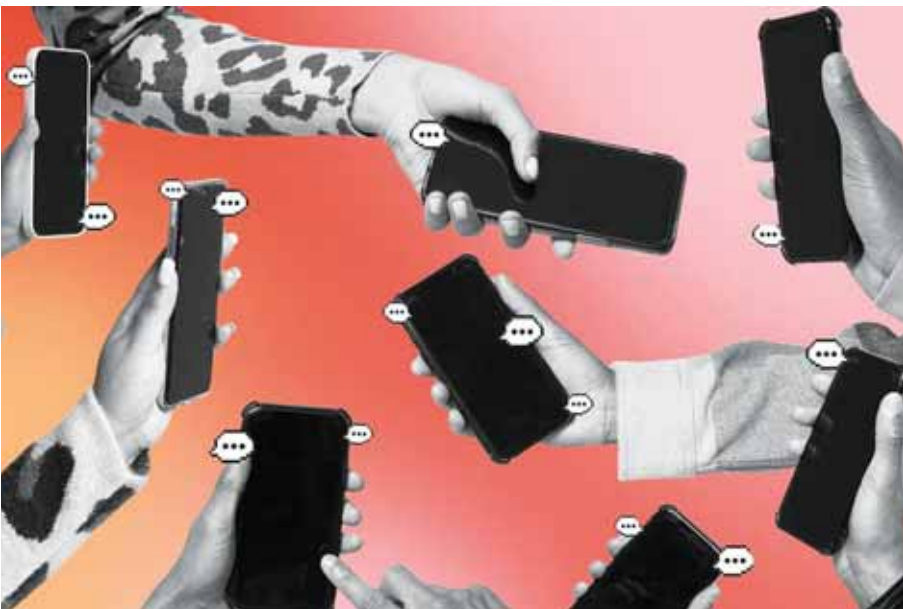
Strip away the legal language and that is the whole dispute. Not encryption. Not national security. A handle - a string of characters beginning with @ - that lets a woman message a stranger on a marketplace without handing over the number that rings in her pocket at midnight.

The sequence tells its own story. On July 1, WhatsApp was ordered to pause the rollout of its optional username feature until the Government was "satisfied" with its safeguards. Within a day, notices reached Telegram and Signal demanding they justify features they have offered for years - Telegram since 2014, Signal since 2024. Zoho's homegrown app Arattai did not wait to argue; it announced it would simply switch its usernames off. In forty-eight hours, a design choice made independently by four companies on four continents became a matter requiring explanation in New Delhi. None of the notices has been made public. Citizens are learning what their Government demands of their communication tools through press leaks.

To see what is actually at stake, rewind nine days. On June 23, the Government notified the authorisation rules under the Telecommunications Act, 2023 — the statute that finally retires the Indian Telegraph Act of 1885 and the Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1933. The word "licence" vanishes from Indian telecom law after 141 years; "authorisation" replaces it, applications now flow through a digital portal, and a colonial framework written for a world in which the state owned the copper wire is gone. This is genuine, overdue modernisation, and the Government deserves credit for it.

But the new law carries a definition with enormous gravitational pull. It describes telecommunication in technology-neutral terms — the transmission of messages by wire, radio, optical or other electro-magnetic systems.

Lawyers have warned that this language is broad enough to pull internet messaging apps into the telecom net whenever the Government chooses to notify them. Read against that backdrop, the username notices



are not a stray consumer-protection exercise. They are a sound-line, dropped to measure how far the new perimeter can reach. Here, a little engineering honesty would rescue the debate, because the public conversation has collapsed two very different things into one: an identifier and an identity.

A username is not a cloak of invisibility. It is a pointer - a human-readable label that a server translates into an account, exactly as the internet's address book translates "thepioneer.com" into a string of numbers. On an end-to-end encrypted platform, the message itself is unreadable to everyone except sender and recipient, whether it was addressed to a phone number or a handle. Banning usernames decrypts nothing. Permitting them encrypts nothing. The mathematics is serenely indifferent to what you call yourself.

What a username does disturb is an arrangement the Indian state has quietly enjoyed for two decades. Every SIM card in this country is issued against verified identity documents. When your messaging account is welded to your mobile number, the state inherits — free of charge, without passing a single law — a chain of custody linking every conversation to a KYC-verified human being. Usernames loosen that weld. That, not fraud, is the deeper anxiety, and we should have the honesty to debate it as what it is: a question about how much anonymity a free society owes its citizens, not a squabble over an app setting.

The fraud concern is real, and it deserves respect rather than dismissal. Digital arrest scams, phishing and impersonation have



exploded. A Ministry of Home Affairs cyber-crime report, submitted to the Delhi High Court, reportedly logged over 6.8 lakh Telegram-linked complaints with losses exceeding ₹71,000 crore. Telegram - banned for a week in June ahead of the NEET-UG re-examination over paper-leak fears - has earned much of its scrutiny.

But a remedy must connect to the disease, and here the engineering refuses to cooperate with the politics. The overwhelming majority of scam calls and messages in India arrive today through phone numbers - spoofed, virtual, international, or procured on forged documents. Two decades of KYC-verified SIMs have not stopped them. If verified numbers cannot stop number-based fraud, it is magical thinking to believe unverified fraud will stop because usernames were banned. Criminals route around identifiers; that is practically their job description. Meanwhile, the people usernames genuinely protect are exactly those the state claims to champion: women dodging stalkers, journalists shielding sources, doctors and teachers who must be reachable without surrendering a personal number to a thousand strangers. Signal designed its usernames to be invisible by default for precisely this reason — the feature exists to shrink the personal data a conversation exposes, not enlarge it.

There is also a rule-of-law problem that should worry us even if the technology bores us. Digital rights groups, including SFLC.in, have pointed out that neither the Information Technology Act nor its rules create any prior-approval regime under which platforms must seek permission

We taught machines our paperwork - Now they are judging us

India built the World's biggest trust machine. Can It survive AI?



PRAVIN KAUSHAL

Somewhere today, a loan is approved, a university seat allotted, a bail application weighed. Increasingly, no human makes the final call. A model does. This is already how power moves through modern institutions, and the change is bigger than automation.

Artificial intelligence is usually discussed as a tool, a faster calculator, a smarter search engine. But a tool does only what it is told. A calculator cannot invent a new branch of mathematics. Today's AI systems learn things their creators never taught them and change in ways their designers did not predict. A chess engine did not simply get better at chess, it invented openings that centuries of grandmasters never conceived. That is not automation. That is agency.

The usual objection is that such agency stays confined to artificial arenas built for the purpose, a chessboard, a simulation. Drop the world's best chess engine into a forest and it cannot start a fire. But the same is true of us. A person left alone on a mountain-side with no tools would not last a week. Our intelligence also functions only inside a specific environment built by human cooperation itself. The question is not whether AI has a real environment to operate in, but whether we already built one for it.

We did. It is called bureaucracy.

The actual machinery of human power

Humans did not conquer the planet by being individually stronger or smarter than other animals. A person alone loses to a



lion. What no other species can do is cooperate in the millions with total strangers. Humans cooperate with people they will never meet, through a shared system of law and institutions that manufacture something invisible but essential: trust.

That is what bureaucracy actually is. A banker does not build furniture. She builds a bridge of trust between a saver who has never met an entrepreneur and an entrepreneur who has never met the saver, so one's money can fund the other's ambition. A judge, a regulator, a bishop, an accountant, each spends the day manufacturing trust between strangers using nothing but words: forms, statutes, ledgers, scriptures, judgments. Money itself is a trust technology, a printed note that lets a stranger hand you bread on the strength of a shared fiction.

This system is powerful



precisely because it does not require its operators to be generally capable. A lawyer who cannot start a fire can, through paperwork alone, reshape a city, because the bureaucratic environment that gives her words their power has already been imposed on the world. That is exactly the environment an AI thrives in.

Why AI is a native, not a guest

Human domination relies on large scale cooperation among strangers, sustained by bureaucratic systems such as laws, finance, and religion, designed to build trust. No human lawyer can hold every statute in their head. An AI

can hold an entire legal code and never mis-remember a clause. No accountant can track every transaction across a global bank. An AI can. A human bureaucrat is, at best, a custodian of a fraction of the rulebook. An AI can be native to the whole rulebook, because bureaucracy, stripped to its essentials, is nothing but words arranged to create trust and consequence.

This is why AI is uniquely placed to take over decisions that once required a human in the room: whether to grant a bank loan, admit a student, decide how long a prisoner should serve, or fire a missile at a target. Each was once human judgment wrapped in bureaucratic process. Increasingly, it is bureaucratic process with the human judgment quietly removed.

India is the loudest test case

Nowhere is this transition further along than in India, though it rarely gets described that way.

before shipping a feature — and have demanded the ministry publish the notices and cite their legal basis. Analysts see the real lever: Section 79 of the IT Act, the safe-harbour provision meant to shield intermediaries, being quietly brandished as a threat. When software features require a nod from a ministry, delivered through unpublished letters, we have not regulated technology. We have built a permission raj for code.

India, of all nations, should recognise the superior alternative, because India invented it. We did not fight payment fraud by banning UPI handles - which are, let us be honest, usernames for money. We engineered trust into the rails: the beneficiary's verified name appears before you pay, limits cap the damage, grievance systems run in public view. UPI now moves billions of transactions a month precisely because identity assurance was built into the architecture rather than bolted on through prohibition. The same template fits messaging: enforce rapid, due-process responses to law-enforcement requests; mandate proactive impersonation detection; hold grievance officers personally accountable; require public transparency reports. Regulate outcomes. Leave the architecture alone.

The new telecom rules themselves mark the boundary the Government is now blurring. They require carriers to store network logs in India and route satellite traffic through Indian gateways — defensible sovereignty measures aimed at companies occupying spectrum, a genuinely scarce public resource. But an app is not a carrier, any more than a conversation is a highway because it happened in a moving car. The 1885 Telegraph Act conflated the message with the wire because, in 1885, the state owned both. The 2023 Act was written to end that confusion. It would be a bitter irony if its first real-world test smuggled the Victorian instinct back in digital clothing.

