

ASHOKE RAJ New Delhi

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



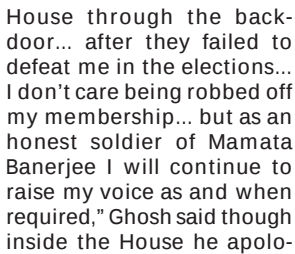
BJP leaders, including MP Nishikant Dubey, have alleged that “foreign forces” and anti-national elements

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

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

SAUGAR SENGUPTA n Kolkata

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

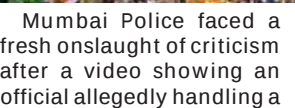


gised to both the Speaker and the TMC Chief Whip saying "If any of my actions appeared disrespectful, I express my regret." The Speaker had presently kept the issue with himself for consideration.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Mumbai

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



Woman activist inappropriately went viral. While police claimed that his action was being "misin-

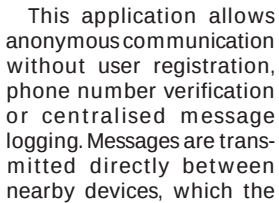
The protest culminated with the playing of the national anthem.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Puri (Odisha)

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

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
n New Delhi

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



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

MOHIT KANDHARI n Jammu

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

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

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

Though the 'Pahandi' was scheduled to begin at noon, it commenced at 10.50 am. Amid chants of "Jai Jagannath" and "Haribol", the deities were taken one after another to their respective chariots. (PTI)



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



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Extract of Standalone Unaudited Financial Results for the Quarter ended 30th June, 2026

(₹ Crore unless stated otherwise)

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

Extract of Consolidated Unaudited Financial Results for the Quarter ended 30th June, 2026

(₹ Crore unless stated otherwise)

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

Note:

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

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

Place : New Delhi

Dated: 24th July, 2026

For and on behalf of Board of Directors

Sd/-

(Dr. Ashok Kumar Panda)

Chairman & Managing Director

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

TONY DAS n Guwahati

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

floods has increased to 47 across the tate. According to the authority's flood report, more than 7,21,000 people have been affected in Charaideo, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Hojai, Jorhat, Kamrup, Kamrup Metropolitan, Karbi Anglong, Nagaon, Sivasagar and Tinsukia districts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rescue operations conclude in rain-battered Palghar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE n Palghar

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

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



A worker transplants paddy saplings at a field in Maharashtra PTI

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

Kadam said the death toll rose to two after another

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

The official said 244 persons were rescued from

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

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

occupants safely out of the partially submerged car.

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

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

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

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

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



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE n Thiruvananthapuram

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE n Chhatarpur

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE n Bengaluru

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE n Agartala

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE n Agartala

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

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

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



Abhishek Debroy

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

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

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

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

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



Editor's
TAKE

Exam leak response
shifts to fast-track courts

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

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

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

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

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

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

The price of Western pragmatism

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



NILANTHA
ILANGAMUWA

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

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

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

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



THE SEIZURE OF
THE GRAND
MOSQUE IN MECCA
IN NOVEMBER 1979
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SAUDI RELIGIOUS
AND POLITICAL LIFE

The writer is a columnist
based in Colombo

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIC TALK



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

PHOTO: PTI



DEEBA
SALIM IRFAN

2ND OPINION

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

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

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

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

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

The things we leave for later



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE
TRADITIONAL INDIAN VALUES

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

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

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

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

KABIR AHMED SAIKIA | ASSAM

Education reforms need accountability

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

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

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

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

NR RAMACHANDRAN | CHENNAI

Nuclear safeguards must remain

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

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

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

SANJAY CHOPRA | MOHALI

Assam struggles against the deluge

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

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

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

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

KIRTI WADHAWAN | KANPUR

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Order Order

Pet dog plays crucial role in solving 2021 Mohali murder



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Delhi court acquits man in 2011 murder case

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

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

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

Centre assures strict steps to curb NEET paper leaks

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

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

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



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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

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

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

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

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



requested the bench to withdraw the same.

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

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

purpose, and objectives of the protest".

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

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

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

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

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

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

The ensuing clashes left several police personnel and protesters injured.

SC restricts uploading proceedings online



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

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

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

court proceedings on social media.

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Pune

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

SC proposes special courts for Manipur violence cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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



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

Senior advocate Vrinda Grover informed the bench

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

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

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

"We direct the legal aid counsels to immediately

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

SC to hear pleas on police action against students

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

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

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



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

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

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BUSINESS11

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

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

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

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

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

(PTI)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(PTI)

India engaged with US for negotiating trade pact: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

File photo

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

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

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

India, Israel conclude second round of trade pact negotiations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

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

The negotiations were held here during July 20-23.