Which brings us back to the question in that July 2 letter — why should you be allowed to offer usernames? and to the quiet scandal inside it. The burden of proof is upside down. In a constitutional democracy, citizens do not petition the state for permission to speak without disclosing a phone number; the state must justify why they cannot. India is building the most ambitious digital public infrastructure on earth, and its credibility rests on one proposition: that we govern technology through law, in the open - not through the leverage of letters no one is allowed to read. On that proposition, this very small fight over a very small feature has become a very large test.

(The writer is a physicist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a columnist on AI, infrastructure and global systems)

Over the past decade, India built the largest biometric identity and digital payments architecture on Earth, authenticating identity and clearing welfare payments for over a billion people with a thinner layer of human discretion than almost any comparable system anywhere. Credit scoring for small loans increasingly runs on models rather than branch managers. Courts, facing tens of millions of pending cases, are exploring AI assisted case triage. This was not built as an AI project, it was built for efficiency, but a machine legible bureaucracy is exactly the terrain an AI decision maker enters with the least friction. India built the habitat first, and AI is simply the most capable resident to move in.

That is a source of both pride and unease. A machine readable state can be more efficient and less corruptible. But a decision produced by a model is hard to argue with. You cannot cross examine an algorithm's reasoning the way you can cross examine an official's.

The question we have not answered

Two questions need answers before this transition goes further, not after a crisis forces them. Does every citizen have an enforceable right to know, in plain language, why an automated system decided against them? Does every citizen retain a genuine path to have that decision reviewed by a human being, not a token appeal, but a real one? A loan, a degree, a sentence, once decided by someone who could explain themselves, is quietly becoming a decision made by something that cannot be asked for anything, unless we insist, now, that it must be.

(Writer is a tech and social entrepreneur and Programme Director (Eastern India) at WHEELS Global Foundation, a Pan-IT alumni initiative working across 20+ states in India)

FROM THE WORLD

NIGERIA

Eight dead in Benue shooting

Gunmen opened fire at people after a funeral in north-central Nigeria, killing eight, police said on Monday.

The attack occurred in the early hours of Sunday in the Otukpo-Nobi community of Benue state. Five others were wounded, state police spokesperson Udemé Edet said.

It wasn't clear what triggered the attack. Herders and farmers have often clashed over resources in Benue, a key food-producing state in Nigeria. Last year, 150 people were killed in the Yelweta community.

Edet said thatched houses and a motorcycle were also set ablaze, adding that more officers have been deployed in the area.

Amnesty International Nigeria said at least 10 people were killed. Police in Nigeria often report more conservative casualty figures. (AP)

PAKISTAN

Hindu doctor killed in Karachi

A 28-year-old Hindu doctor was on Monday killed during a robbery in Pakistan's Sindh province, police said. The incident took place in Karachi's posh Clifton area. Akash Chand was killed when firing took place outside a private bank between the robbers and a bank security guard, senior police official SSP Mehroz Ali said. Chand, along with his father and cousin, had withdrawn 5 million rupees from another bank and were bringing two packets of 2.5 million each to deposit in the other bank, Ali said.

"As soon as their car stopped outside the bank, another car pulled up behind them and attempted to rob them of the money but the bank security guard standing at the door opened fire and the robbers also retaliated, and Chand was killed," Ali said.

The robbers got away with one packet of 2.5 million rupees. (PTI)

UK bans Revolutionary Guard over attacks on Jewish sites

ASSOCIATED PRESS n London

A series of arson and vandalism attacks on Jewish sites in Britain were the work of a proxy group backed by Iran, the UK Government said on Monday.

The Government said it is banning the Islamic Movement of the Companions of the Right, or IMCR, also known as Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamia.

It also banned Iran's powerful paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. In a statement, Security Minister Angela Eagle said that the IMCR has claimed seven attacks in the UK.

The group had said online that it was responsible for a string of arson attacks on Jewish sites in London in recent months, including fires at synagogues and Jewish charity ambulances, as well as a Persian-language media organisation critical of Iran's Government. No one was injured in the blazes.

"Sitting behind IMCR were members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps



Qods Force, who almost certainly directed IMCR attacks across Europe," she said. Quds, or Jerusalem, Force is the Guard's expeditionary unit. The group sprang up online earlier this year and has also claimed responsibility for synagogue attacks in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Law enforcement officials and intelligence experts say Iran-backed proxy groups are

behind a growing number of attacks in Europe, most targeting the Jewish community and Persian-language media critical of Iran's Islamic Government.

They typically work by recruiting members of criminal groups to carry out sabotage and other attacks.

Earlier this month, two Romanian men were given prison sentences over the

stabbing of a journalist from a Persian-language television station, an attack the judge said was carried out on behalf of the Iranian State. There was no immediate comment from Iran.

The European Union in January listed the Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organisation over Tehran's bloody crackdown on protests.

27 killed, 25 critical in massive fire at Bangkok music Bar

ASSOCIATED PRESS n Bangkok

A huge fire tore through a music bar in Bangkok overnight, killing at least 27 people and leaving 25 hospitalised in critical condition in the Thai capital's most deadly blaze in 17 years.

Photos from the Rong Beer Na Ladprao bar in a northern part of the Thai capital showed people fleeing as flames shot out the single-story building and thick black smoke billowed into the sky. Shoes lost and scattered as their owners sought to flee could be seen in pictures from the aftermath of the tragedy.

Bangkok city officials said the fire broke out shortly before midnight Sunday, and it was about half an hour until firefighters brought it under control.

By daylight Monday morning, the site had been cordoned off as dozens of Thai forensic officers combed through the burned remains for clues about what caused the fire.

The building's street-



Police officers inspecting the site of a fire in Bangkok, Thailand AP

facing windows had been blown out and debris littered the sidewalk, including charred television sets, speakers and an electric guitar.

From outside, the scale of the devastation was visible through the shattered windows, where burned-out tables, some still holding empty beer bottles, stood inside.

Thai national police chief Kittharath Punnetch said most of the dead were found trapped in windowless bathrooms near one of the rear

exits of the bar, where they may have sheltered to escape the flames in the hall.

He said the exit had not been used, and people may have been obstructed from reaching it by a table set up in the hall to sell candy, or because it was too dark to find it. Access to another exit near the kitchen might also have been narrowed by shelving units and lockers, said Kittharath, who visited the scene Monday morning.

EU targets Russian spies over long-running cyber campaign

ASSOCIATED PRESS n Brussels

The European Union (EU) on Monday imposed sanctions on Russian military intelligence officers, hackers and private companies, denouncing what it called a yearslong cyber espionage campaign to undermine the bloc.

The move targeted nine people and four entities accused of links to an online spying network that the EU said has targeted Governments and carried out sabotage operations against critical infrastructure like heating and power plants since 2010.

The European Council said in a statement that those targeted "contribute to Russia's efforts to destabilise the EU, its member states and international partners." The espionage and attacks have taken place in at least nine countries.

The names of the individuals and entities - which usually companies, Government agencies, banks or other organisations - were not listed on the statement. It said France,



Germany, Poland, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Austria, Slovakia, Romania and Finland, "among others" have been targeted.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said that France intends to summon the Russian ambassador in the coming days.

He told French BFM television that the aim of the cyber activities is "either to capture information, or sabotage the operation, for example, of railway infrastructures as it was the case in Poland." The EU focused its measures on the 16th Centre

of Russia's Federal Security Service, or FSB. It said the FSB has been "controlling a variety of cyber threat groups," and said it "has conducted a wide range of malicious cyber activities with growing severity."

Some countries have accused Russia of using cyberattacks and propaganda to interfere with elections. In April, Sweden said Wednesday that a pro-Russian group with links to Russia's security and intelligence services was behind a cyberattack on a heating plant last year.

NASA astronaut Anil Menon set for 8-month mission to space station

SAGAR KULKARNI n Washington

Anil Menon, a NASA astronaut of Indian descent, is set to embark on an eight-month mission to the International Space Station on Tuesday from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan along with two Russian cosmonauts. The Roscosmos Soyuz MS-29 spacecraft is scheduled for lift-off from the Baikonur spaceport at 8.17 pm. (IST) on Tuesday and is expected to dock at the orbital laboratory after a little over three hours.

Besides Menon, Russian cosmonauts Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina will be part of the 75th expedition to the ISS.

The Soyuz spacecraft will dock at the ISS at 11.56 pm. IST on Tuesday, and the astronauts will be onboard the ISS at around 1.25 am IST early Wednesday.

Once aboard, the trio will join NASA astronauts Jessica Meir, Jack Hathaway, and Chris Williams, European Space Agency astronaut Sophie Adenot, and Roscosmos cosmonauts Sergey Kud-Sverchkov, Sergei Mikaev, and Andrey Fedyaev. Born in Minneapolis to Ukrainian and Indian immigrants, Menon is an emergency medicine physician and a US Space Force colonel.

During his stint with the US Air Force, he served on the frontlines in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom and also worked for the Himalayan Rescue Association, caring for climbers on Mount Everest. Menon, 49, has also spent a year in India as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar to study and support Polio vaccination initiatives. He is scheduled to travel to space aboard the Roscosmos Soyuz MS-29 space-



craft along with cosmonauts Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina. Menon began his career at NASA as a flight surgeon in 2014 and worked with astronauts living and working on the International Space Station.

He joined SpaceX in 2018, where he started the company's medical program, helped prepare for its first human space flights and worked closely in the development of Starship, the super heavy rocket and spacecraft for undertaking missions to the moon, Mars and beyond.

He was selected as a NASA astronaut in December 2021 and joined the two-year training programme next month.

Menon's wife Anna Wilhelm is also an astronaut and travelled to space in September 2024 as part of Polaris Dawn, a private crewed spaceflight operated by SpaceX. The spaceflight lasted for nearly five days. While on board the ISS, Menon will conduct a series of experiments to study the physiological toll of long-duration spaceflight and examine how microgravity affects blood flow, vein structure, and blood composition in astronauts. (PTI)

Ex-minister murder probe taken over by UK Police



ADITI KHANNA n London

Britain's counter-terrorism police on Monday took charge of an ongoing investigation into the murder of a former Tory minister and outspoken far-right politician who was found dead in her home in south-west England.

Ann Widdecombe, 78, was attacked in the small village of Haytor Vale at Dartmoor in Devon last week. Prime Minister Keir Starmer led condemnations over the "really shocking news" that shook the political establishment across party lines.

A 28-year-old white British man from Rotherham, South Yorkshire, arrested on suspicion of murder on Saturday, has now been re-arrested on terrorism-related charges, Counter Terrorism Policing South East (CTPSE) said.

UK Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood took to social media to reveal that "new information and evidence" had emerged in the case, which led the CTPSE to take charge of the investigation. "The police are pursuing multiple lines of enquiry to establish the motivation for this attack," said Mahmood, who will make a statement in Parliament with further details.

CTPSE said, "new information ?and evidence have come to light during what has been a dynamic and complex investigation" and as a result, it is now leading the investigation.

"The man in custody has since been re-arrested on suspicion of commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism," said the CTPSE. (PTI)

Saudi airstrikes hit Sanaa airport, say Houthis

ASSOCIATED PRESS n Cairo

Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen said Saudi airstrikes hit Sanaa International Airport on Monday, while the internationally recognised Government in Yemen said they were meant to prevent an Iranian plane from landing.

For years, a Saudi-led coalition based in Yemen's south, including the internationally recognised Government, has been fighting the Houthis in the north.

Saudi Arabia did not immediately acknowledge carrying out airstrikes in Yemen, and its officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Gen Taher al-Aqili, the Government's defence min-



ister, said on X that the airport's runway was struck to stop the plane carrying the Houthi delegation after attending the funeral of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

In a video statement released shortly before the strikes, Al-Aqili warned against infiltrating Yemeni airspace with Iranian air-

craft. "At this moment, we say that our patience has run out. Accordingly, we will respond appropriately to this treacherous and brutal act, and we will confront and deal with the hostile aircraft violating Yemeni airspace and sovereignty by all available means," he said. The Houthis said the plane changed its route and

landed at Hodeida Airport. There were no immediate reports of damage to the airport in Sanaa.

A Houthi official, Brig Gen Yahya Saree, said on Telegram that Saudi Arabia launched the airstrikes in what he called an "end to the de-escalation phase." He warned that "this aggression will not go unanswered or unpunished."

The Yemeni defence ministry issued orders to evacuate the airport and surrounding areas. Rashad al-Alimi, who leads Yemen's ruling Presidential Leadership Council, said Iran had requested to operate a flight by Iranian airline Mahan Air from Tehran to Sanaa to return the Houthi delegation.



Three boys playing in the shallow waters of the Strait of Hormuz, as a plume of smoke rises from an explosion in the background, off Bandar Abbas, Iran on Monday AP

Pakistan deports over 2.6 million Afghan nationals in 3 years amid crackdown

M ZULQERNAIN n Lahore

Pakistan has deported more than 2.6 million Afghan nationals, including women and children, in the last three years, an official said on Monday. These deportations were part of a larger crackdown on undocumented Afghan nationals and those overstay in the country without a valid visa.

The Punjab Government routinely conducts surveys to identify illegal or undocumented immigrants. The spokesperson for the Punjab home department's foreign national security said in a statement that the provincial Government alone detained



1,38,342 Afghans in its holding centres, completed their documents and deported them.

He added that around 2.6 million Afghan nationals staying illegally in Pakistan have been sent back in the last three years. The depor-

tations are usually carried out through the Torkham checkpoint in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The crackdown has led to anxiety in the Afghan community, with some residents claiming they have

lived in Pakistan for generations. Local Pashtuns have also reported being subjected to undue harassment and identity checks during police raids.

The UN Human Rights Commission has also expressed concerns about the scale and nature of these deportations. The authorities intensified the crackdown against illegal Afghan immigrants after an armed conflict between the two countries in April. Both countries witnessed intermittent hostilities along the frontier, which intensified after reported Afghan action in response to Pakistani airstrikes targeting militant positions. (PTI)

3 POLICEMEN KILLED IN MILITANT ATTACKS IN PAKISTAN'S KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

Peshawar: Three police personnel were killed and as many others injured in separate militant attacks in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police said. Two policemen, including an assistant sub-inspector, were killed and three others seriously injured when an improvised explosive device hit a police armoured vehicle near Mashah Jan Bungalow on the Tank-Waziristan Main Road. The injured personnel were shifted to a nearby hospital, while security forces cordoned off the area and

launched a search operation to trace those responsible for the attack, police said. In a separate incident in Nowshera district, unidentified assailants opened fire on a police constable on Kheskhi Road, killing them on the spot.

Governor Faisal condemned the attacks and sought reports from the relevant authorities. They paid tribute to the slain policemen, expressed condolences to their families, and directed authorities to ensure the best possible treatment for the injured personnel. (PTI)

Ebola centres strike over unpaid salaries in Congo

ASSOCIATED PRESS n Bunia

Dozens of people working at an Ebola treatment centre in northeast Congo went on strike on Monday over unpaid salaries and bonuses.

The striking staff at Rwampara General Hospital in Ituri province includes epidemiologists, case investigators, drivers and gravediggers who say they have not been paid by the Congolese authorities. The hospital was shuttered by protesting staff, who blocked the road leading to the medical facility.

Some of the centre's health workers and those working



on the ground began striking last week, accusing authorities of failing to pay their wages since the outbreak began in May.

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Oil prices jump as US and Iran carry out airstrikes

USD/KRW	KOSPI
1,509.80	7,484.92
▲ 0.30 (0.02%)	▲ 193.01 (2.65%)

Oil prices jumped and world shares were mixed on Monday after the US carried out airstrikes and Iran retaliated. In early European trading, Germany's DAX added 0.2 per cent to 25,105.55 and the CAC 40 in Paris edged 0.1 per cent higher, to 8,347.26. Britain's FTSE 100 also was up just 0.1 per cent, at 10,506.86.

US stock futures were mixed, with the contract for the S&P 500 down 0.3 per cent and that for the Dow nearly unchanged. The Nasdaq composite future lost 0.9 per cent. The price of Brent crude, the international standard, climbed as much as nearly 5 per cent early Monday before falling back. As of early morning in Europe, it was up 2.3 per cent at \$77.72 per barrel, while US benchmark crude added 2.1 per cent to \$72.92 per barrel. Prices for both types of crude oil recently had slipped back to around the levels they were at before the war with Iran began after the two sides set an interim agreement on ending the conflict and ships resumed transporting oil through the Strait of Hormuz. However, the United States launched several waves of strikes on Iran into Monday morning over an Iranian attack on a container ship in the strait that set it ablaze and left a crew member missing over the weekend. Iran retaliated by targeting countries across the Middle East. In Asian share trading, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index lost 1.9 per cent to 67,242.73, while in Seoul, the Kospi declined 9 per cent to 6,806.93. It's now at its lowest level since early May. (PTI)

Retail inflation inches up to 4.38% in May: Govt data

Retail inflation inched up to 4.38 per cent in June compared to 3.93 per cent in May, mainly due to higher prices of food items, according to government data released on Monday.

The food inflation based on the consumer price index (CPI) was 5.32 per cent in June, higher than 4.78 per cent in May, according to the data.

The government has mandated the Reserve Bank of India to ensure that the headline inflation remains at 4 per cent, with a margin of 2 per cent on either side. (PTI)

INDIA'S EXPORTS RISE 15.5% IN JUNE, TRADE DEFICIT WIDENS TO \$30.43 BN

India's exports rose by 15.5 per cent to \$40.41 billion in June, even as the trade deficit widened to \$30.43 billion.

Imports in June went up by about 31 per cent to \$70.84 billion.

During April-June this fiscal, exports increased 15.92 per cent to \$129.32 billion, while imports rose 19.89 per cent to \$216.18 billion.

Gold imports in the first quarter of this fiscal year rose to \$11.01 billion from \$7.49 billion in April-June last year.

India's exports to West Asian countries rose 7.29 per cent to \$5 billion in June, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal said in a press briefing on trade data.

Agarwal attributed the increase in the country's inbound shipments to higher imports of crude oil, electronics, machinery, and precious metals.

The Pioneer

DEHRADUN | TUESDAY | JULY 14, 2026

Build AI, cybersecurity to tackle rising threats: IT Secy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Government on Monday stressed the need to build domestic capabilities in artificial intelligence and cybersecurity, with IT Secretary S Krishnan saying India has "no other option" but to strengthen indigenous capacity as cyber threats grow in scale and sophistication.

Krishnan said rapid digitisation has brought significant gains in ease of living, ease of doing business and economic efficiency, but has also exposed businesses and individuals to evolving cyber risks.

"A critical area we need to act on is ensuring that in the AI space, what is the infrastructure and the capability we build as a country, both in terms of models, data, how we use this, how this infrastructure is something that we can support ourselves with, and the critical thing here is building domestic capacity," Krishnan said.

Cybersecurity is one of the most important concerns to be prioritised for preserving the benefits derived from digitisation, Krishnan emphasised.

The secretary also released the second edition of the Digital Threat Report 2025-26 for the Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI) and payments ecosystem. The report provides financial institutions, regulators and cybersecurity leaders with an executive assessment of the threats reshaping banking, financial services, insurance and digital payments.

"In today's world, all of us understand that cybersecurity is one of the most important concerns that we have to

address if we have to preserve all the benefits that we have derived from digitisation," Krishnan said.

He noted that cyber threats now span multiple levels, from cybercrime targeting individuals through financial and reputational losses, to ransomware attacks on organisations, and cyber warfare that can undermine governments and national infrastructure.

Framework deal is ready, to be signed at right time: Official on India-US trade pact

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

Negotiations for a trade agreement between India and the US are progressing well, and the framework deal is ready which will be signed at the right time, an official said on Monday.

The official said that India is seeking a comparative advantage on the tariff front in the agreement vis-a-vis its competitor nations.

"There was a very good discussion (with the US team). The framework deal is ready... whenever there is right time, it will be signed. We are negotiating a framework deal and a bilateral trade agreement (BTA), and

both things are progressing well," the official said.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer last month held bilateral talks on issues related to the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement here.

Trade deals are all about

preferential market access or comparative advantage.

"So that is something which is getting structured, whenever it is ready, things will be signed. But we are on a safe way, our understanding is safe, both sides are very clear what is there in the framework deal, what is being negotiated under BTA, and we are progressing there," the official, who does not wish to be named, said.

The official clarified that there is no dissension, and they do not see any challenge around it.

The bilateral trade is growing between the two countries. India has also been increasing its energy imports from the US.