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

fying areas of convergence," the Commerce Ministry said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

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

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

The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO)

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

SC Ralhan, President, FIEO,

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

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

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

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

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

The project will be housed

under a Special Purpose Vehicle, Vizag Power Transmission Ltd.

Its scope involves the establishment of a 4x1500 MVA, 765/400 kV GIS substation at Pendurthi (Vizag) and a 3x1500 MVA, 765/400 kV Khammam-II substation.

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

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

Rupee recovers 18 paise to settle at 96.55 against US dollar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n Mumbai

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

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

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened

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

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

VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Ltd, said, "Rupee has been stable on Friday, trading around 96.55 to the dollar at 3.30 pm. There are reports of RBI intervention to prevent further depreciation of the rupee. Some PSU banks are also reported to have sold dollars to stabilise the rupee. If crude declines next week, it can further help the rupee to stabilise."

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on further escalation in tensions between the US and Iran.

Elevated crude oil prices may also pressure the rupee. However, diplomatic talks between the two nations may prevent a sharp fall in the rupee," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said.

Any intervention by the RBI may also support the rupee at lower levels, he said, adding that the USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of `96.30-96.85. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading marginally down by

0.06 per cent at 101.38. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, crossed the \$100-mark, trading 0.25 per cent lower at \$100.4 per barrel in futures trade.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex settled lower for the fifth day in a row, falling 331.62 points, or 0.43 per cent, to 76,059.77, while the Nifty was down 102.15 points, or 0.43 per cent, to 23,767.45.

Foreign Institutional Investors offloaded equities worth `2,999.23 crore on a net basis on Thursday, according to exchange data.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
n New Delhi

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

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

information has been made available to their clients.

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

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

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

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

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

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

NSE Nifty dipped 102.15 points, or 0.43 per cent, to end at 23,767.45. From the Sensex

pack, Eternal, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Bharti Airtel, Asian Paints and

Infosys were among the major laggards. IT services company Infosys declined 1 per cent after it tempered the upper end of its full-year revenue forecast to between 1.5 per cent and 3 per cent amid continued macroeconomic uncertainty.

"Indian equity markets extended their losing streak to a fifth consecutive session as investors remained cautious amid lingering geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and renewed concerns over US trade tariffs. Weakness across Asian markets reinforced the risk-off mood, prompting broad-based selling despite signs of easing pressure in energy

markets," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

"Markets traded volatile and ended lower on Friday, extending their losing streak for the fifth consecutive session amid persistent geopolitical concerns, elevated crude oil prices and disappointing earnings from select large-cap companies," Ajit Mishra — SVP Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, dropped 3.66 per cent to \$96.98 per barrel on Friday, after surpassing \$100 per barrel in the previous session.

FROM THE WORLD

PAKISTAN

Imran son seeks global help

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

CHINA

Attacks Philippine ships again

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

Drones target US base in Iraq, conflict escalates

JULIA FRANKEL/ STELLA MARTANY
n Irbil

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



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Sri Lanka welcomes US tariff reduction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
n Colombo

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



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

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



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

Pakistan expresses concern over recent tensions in West Asia

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
n Islamabad

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



Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar

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

UK PM begins work from new No 10 North

ADITI KHANNA
n London

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



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

ASSOCIATED PRESS
n Seattle

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



crashes just out of sight. Witnesses rushed to help. People can be seen getting out of the plane as smoke rises before bright orange flames engulf the fuselage, which came to rest partially submerged against a large rock. "An Urgent Marine Information Broadcast was issued to mariners in the area, and numerous good Samaritan vessels responded to assist," the US Coast Guard said Friday in a statement about the crash, which hap-

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

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

ASSOCIATED PRESS
n Warsaw

Poland's main Opposition party faces a split in a disagreement over its future direction, with the party leader saying on Friday that more than 30 lawmakers have effectively left. The conservative nationalist Law and Justice party ran Poland from 2015 to 2023, when the current liberal Government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk took power. During that time, it tightened control over the courts by appointing loyalist judges to higher courts and punishing critics with disciplinary action. The Tusk Government's efforts to reverse those changes have repeatedly been blocked by two successive presidents sympathetic to Law and Justice. Still, tensions within Law and Justice have simmered as a national election next year approaches, and it faces a challenge from parties further to its right. Longtime leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski and Mateusz Morawiecki, Poland's prime minister from 2017 to 2023, have been at the centre of the spat. Morawiecki represents a relatively moderate faction and in April set up an association called Development Plus, which many in the party view with suspicion.