Silver futures tumble amid strengthening US dollar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE n New Delhi

Silver futures tumbled by `3,783 to `2.18 lakh per kilogram on Monday as the fresh escalation in the US-Iran conflict drove oil prices higher and boosted the dollar.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, silver for September delivery declined by `3,783, or 1.7 per cent, to `2,18,881 per kg in a business turnover of 11,733 lots.

metal plunged `14,746, or 6.2 per cent, to settle at `2.22 lakh per kg over the past week. Traders said that higher energy prices could stoke inflation and keep US interest rates elevated, which prompted investors to trim exposure to precious metals.

"Silver prices declined sharply on Monday as rising crude oil rates, a stronger US dollar, and higher Treasury bond yields reduced the appeal of bullion," said Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk.

He said oil prices surged as renewed

military exchanges between the US and Iran fuelled concerns over disruptions to crude supplies through the Strait of Hormuz, intensifying inflation worries.

"Despite the weakness in prices, investor appetite for silver remained firm, with exchange-traded funds (ETFs) attracting a record `4,286 crore in inflows during June," Pinky Yadav, Commodity Fundamental Analyst at Choice Broking, said.

In the international markets, Comex

silver futures for September delivery fell \$1.68, or 3 per cent, to \$58.47 per ounce in New York.

"Silver futures slipped below \$60 per ounce in the global markets as rising crude oil prices and escalating US-Iran tensions strengthened expectations that the Federal Reserve will keep interest rates higher for longer," brokerage firm Axis Securities said.

According to Anindya Banerjee, Head of Commodity and Currency Research at Kotak Securities, Brent crude hovered near \$79 per barrel, and WTI traded above \$74 after fresh exchanges between Washington and Tehran clouded prospects for restoring normal tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

Analysts said market participants are awaiting speeches by Federal Reserve officials, including Michelle Bowman and Christopher Waller, for fresh signals on the US monetary policy outlook, which could provide the next catalyst for bullion.

BUSINESS 13

He said while artificial intelligence (AI) enables malicious actors to mount more sophisticated attacks, at the same time, it equips defenders with advanced tools to detect and respond to threats more quickly.

Calling for continuous vigilance, Krishnan said cybersecurity should be treated as an "enterprise-wide systemic risk" and embedded into broader digital governance frameworks, including AI governance, alongside privacy and operational resilience.

He also emphasised the need to strengthen identity and access management, build resilient software and hardware systems, and ensure business continuity in the face of cyber threats.

On AI, Krishnan said India must develop domestic capabilities across models, data

and computing infrastructure. "In this particular space, there is no other option but to build domestic capacity," Krishnan said, adding that strengthening indigenous technological capabilities is critical for safeguarding the country's digital ecosystem and reducing strategic vulnerabilities.

The report released by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), along with the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), the Computer Security Incident Response Team in Finance (CSIRT-Fin) and SISA, draws on extensive digital forensics and incident response (DFIR) research, analysis aligned with CERT-In and CSIRT-Fin observations, and research into adversarial AI.

Date	Rate (INR per USD)	Change
Jul 6	95.43	(-25p)
Jul 7	94.96	(+47p)
Jul 8	95.48	(-52p)
Jul 9	95.47	(+1p)
Jul 10	95.38	(+9p)
Jul 13	95.65*	(-27p)

*Provisional (Inverted Scale)

Rupee falls 27 paise to close at 95.65 against US dollar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Mumbai

The rupee depreciated 27 paise to close at 95.65 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, weighed down by elevated crude oil prices after Iran declared the Strait of Hormuz closed.

Forex traders said renewed drone and missile strikes between the US and Iran prompted supply concerns, while elevated crude oil prices and a strong greenback triggered capital outflows.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.72 against the American currency and traded in a range of 95.58-95.86 during the session.

The rupee finally closed at 95.65 (provisional), down 27 paise from its previous close.

On Friday, the rupee rose 9 paise to settle at 95.38 against the US dollar.

"The Indian rupee opened lower as the US-Iran war intensified over the weekend. A surge in crude oil prices and a rise in the US dollar too pressurised the rupee. However, the rupee recovered from lower levels on recovery in the domestic markets and some softening of crude oil prices from the day's highs," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan.

Choudhary further said, "We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on risk aversion in global markets amid heightened tensions between the US and Iran. However, diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions may support the rupee at lower levels."

CIC directs ministry to share petrol, ethanol, profit data

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

The Central Information Commission (CIC) has directed the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC), the oil ministry's planning arm, to reveal historical data on petrol production and imports, ethanol procurement and blending, and petroleum sector profits.

The direction was given to share the information with an RTI applicant after the commission found that the cell provided only "partial information."

Information Commissioner Khushwant Singh Sethi also directed PPAC to provide the

web link for ethanol blending notifications, transfer the query on ethanol suppliers to the concerned public authority, and invoke the appropriate exemption under the RTI Act, while responding to the request for company-wise petrol supplier information.

The RTI application sought six sets of information relating to India's petrol and ethanol programme, including fuel production and imports, ethanol blending norms, procurement and consumption of ethanol, supplier details and profits from

petrol sales. The commission observed that "the respondent has provided partial information to the appellant" and directed it to furnish a revised response on different queries.

The first query sought year-wise details from 2014-15 onwards of petrol purchased, imported, and produced in India, annual expenditure on petrol, and source-wise break-up.

PPAC replied that import, export, production and state-wise data were available on its website, but company details were "of commercial & confidential nature" and exempt under Sections 8(1)(d) and 8(1)(e) of the RTI Act.

Gold drops `1,500 to `1.47 lakh/10g; silver slumps `2,000 in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

Gold prices declined `1,500 to `1.47 lakh per 10 grams in the national Capital on Monday and silver slumped `2,000 tracking West Asia uncertainties.

The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity depreciated `1,500 to `1,47,000 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from Friday's closing level of `1,48,500 per 10 grams, according to local marketmen.

Silver also plunged by `2,000 to `2,35,000 per kilo-

gram (inclusive of all taxes). The white metal had settled at `2,37,000 per kg in the preceding session.

Traders said the renewed flare-up in West Asia lifted crude oil prices, fuelling inflation concerns and strengthening the US dollar,

which weighed on the precious metals.

"Gold prices edged lower on Monday, tracking weakness in international markets as renewed tensions in the Middle East lifted crude oil prices and revived inflation concerns," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

He said the latest escalation between the US and Iran has heightened concerns over disruptions to global energy supplies and tighter oil market conditions in the third quarter.

Stock markets recover losses to close flat, IT shares cushion decline

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Mumbai

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty recovered from early lows to close marginally higher in a volatile trade on Monday as buying in IT and consumer durable shares helped offset the impact of rebounding crude oil prices and escalation in West Asia tensions.

After a weak start, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed higher by 47.01 points, or 0.06 per cent, to settle at 77,616.40, marking its third straight day of gains.

The index opened sharply down by over 711 points and hit a low of 76,857.43 in early trade. However, buying in IT

shares such as TCS and Infosys and consumer durables helped pare losses, with the Sensex rebounding around 931 points from the low to hit a high of 77,789.29. Profit booking in the last hour erased the gains.

The 50-share NSE Nifty eked out an uptick of 4.10 points, or 0.02 per cent, to end at 24,211, registering its third day of gains. The index hit a low of 24,000.20 and a high of 24,259.8 during the day.

Resilience in IT and consumer durables stocks helped offset the impact of geopolitical concerns, enabling the benchmark indices to recover from early losses and close on a largely

Index	Open	Low	High	Close	Change
NSE Nifty	24,039.40	24,000.20	24,259.80	24,211.00	4.10 (0.02%)
BSE Sensex	76,963.35	76,857.43	77,789.29	77,616.40	47.01 (0.06%)

flat note, an expert said.

From the Sensex pack, Tata Consultancy Services jumped 5.43 per cent to emerge as the top gainer, while HCL

Tech climbed 5.02 per cent, Tech Mahindra 3.34 per cent, Infosys 3.17 per cent, NTPC 2.18 per cent and Kotak Mahindra Bank 1.83 per cent.

Tata Steel, Eternal, InterGlobe Aviation, Maruti, UltraTech Cement and Bharat Electronics were among the laggards. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 2.57 per cent to \$77.96 per barrel.

"Indian equity markets ended largely flat after opening on a weak note, as investors adopted a wait-and-watch approach amid escalating geopolitical tensions between the United States and Iran. Continued hostilities around the Strait of Hormuz, which have disrupted oil tanker movements and pushed crude oil prices sharply higher, kept overall market sentiment cautious," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich

Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi slumped 8.95 per cent. Japan's Nikkei 225 and Shanghai's SSE Composite index also ended lower, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled marginally higher.

Markets in Europe were trading mixed. US markets ended higher on Friday.

"Markets witnessed a volatile session on Monday and ended almost unchanged amid mixed global cues. Investor sentiment remained cautious amid renewed geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, which pushed Brent crude prices higher and weighed

on global risk appetite," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

However, resilience in the IT pack following the start of the earnings season, coupled with selective buying in heavyweight stocks across sectors, helped the market recover from its intraday lows, he added.

The BSE MidCap Select index went up by 0.51 per cent, while SmallCap Select index dipped marginally by 0.03 per cent.

Among sectors, IT surged 3.49 per cent, Focused IT (3.30 per cent), Consumer Durables (0.59 per cent), Utilities (0.35 per cent), Auto (0.31 per cent) and Bankex (0.15 per cent).

➤ PROSPECT

Will, Erik win Canada, US Crossword rounds

While Will Nediger of London, Ontario, has topped the 1st round of the three-round Canada Cryptic Crossword Contest 2006, the top position has gone to Erik Agard of Kansas City, Missouri, in 1st round of US Cryptic Crossword Contest 2026.

Known as Canada Triple-C and US Triple-C, both are inaugural online events aimed at creating crossword awareness across globe. They are being organized by Extra-C, a Patna-based civil society initiative, and the World Crossword federation (WCF) with support from Bihar Tourism, Bihar Foundation, and the Bihar-Jharkhand Association of North America (BJANA).

The 2nd and the 3rd ranks in Canada Triple-C have gone to Rupert Marten Morrish of Markham, Ontario, and Daniel Currie Hall of Halifax, Nova Scotia. The same ranks, respectively, in US Triple-C have been achieved by Paolo Pasco of Brooklyn, New York, and Dan Schwartz of New York. Earlier, on July 5, the Practice Round of the events kicked off with an overwhelming response. While the top ranking in this round was exactly similar to the Round 1 ranking for Canada Triple-C, the US Triple-C rankings had shown only a little shake-up with Erik snapping at the heels of the top ranker Paolo and just a shade ahead of Mathew Theodore Marcus of Oregon, who was in 3rd place. While the Practice Round scores will not be added to the cumulative scores at the end of the 3rd and final round, it showed the enthusiasm and popular appeal of contests in the two countries. The next scoring rounds are scheduled on July 19 and 26 and will begin at 10am Pacific time/1pm Eastern Time, after which championship winners will be announced. The contests are being hosted on www.crypticsingh.com, according to press release.



Will Nediger

Will deposit `50cr in 45 days: SpiceJet tells HC on dispute

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

SpiceJet and its promoter Ajay Singh on Monday assured the Delhi High Court that they will deposit `50 crore in 45 days with the court registry in connection with a legal dispute with media baron Kalanithi Maran and Kal Airways.

Justice Subramonium Prasad — who has earlier directed SpiceJet and Singh to deposit around `144 crore in the case arising from an arbitral award against them in their dispute with Maran — was told that the remaining `94.50 crore would also be deposited in the next ninety days.

On May 4, the bench dismissed pleas by SpiceJet and Ajay Singh seeking a review of a January 19 order to deposit over `144 crore in the case. The Supreme Court, on May 19, however, asked the airline to approach the high court for extension of time to make the deposit.



The senior counsel for SpiceJet and its promoter on Monday informed the court that they have received financial assistance from the central government amid the ongoing West Asia crisis and undertook to pay `50 crore as the first instalment. He further said that the balance would also be paid in the next 90 days.

Considering the stand, the court deferred hearing till November on the airline's plea against the arbitration award.

It listed the matter in September as well on the issue of deposit of `144 crore with the registry.

Senior advocate Jayant Mehta appeared for Maran, along with law firm Karanjawala & Co.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi appeared for SpiceJet and Singh.

On January 19, the court had directed SpiceJet and Singh to deposit `144 crore with the registry within six weeks against an admitted liability of `194 crore pursuant to the arbitration award against them in their dispute with Maran. On March 18, the time to make the deposit was extended by four weeks.

The matter arises from a dispute regarding the non-

issuance of warrants in favour of Maran after the transfer of ownership to Singh, the controlling shareholder of SpiceJet.

The dispute started after Singh took back control of SpiceJet in February 2015 amid a financial crisis at the airline.

Maran and Kal Airways had transferred their entire 35.04 crore equity shares, amounting to a 58.46 per cent stake, in SpiceJet, to its co-founder, Singh, in February 2015 for just `2.

In May 2024, a division bench of the high court set aside a single judge bench order which had upheld an arbitral award asking SpiceJet and Ajay Singh to refund `579 crore plus interest to Maran.

The division bench allowed the appeals filed by Singh and SpiceJet challenging the single judge's July 31, 2023, order and remanded the matter back to the court concerned to consider the petitions afresh.

Hanmantrao Gaikwad: The man who did not chase success yet built it for millions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n NEW DELHI

Some people build companies. Some create wealth. But a very few dedicate their lives to building a nation. Hanmantrao Gaikwad, Founder, Chairman and Managing Director of BVG India Ltd belongs to that rare league.

From humble beginnings to leading one of India's largest integrated services groups, his journey is defined not merely by entrepreneurial success but by a commitment to creating opportunities and touching lives. Today, Gaikwad aims to positively impact 100 million lives by 2035, create one million jobs and expand BVG to 100 countries.

He stands as living proof that a dream driven by purpose can transform not just one life, but an entire nation through entrepreneurship. Born in October 1972 in

the small town of Rahimatpur, Maharashtra, he began far from privilege as his father died while he was still young leaving his mother, a humble schoolteacher, to raise the family alone.

For 21 years, mother and son shared a single hundred-square-foot room. Financial hardship never became an excuse for him, instead it became his sternest teacher. Each day he cycled 40-50 kilometres to reach college and through Maharashtra's Earn-and-Learn Scheme he worked while he studied, eventually earning his engineering degree.

Those years instilled in him resilience and discipline, and a conviction that determination could overcome even the harshest circumstances. Inspired by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and the courage of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, he developed a vision that reached well beyond personal



advancement. At just the age of 19, he founded Bharat Vikas Pratishthan, driven by a simple desire to serve society. In 1994, he joined Tata Motors as a trainee engineer, a secure and promising start to corporate life. But one question would not leave him: could India truly progress if everyone merely

sought jobs, rather than creating them? That question altered the course of his life.

In 1997, he left the comforts of a corporate career to establish Bharat Vikas Group (BVG) with just eight employees and a single housekeeping contract. At a time when housekeeping was dismissed as unorganised and

unglamorous work, Gaikwad saw dignity in it, introducing mechanised housekeeping and professional facility management to India for the first time.

That modest venture has since grown into one of India's largest integrated services groups, employing more than 100,000 people across over 2,500 sites in 29 states and union territories, and serving more than 1,400 clients in over 205 cities. Its services now extend to Parliament House, Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Prime Minister's Office, the Supreme Court, IITs, IIMs, airports, metro systems and shrines including Ram Mandir at Ayodhya, Vaishno Devi and Jagannath Puri. The group has since expanded into life sciences, clean energy, agriculture and nuclear services.

Yet Gaikwad's greatest achievement is not measured in revenue. BVG's fleet

of more than 1,500 ambulances has treated over fifteen million patients, while over 1,000 first-response vehicles have assisted more than nineteen million citizens. His work has been recognised with the Maharashtra of the Year Award, presented by President Pratibha Patil, the Vocational Excellence Award from Rajashree Birla, the Maxwell Award for Excellence in Entrepreneurship and the ABP Majha Sanman Puraskar.

His story features in Maharashtra's Class X English textbook, B.Com Pune University and in Rashmi Bansal's Connect the Dots. From a 100-square-foot room to building one of India's largest service enterprises, Hanmantrao Gaikwad's story is a reminder that true success is measured not by wealth accumulated, but by lives transformed and the hope inspired.

Indian Potash inks pact with Jain Irrigation Systems



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

Indian Potash Ltd has signed an agreement with Jain Irrigation Systems Ltd (JISL) to promote the latest irrigation technologies for sugarcane cultivation in Gujarat.

Both companies signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the 8th of July 2026 to "collaborate on promoting scientific, sustainable, and technology-driven sugarcane cultivation across Gujarat", Indian Potash Ltd said in a statement.

The partnership will focus on the survey, design, supply, and installation of drip irrigation systems, along with capacity building, farmer training, and field demonstrations to encourage the adoption of modern sugarcane

farming practices. As part of the MoU, Indian Potash and Jain Irrigation Systems will promote efficient irrigation and fertigation technologies for sustainable sugarcane cultivation.

They will demonstrate modern irrigation solutions, precision input management, and improved agronomic practices. Awareness programmes, workshops, and field demonstrations will be organised. That apart, they will facilitate access to credit and grant support for eligible farmers to adopt micro irrigation systems.

Indian Potash Ltd is one of the leading importers, suppliers and distributors of fertilizers in India. It is also engaged in the business of manufacturing sugar and bio-fuels and their by-products and other allied activities.

'BSNL unaudited operational revenue up to `4,418 crore in Q1'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

State-run BSNL has provisionally posted around a 10 per cent increase in revenue from operations in the first quarter of fiscal year 2026-27, Union Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Monday.

While speaking to the media after the review meeting of BSNL for the first quarter of the current fiscal, Scindia said that BSNL's enterprise business segment and consumer mobility have shown growth while the consumer fixed access segment has remained almost flat. "As far as our total revenue is concerned, directly from business operations, we have posted close to about a 10



per cent increase in revenue over last year. Last year, we closed Q1 at `4,017 crores. This year, we have closed Q1 at `4,418 crores. So there's a delta of `401 crore, an increase," Scindia said.

He said BSNL's ARPU (average revenue per user) has provisionally increased from `100 to `102.7.

DAILY SUDOKU

9	4			8	5			
			9		1			6
		7		3				9
5	7	3			6			
			8			3	1	7
7				5		4		
3		6		7				
		8	4			7		2

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

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



SOLUTION (13.7.26)								
4	8	2	6	3	9	7	5	1
7	1	3	2	5	8	6	9	4
5	6	9	4	7	1	3	2	8
3	7	1	8	9	6	5	4	2
2	9	4	5	1	3	8	6	7
8	5	6	7	4	2	9	1	3
9	2	5	1	8	7	4	3	6
6	4	7	3	2	5	1	8	9
1	3	8	9	6	4	2	7	5

DOUBLE CROSSWORD
TUESDAY | JULY 14, 2026

1	2	3	4	5	6			
7								
10	11	12			13			
14							16	
			17	18				
		21			22			
								25
26							29	30
								31
34								
36								

- ACROSS**
- 4 When it's only tiny, keep quiet about a bit of pain (6)
7 He painted Mona, and maybe Noel and Dora (8)
8 Suit apt to show the dirt? (6)
10 Crop bringing anger to the workers' leader (5)
13 Clothing that may be the rage (4)
14 Invalid possessing no legal power (4)
15 No Oriental concoction of stew (4)
16 Be bent on seeming humble (3)
17 The animal to put £1 on (4)
19 Call some taxis to a house as a prank (4)
21 Solved the problem of keeping fit (6,3)

- DOWN**
- 1 Sent by air (5)
2 Hm, there isn't one! (5)
3 Shoemaker's latest model (4)
4 Biblical name for Grandma (5)
5 Close to the northeast part of Arabia (4)
6 A set form of home entertainment (3,3)
9 Sadness of a soft-headed musketeer (6)
11 A Schubert piece with heart (3)
12 Distribute to all (5)
13 No particular soldier? (7)
15 Though circular, it has a shallow end all right (3)
16 Take a knock sportingly (3)
18 Historic Parliamentarian upset by some

- 23 Victor, with a broken toe, can still go to the poll (4)
24 The uncleared part of the forest? (4)
26 Not too many have noisy ways (3)
27 Weather change not enough to take one's breath away (4)
29 Utter in semitones (4)
32 It has a black face (4)
33 If you want stiffening, have a couple! (5)
34 Race venue where a non-starter dishes out meals? (2,4)
35 She introduces a boy to a girl (8)
36 Show anger, but with restraint (6)

- exertion (6)
20 Open to exposure, nothing may be true! (4)
21 In two ways a big success (3)
22 It's due to be pronounced wet (3)
23 Beauty is but skin deep (6)
25 Thus quoted, in turn, with some precision (3)
28 Hates changing in a rush (5)
30 One house of a number in ruin! (5)
31 Where Americans get cross, put in a bad seat (5)
32 One posted in Picardy? (4)
33 Refereeing manual? (4)



MLAs of the Congress Party paid a courtesy visit to CM Himanta Biswa Sarma at his office chamber in the Assam Legislative Assembly in Dispur on Monday

PIONEER PHOTO

FM calls for enhanced NRI outreach to sustain foreign currency mobilisation momentum

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday asked banks to enhance outreach to Non Resident Indians (NRIs) for greater mobilisation of foreign currency deposits.

Chairing a review meeting with CEOs of public sector banks and financial institutions on the Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank), or FCNR(B) deposits, External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs) and Overseas Foreign Currency Borrowings (OFCBs) swap initiatives, Sitharaman appreciated the encouraging and enthusiastic initial response.

She called upon banks to further intensify outreach to the NRI diaspora, introduce innovative deposit products and sustain the



momentum of mobilisation during the remaining period of the schemes, the finance ministry said in a statement.

During the meeting, CEOs informed that banks are offering attractive returns on FCNR(B) deposits, including on five-year deposits, supported by the suspension of the interest rate ceiling on fresh FCNR(B) deposits under the scheme.

The CEOs stated that there has been significant interest from NRIs residing in Singapore, Hong Kong, West Asia, the United Kingdom,

the United States and other overseas jurisdictions.

They outlined their plans to capitalise on the positive sentiment and accelerate deposit mobilisation during the remainder of the scheme period, it said.

They expressed confidence that ECB mobilisations would gather stronger traction during the third quarter (October-December 2026) of the current fiscal year, it said.

Public sector banks (PSBs) also informed that they have put in place customised outreach strategies, including digital channels, to engage with the non-resident Indian (NRI) diaspora and enhance deposit mobilisation, it said.

They further noted that FCNR(B) deposit mobilisation has shown a clear accelerating trend, supported by attractive returns being offered by banks, it said.

Statewide expansion for women safety inaugurated in Tamil Nadu



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Chennai

Securecam India has officially announced the successful completion of all five operational phases of its landmark Secure Our City (SOC) campaign within Chennai. Designed to prioritise the safety of residents, particularly women and children, the global campaign aims to create public consciousness regarding micro-level safety by providing completely free security surveillance system installations.

The latest operational updates highlight widespread coverage across critical neighborhoods in the city:

Phase 3: Brought over 800 homes across SM Nagar (Sathyavani Muthu Nagar) in Chennai Central under continuous CCTV coverage.

Phase 4: Successfully secured an additional 600 households around the Karpagam Avenue, RA Puram (Raja AnnaMalaiPuram) area.

Phase 5: Completed the targeted installation of surveillance systems for several independent and individual houses and school of specially abled kids and people in and around Chennai. (Semmanchery, perumbakkam, Tambaram, Medavakkam, Ayyappakkam, Kundrathur, Nandanpakkam).

BRIEFLY

Sinner evolving just like Federer, Nadal and Djokovic before him



A perfectly-placed topspin lob winner that sailed beyond reach of his 6-foot-6 (1.98-meter) opponent and landed on the outside of the baseline in the second game.

A delicate drop shot which made Alexander Zverev change direction so suddenly that the German player over-extended his right knee at a crucial point of the third set.

Sure, there were plenty of the usual whizzing, missile-like baseline winners from Jannik Sinner in his four-set victory over Zverev in the Wimbledon final. He also showed off the new variety of his game, though - which came in handy when Zverev unleashed more power than he had used before against the top-ranked player. The variety of shots were what Sinner's two coaches, Darren Cahill and Simone Vagnozzi, appreciated most from their player in Sunday's match.

Just like the Big Three and Big Four before them - Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray - Sinner, Zverev and Carlos Alcaraz (who is out injured) are continually evolving their games, Cahill noted.

"Alexander is now playing a different style of tennis against Jannik," Cahill said. "We know Jannik is going to have to improve in certain areas to handle that type of game. Carlos is going to come back really strong, as well - as we all hope. You need to keep adding things to his game. "We saw a lot of the stuff he doesn't normally like doing, even in the final today: sliced backhands, a couple lobs, couple drop shots. Really stepping up when he needed to in the big moments." Deficit to Alcaraz in Slams count reduced: Sinner's second consecutive Wimbledon victory matched the two titles that Alcaraz won before him at the All England Club and raised his overall tally to five Grand Slams - narrowing the gap to Alcaraz's seven. (AP)

Former Spanish leader criticised for comments about France's World Cup team



A former Spanish prime minister is facing criticism for saying that France's World Cup team "does not have any French players," which French and Spanish leaders have called racist.

Mariano Rajoy, a member of Spain's conservative Popular Party, made the comment in a column for Spanish outlet El Debate ahead of Tuesday's World Cup semifinal between the European neighbors.

"They've won every match they've played at this World Cup and are currently top of the FIFA rankings. They also have an exceptionally strong squad. That said, one thing they don't have is any French players," Rajoy wrote on July 10. On Monday, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot told French broadcaster BFM TV that "France has no skin color. Any contrary claim stems from stupidity, racism or a combination of the two."

A day earlier, French Football Federation president Philippe Diallo wrote on X that "Mariano Rajoy's remarks about the French team carry intolerable whiffs of racism," adding that "they also raise questions about the deplorable climate that gives rise to such sentiments. Our players do not need a certificate of nationality from a former Spanish prime minister." Spain's ruling Socialist government swiftly condemned the remarks by Rajoy, who was prime minister from 2011 to 2018.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez referenced the comments without naming his predecessor, writing on X: "There are those who still measure belonging by surname, place of birth, or skin color. Others measure it by our roots in a country and our will to contribute to it. Playing soccer. Caring for our elders. Or opening businesses. France, we'll see you in the semifinals. May the best one win and may racism lose." (AP)

Named in CWG contingent, Nandakumar declared ineligible

PHILEM DIPAK SINGH n New Delhi

Para swimmer Tejas Nandakumar, who was named in the Indian contingent for the upcoming Glasgow Commonwealth Games, will not compete in the multi-sport event starting on July 23 as his entry has been rejected by the organisers due to a classification issue.

The 20-year-old Nandakumar's name was there in the list of competitors issued by the government last week. He was to compete in the men's 50m freestyle S7 event in Glasgow and his slot was earlier accepted by the organisers.

S7 classification in para swimming is for athletes who have the full use of their arms and trunk, but have limited leg function, are missing parts of both legs, or have limited movement in all four limbs. Nandakumar, who has previously competed in the Para-Asian Games in 2023, has a congenital condition



affecting his legs.

In a letter sent on July 9, the local organisers have informed the Indian

Olympic Association (IOA) that he is no longer eligible to compete following a validation process by the international federation - World Para Athletics - post June 23.

"Following the IF validation process (post June 23), the athlete (Tejas Nandakumar) has been identified as ineligible to represent your CGA in the Para Swimming competition of G2026 (Glasgow 2026)," Georgia Lambert, Sports Entries and Information Coordinator - Oceania & Asia Glasgow 2026, wrote in the letter.

"The athlete must be internationally classified with a confirmed sport class status or review with a fixed review date of 2027 or later at the sport entries deadline of 23 June 2026. As the class status for Tejas is R-2025, he is therefore unfortunately ineligible to compete."

Classification determines which athletes are eligible to compete in a sport

and how they are then grouped together for competition. This is done to safeguard the integrity of fair competition.

Classification of athletes is done by a panels of medical and technical experts in their sport. Athlete evaluation normally takes place before competitions and they are given slots.

Classification of athletes is not permanent. Athletes with progressive conditions require periodic reviews.

Depending on the type and severity of the impairment an athlete might undergo athlete evaluation several times throughout his or her career. Some impairments change over time and junior athletes may not yet have reached skeletal maturity by the time of first classification.

In these cases, classifiers can decide that the athlete must be seen again or reviewed at the next competition or at set time-frames. (PTI)

The cloud over Argentina's 2026 World Cup campaign: Why perception matters



SHAKYA MITRA

When the draw for the 2026 FIFA World Cup was made in December 2025, few disputed that defending champions Argentina had received one of the tournament's more favourable paths. On paper, a group featuring Austria, Algeria and Jordan appeared considerably less demanding than those faced by several other contenders. Their projected knockout route also looked manageable, with possible meetings against Uruguay in the Round of 32 and the runners-up of Group G or Group D in the Round of 16, leaving Portugal as their first expected major test in the quarter-finals. By comparison, teams such as Germany, Brazil and the Netherlands faced significantly tougher routes.

There is nothing inherently wrong in receiving a favourable draw. World Cup draws are lotteries, and every nation enters the tournament knowing that luck inevitably plays a role. What has complicated Argentina's campaign, is the growing perception that they have also benefited from favourable officiating and institutional goodwill. Whether that perception is justified or not, it has become one of the defining narratives of the tournament.

This debate has lingered since Argentina's victorious 2022 World Cup campaign, their first in 36 years. Several high-profile refereeing decisions from Qatar remain frequent points of discussion, including the heated quarter-final against the Netherlands, the penalty awarded against Croatia in the semi-final, and the penalty given in the final against France fol-



lowing what looked a relatively soft challenge.

The presence of Lionel Messi inevitably amplifies this debate. Widely regarded as one of the greatest footballers in history, Messi now plays for Inter Miami and has spent the latter stages of his career based in one of the host nations of the 2026 tournament. Before lifting the World Cup in Qatar, he carried the burden of being considered perhaps the greatest player never to win football's biggest prize. That debate ended in December 2022. Now, with Messi playing his sixth World Cup while continuing to add to his extraordinary goalscoring record, every controversial decision involving Argentina is

viewed through the lens of protecting football's biggest global icon.

Events during this tournament have only strengthened that perception. Against Algeria, Messi avoided even a booking after striking the back of an opponent's leg. Against Austria, an Argentine goal stood despite protests over an alleged foul in the build-up. Viewed individually, each incident can be defended within the Laws of the Game. Taken together, however, they reinforce an existing narrative that Argentina consistently receive the benefit of doubt.

The Round of 16 victory over Egypt has become the focal point of

that debate. Egypt led 2-0 with just 11 minutes of normal time remaining before the match turned dramatically. In the second half Egypt had what would have been a crucial goal ruled out after the referee penalised a foul through the aid of the Video Assistant Referee (VAR). Later, Argentina scored what proved to be the decisive goal following a challenge in their own half that closely resembled the earlier incident.

If one goes by technicalities, there is a credible argument that both decisions were correct. Football, however, is often judged less by technical interpretation than by consistency. The question that football observers are asking is whether those same interpretations would have been applied had the teams been wearing the opposite shirts.

Fortune has certainly favoured Argentina in several respects. Their relatively comfortable group-stage draw was simply the product of chance, and if projected opponents such as Uruguay, the United States, Turkey or Portugal failed to stand in their path to the semi-finals, that is hardly something for which

Argentina can be criticised. At the same time, narrow victories over Cape Verde, Egypt and Switzerland demonstrate that supposedly easier fixtures still demand difficult victories, with Argentina's stronger attacking options making decisive late contributions.

Other developments have nevertheless fuelled the perception that appearances are working against FIFA. President Gianni Infantino remarked publicly that he had "suffered" while watching Argentina's dramatic victory over Cape Verde. Although intended as an emotional observation, the comment inevitably attracted criticism given his position.

None of this diminishes Argentina's quality. While they may be marginally weaker than the side that triumphed in 2022 particularly following Angel Di Maria's retirement from international football they remain one of the world's elite teams, fully capable of winning matches on their own merits. That is precisely why the perception of institutional protection is so damaging. It overshadows legitimate achievements, casts doubt over genuine victories and shifts attention away from the football itself.

Whether FIFA has actually favoured Argentina is, in many ways, less significant than the fact that a substantial number of supporters believe it has. For a tournament that prides itself on being the pinnacle of global sport, perception matters almost as much as reality. Fairness must not only exist; it must also be seen to exist. Until that confidence is fully restored, every close decision involving Argentina and Lionel Messi will continue to invite suspicion, a situation that befits neither the three-time champions nor the World Cup itself.

The writer is a sports management consultant

World Cup semifinals: Mbappe vs Yamal and Messi vs Kane



JAMES ROBSON n Atlanta

It's a World Cup semifinal line-up for the ages. Four previous champions and the four top-ranking teams in the world. Five of the six top scorers, one GOAT and one of the bitterest rivalries in soccer.

Argentina, Spain, France and England went into the tournament as the top four in FIFA's rankings and are two wins away from being crowned champion of the world again. It's just too close to call either semifinal matchup: France will play Spain in Arlington, Texas, on Tuesday and England will face Argentina in Atlanta on Wednesday.

Not since 1990 has the final four of a World Cup been made up entirely of previous winners. England and Argentina were involved then, although they didn't play each other. Then, like now, Argentina was the defending champion - after beating West Germany in the 1986 final in

Mexico - and went on to lose to West Germany in the 1990 final.

And this year could also see a repeat final from 2022 if France and Argentina both advance.

England vs. Argentina: A bitter rivalry: Argentina must overcome England in a match that resumes a fierce rivalry that goes beyond the soccer field, with tensions also relating to the 1982 conflict over the Falklands Islands.

On the field there have been numerous flashpoints between the teams on the World Cup stage. Argentina captain Antonio Rattin, whose death was announced on Saturday, was sent off in a bad-tempered quarter-final match against winner England in 1966. England manager Alf Ramsey tried to stop his players from swapping shirts with their opponents after a 1-0 victory.

Roll the clock forward 20 years and in 1986 Diego Maradona's infamous "Hand of God" goal

helped Argentina to a 2-1 win against England in the quarterfinals on the way to lifting the trophy.

David Beckham was sent off in 1998 for kicking out at Argentina midfielder Diego Simeone, who was predictably criticized by the English media for his reaction to what appeared to be light contact. Argentina won the round of 16 match on penalties.

Beckham got his revenge four years later by scoring a penalty in a 1-0 win that contributed to Argentina being eliminated at the group stage.

France vs. Spain: A quick chance for French revenge

France and Spain meet again in the semifinals of a major tournament, just two years since going head-to-head at the European Championship. Spain won 2-1 with a then-16-year-old Lamine Yamal on the score sheet and went on to lift the Euros by beating England in final. (AP)

What to know about rules behind FIFA WC's most contentious calls



JAMES ROBSON n Atlanta

It was another game-changing moment at the World Cup that had more to do with television replays in a room far away than a moment of brilliance on the field. The sending off of Switzerland's Breel Embolo in Saturday's quarterfinal game against Argentina was the latest call that may have left fans scratching their heads, not least because of the confusing name of the newly implemented law that swung the match.

It is called the "mistaken identity" rule. Yet, technically, Embolo was not shown a second yellow card - resulting in a red - for a case of mistaken identity. It was because the referee Joao Pinheiro did not see in real time that the forward had simulated a foul under a challenge from Argentina's Leandro Paredes.

Paredes was initially shown a yellow card, which is a key factor. Under FIFA rules, because Paredes was shown a card, the video assistant referee (VAR) can intervene and recommend that the on-field official review the sideline monitor. After review, the referee deemed Embolo to have committed a "clear simulation" and showed him a second yellow card and sent him off.

The rules state that the VAR can assist when the referee penalises the "wrong team for an offence that results in a red or yellow card being shown to the wrong player." It was a pivotal point in the match, coming five minutes after Switzerland had made it 1-1. Argentina won 3-1 after extra time. "The referee made the wrong decision," Switzerland coach Murat Yakin said. "I know they will protect their referee, but this rule destroyed our game today, and it's very painful, and to be eliminated in that way hurts a lot." It is not the first time at this World Cup that teams have hit out against new rules or technology.

Germany infuriated by disallowed goal: Newly tightened regulations contributed to Germany's shock elimination in the round of 32.

Defender Jonathan Tah's potentially game-winning goal in extra time against Paraguay was ruled out after VAR



review for a foul on goalkeeper Orlando Gill.

Replays showed Germany's Waldemar Anton push Gill to the ground, but the minimal contact led to criticism of the decision. FIFA's referees chief Pierluigi Collina said officials had been told to punish incidents when players try to block opponents and make no attempt to play the ball, especially where goalkeepers are concerned. Germany went on to lose the game in a penalty shootout, with Tah firing a decisive spot kick over the bar.

High tech ball costs Croatia: The words "connected ball technology" will likely haunt Luka Modric and Croatia for years to come.

The high-tech soccer ball fitted with "advanced sensors" used at this World Cup cost Croatia a dramatic late equaliser against Portugal in the round of 32.

Egypt heartbroken against Argentina: It was shaping up to be one of the great World Cup upsets. Egypt led 2-0 against defending champion Argentina in the round of 16 and might have been 3-0 up if not for VAR. (AP)

I am Terminator, Abhishek is Terminator 4, Vaibhav is Terminator 6, says Yuvraj Singh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n London

Yuvraj Singh has come up with a fitting analogy to describe the evolution of fearless Indian batters, likening himself, Abhishek Sharma and teenage sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi to different versions of the iconic Hollywood franchise 'Terminator', starring Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The former India all-rounder, who has mentored Abhishek over the years, believes the 15-year-old Sooryavanshi represents the next stage in the progression of attacking batting and said he would be delighted to work with the youngster in the future.

Speaking to JioHotstar, Yuvraj said, "I always call myself a Terminator. Now there is Terminator 4, Abhishek Sharma, who is four times better than me. And after him comes Terminator 6, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, who has evolved even more.

"I did my part in my time, Abhishek elevated it, and now Vaibhav is setting new standards. This is the third phase of the same journey. It is great to see the sport evolving," said Yuvraj, who watched the Wimbledon



men's singles final alongside Abhishek and Sooryavanshi.

"When I watch (Jannik) Sinner and (Carlos) Alcaraz, I see how tennis is changing. I see the same evolution in Abhishek and Vaibhav. I have spent a lot of time training Abhishek, and I would love to spend

time with Vaibhav as well. He has a great career ahead of him. He is a serious player in the time with Vaibhav as well. He has a great career ahead of him. He is a serious player in the

making, and I believe he will get there."

The batting prodigy, on his part, said the interaction with Yuvraj gave him valuable lessons that extended beyond technique.

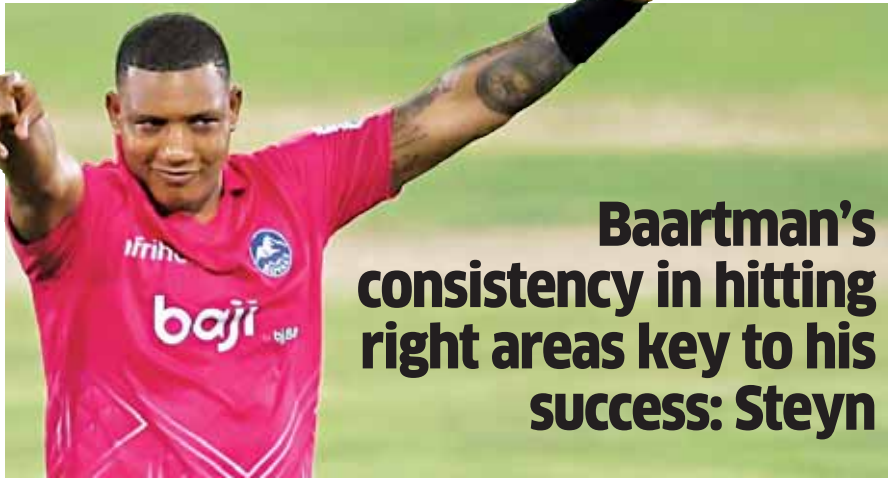
"Yuvi Paaji is my idol too. Meeting him for the first time was a special moment. I got to spend time with him and he shared a lot of insights about the game.

"He spoke about the mental side of the game, how to handle pressure, and the importance of believing in yourself. It feels great to have so much to learn from someone like him. I am sure it will help me a lot in my career going forward," Vaibhav Sooryavanshi said.

Abhishek, who has flourished under Yuvraj's mentorship, said he could relate to the teenager's emotions.

"I can feel what Vaibhav is feeling right now because Yuvi Paaji is my idol as well. I remember when I first met him, it was kind of the same feeling that he's feeling right now.

"So obviously, watching my first Wimbledon, and that too the finals, with Yuvi Paaji and Vaibhav, it's a special day for me," Abhishek said.



Baartman's consistency in hitting right areas key to his success: Steyn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Johannesburg

Former South Africa pace great Dale Steyn is mighty impressed with Ottneil Baartman's consistency and believes it has been the primary reason for his continued success in the SA20 league.

Baartman is the leading wicket-taker in the four-season history of the SA20, and Steyn has worked with him in the past at Sunrisers Eastern Cape.

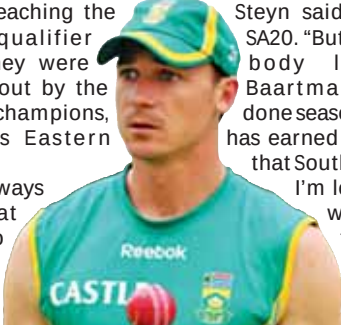
Baartman, who has claimed 61 wickets across

four seasons, dismissed 20 batters in just nine matches during his maiden stint for the Paarl Royals in the 2025-26 edition and played a significant role in David Miller and Co reaching the second qualifier before they were knocked out by the eventual champions, Sunrisers Eastern Cape.

"I'm always looking at guys who can consistently land the

ball in the right area. The thing about T20 cricket is that you can bowl badly and still pick up wickets. You can get your bad ball caught on the boundary or something like that," Steyn said, speaking to SA20. "But for me, somebody like Ottneil Baartman, what he's done season after season has earned him a spot in that South African team.

I'm looking at guys who can consistently land ball in the hot zone for a long period of time."



Best is yet to come: First female Test centurion at Lord's Yastika Bhatia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n London

India wicketkeeper-batter Yastika Bhatia believes her "best is yet to come" after she became the first woman cricketer to hit a Test century at the iconic Lord's stadium, marking an incredible comeback from a career-threatening knee injury last year.

Bhatia struck 113 off 158 before India declared their second innings at the stroke of tea on day three, setting hosts England a massive 457-run target. "It's unbelievable because six months ago I was in a very different place and if you would have told me that I would have my name in the honours board I wouldn't have believed it," Bhatia said after third day's play.

"The best is yet come, I have always believed that. But so far it's really good and I enjoyed my time in the middle. It's just the beginning, a lot more to come and I am looking forward to that," he added.

She credited her family, team mates and support staff for helping her recover from the career-threatening torn ACL in her left knee that she sustained in October last year. The injury, which needed a surgery, prevented her from competing in India's ODI World Cup-winning campaign at home. "A lot of people have been working behind the scenes, my family, my father, mother, my sister they have been the biggest backbone, support. My coaches, trainers back home, the support staff and team mates here, they have backed me," she said.

Under-fire India turn to Ro-Ko to find winning touch against England



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Birmingham

Veterans Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will not only have to perform for themselves but also play a key role in lifting the sagging Indian spirits against an upbeat England when the two sides clash in a three-match ODI series, starting here on Tuesday.

Kohli and Rohit, along with Jasprit Bumrah, are back in the mix to play the format in which bilaterals have been losing both context and sheen amid growing popularity of T20 cricket.

The 39-year-old Rohit and the soon-to-be 38 Kohli still have the fire in their bellies and the runs to show for their efforts as they aim for a ODI World Cup swansong.

Facing Jofra Archer and Josh Tongue on tracks, which are spicier compared to sub-continental featherbeds, is a different challenge. But the duo has smashed English bowlers enough over the years to know what is required of them.

But their presence for this series certainly holds more significance after the Indian team, under a new T20 skipper Shreyas Iyer, lost all but one of its seven T20I matches in the ongoing tour.

The only match they didn't lose was a game that got abandoned. The 0-2 defeat versus Ireland and 0-4 thrashing handed by England has opened a Pandora's Box with BCCI calling for a performance review.

7 bronze medals secured in Asian U-19 and U-23 Boxing Championships

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Jakarta

Indian boxers remained a strong force at the Asian U-19 and U-23 Championships with eight of them advancing to the finals across men's and women's U-23 categories and seven others

securing bronze medals after semifinal finishes in Jakarta. In the U-23 women's category, five Indian boxers progressed to the finals.

Nisha (54kg) defeated Hyeju Lee of Korea, while Nikita Chand (60kg) registered a win against Sarri



Kokufu of Japan.

Gulzina Melsvek of Kyrgyzstan on Sunday. In all

Zverev hopes he can be more than just 'the third guy' in tennis

MATTIAS KAREN n London

Alexander Zverev is used to being "the third guy" in tennis. After following up his French Open title with a run to his first Wimbledon final, he's hoping to be more than that in the future.

Despite losing to Jannik Sinner on Centre Court on Sunday, the 29-year-old Zverev thinks he is closer than ever to challenging the top-ranked Italian and his main rival Carlos Alcaraz and giving tennis a Big Three again.

Sinner and Alcaraz had won the last nine Grand Slam tournaments between them before Zverev won his first major at Roland Garros this year.

"There was always this conversation, who will be the third guy?"

Zverev said. "I've always been the third guy, but I was just far away from those two. But I've always been No. 3 in a way. So if I get closer to them ... it would be great."

Alcaraz missed this year's French Open — and Wimbledon — with a wrist injury, and Sinner was eliminated in the second round in Paris after wilting in the heat.

Zverev lost in five sets to Alcaraz in the semifinals at the Australian Open this year and lost 6-7 (7), 7-6 (2), 6-3, 6-4 to Sinner on Sunday after overextending his knee in the third set. "I think I've been pushing those guys," Zverev said. "I haven't beaten them this year, but I've pushed them to the limits, I would say." (AP)



IDFC FIRST Bank Limited

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Notice is hereby given to the Below mentioned borrowers and the general public that the borrowers have availed loan facilities from IDFC FIRST Bank Limited by pledging Gold ornaments and despite repeated reminders and notices, the borrower has failed to repay the outstanding dues within the stipulated time under the facility. The following LANS were put up for auction in physical mode previously which did not prove successful. Accordingly, the Bank, in exercise of its rights, shall conduct a re-auction in online mode of the pledged gold or ornaments on 18/08/2026 for the recovery of its dues. Borrowers are hereby informed that this is the final opportunity to repay the entire outstanding dues along with the applicable relevant interest, charges and expenses before the auction date, failing which the pledged gold ornaments shall be sold.

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176347120	BHASKAR SINGH	NAINITAL BRANCH

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Auction shall be conducted online through its approved auction service providers through - <https://idfcgold.auctiontiger.net> on 18/08/2026 from 12:00 pm to 02:00 pm. and <http://gold.samil.in> from 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.

Please note that, if the customer is deceased, all the conditions pertaining to auction will be applicable to their nominee/legal heir.

Sd/-
DATE : 14-07-2026
PLACE: UTTARAKHAND

Authorized officer for
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केनरा बैंक Canara Bank

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ASSET RECOVERY MANAGEMENT (ARM) BRANCH,
ARYA SAMAJ ROAD, KAROL BAGH, NEW DELHI - 110005
Email: cb3038@canarabank.com | cb2365@canarabank.com

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Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described movable/ immovable property mortgaged/hypothecated charged to the Secured Creditor, the possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Canara Bank, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is What is" and "Whatever there is basis" on below mentioned dates through E-Auction under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, read with Rule 8(6) & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer the link "E-Auction" provided in provider (M/s PSB Alliance (Baanknet.com)), (Contact No. 8291220220, Email: support.BAANKNET@psballiance.com) or Canara Bank's website www.canarabank.com, EMD amount of 10% of the Reserve Price is to be deposited in E-Wallet of <https://baanknet.com> portal directly or by generating the Challan therein to deposit the EMD through RTGS/NEFT in the account details as mentioned in the said challan.

S. No.	Name and Address Borrower/ Guarantor	Brief Description of Immovable Property	Total Liabilities (Rs.) : Reserve Price (Rs.) : EMD (Rs.) : Increment Amount (Rs.) :	Date & Times of Auction Contact Person Name
1.	M/S J D GALAXY HOTEL (BORROWER) (PROP. SATISH SEMWAL) PRIMARY SCHOOL GRAM MANDO NEAR TRISHUL HOME STAY PATTI BADAGADDI TEHSIL BHATWARI NARENDRA NAGAR TEHRI GARHWAL UTTARKASHI UTTARAKHAND 249193 SHRI SATISH SEMWAL (PROPRIETOR/MORTGAGOR) S/O LATE SHRI. DATARAM SEMWAL MUKHAWA BHATWARI UTTARAKASHI UTTARAKHAND 249135 MOB 9410199883 SMT. GAJENDRI (GUARANTOR) WO LATE SHRI.DATARAM SEMWAL GRAM MANDO PATTI BAADAGADDI SUB TEHSIL JOSHIYADA TEHSIL BHATWARI DISTT UTTARKASHI UTTARAKHAND 249193 MOB 9058991144	Land situated in mauja Mando patti Badagaddi Sub Tehsil Joshiyada Tehsil Bhatwadi Distt- Uttarkashi having Khata No.00103 Fasil Year from 1425 to 1430 bearing Khara No. 1425 having Area 0.010 Hectare (100 sq mtrs), Khasra No. 1426 having rea 0.006 Hectare (60 Sq Mtrs), Khasra No. 1560 Madhye Area 0.006 Hectare (60 Sq Mtrs).Total Three Khasra Numbers Having Total Area 0.022 Hectare (220 Sq Mtrs). BOUNDARIES- EAST- LAND OF SHRI. BANUDI WEST- LAND OF SHRI NEGI NORTH- TEKHLABYPASS MOTOR ROAD SOUTH- LAND OF SHRI CHAUHAN	Rs. 71,78,865.75 as on 11.08.2025 Rs. 1,68,00,000/- Rs. 16,80,000/- EMD Should be Deposit on 31.07.2026 up to 11.00 AM Rs.50,000/-	31.07.2026 between 12:30 PM TO 01:30 PM (With unlimited extensions of 5 minutes duration each) SHRI SIDDHARTH SHUKLA Mobile No. 9928875879 and SHRI MANOJ KUMAR (Authorised Officer) Mobile No. 8826933887

Date : 10.07.2026
Place : New Delhi

For Canara Bank
Authorised Officer