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South Africa mourns veteran freedom fighter Shanthie Naidoo

FAKIR HASSEN
n Johannesburg

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



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

KIM TONG-HYUNG
n Seoul

A United Nations committee voted on Friday to inscribe a major archaeological site in the West Bank and a set of castles in southern Lebanon as World Heritage sites, despite objections from Israel, which had urged the committee to reject the bids. The decision at a UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation meeting in South Korea came days after Israel's Foreign Ministry urged the committee to reject efforts to designate the small West Bank town of Sebastia and five castles in Lebanon's Mount Amel area on both the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger after reviewing the nominations on an emergency basis. Sebastia, a hilltop town about 10 kilometers (6 miles) northwest of Nablus in the



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

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

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

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

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

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

PROSPECT



Former CAG Vinod Rai unveiling a coffee table book titled 'Vinod Rai, Essence and Times' which is a collection of photos, stories of the bureaucratic journey as well as his early life authored by former spokesperson of CAG BS Chauhan.

Flipkart partners with India Post for parcel delivery

E-commerce firm Flipkart on Friday said it has partnered with the Department of Posts for the delivery of parcels to consumers through India Post.

Through this partnership, Flipkart will gain access to the Department of Posts' vast network of over 1.6 lakh post offices. This will enable wider market reach, improved delivery efficiency and enhanced serviceability, particularly in remote and rural locations, the e-commerce platform said in a statement. "Under the agreement, the Department of Posts will provide last-mile delivery services for Flipkart shipments across India," the statement said.

As part of the collaboration, Flipkart will utilise India Post's extensive network for parcel delivery services across urban, semi-urban and rural areas, including remote and underserved regions.

Adani Group says no plans to launch an airline

Adani Group on Friday denied media reports and market speculation that it is planning to enter the airline business, calling the claims "entirely baseless and factually incorrect."

"We would like to categorically deny the recent media reports and market speculation suggesting that Adani Enterprises is planning to launch an airline. These reports are entirely baseless and factually incorrect," an Adani Enterprises spokesperson said.

The spokesperson added that Adani Enterprises is not evaluating any proposal to enter the airline business.

SAIL declares financial results for Q1 FY27

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) has declared its financial results on Friday for the quarter ending 30th June, 2026.

The company reported strong profitability in Q1FY27, with net profit rising by over 138 per cent compared to the corresponding period last year (CPLY). During Q1FY27, SAIL moderated volumes compared to CPLY by advancing certain scheduled repairs and maintenance during the quarter, a step necessitated by geopolitical volatility that disrupted the supply chain across the globe. This forward looking & planned interven-



tion is expected to support greater production stability and improved performance in the coming quarters.

Commenting on the results of the first quarter of the current financial year,

Chairman & Managing Director, SAIL, Dr Ashok Kumar Panda said, "Amid global uncertainties, the domestic steel industry demonstrated resilience backed by sustained demand

PERFORMANCE OF Q1 OF FY27 AT A GLANCE				
Particulars	Unit	Q1 25-26	Q4 25-26	Q1 26-27
Crude steel production	Million Tonnes	4.85	5.08	4.76
Sales volume	Million Tonnes	4.55	5.32	4.16
Revenue from operations	` Crore	25,921	30,813	26,246
Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA)	` Crore	2,925	4,762	4,356
Profit before exceptional items and tax	` Crore	890	2,653	2,303
Exceptional items	` Crore	0	(330)	(144)
Profit before tax (PBT)	` Crore	890	2,324	2,159
Profit after tax (PAT)	` Crore	685	1,680	1,636

in domestic steel consumption. SAIL, through enhanced operational efficiencies, prudent cost management and focused marketing initia-

tives, has delivered a significantly profitable first quarter in FY27. The company remains confident of leveraging robust manufacturing

capabilities and continues to strengthen performance while capitalising on the sustained domestic steel demand."

Inaugural Assam Premier League set to begin on August 1 with 8 teams in fray

TONY DAS
Guwahati

The stage is set for the inaugural season of the Assam Premier League (APL), with eight teams preparing to battle for the coveted title across a packed 23-day cricketing calendar from August 1 to 23, 2026.

The tournament will get underway on August 1, with Charaideo Sunrisers taking on Barpeta Braves in the opening encounter at 2:00 pm. The opening day double-header will then see Tezpur Titans face Dibrugarh Warriors at 7:00 pm.

Season 1 will feature 43 matches, including 40 league-stage encounters, two semi-finals and the grand finale. Each team will face every other side once during the league stage, along with three reverse fixtures, setting up several intriguing rematches and potential rivalries as the race for the top four intensifies. The opening weekend will continue with another exciting double-header on August 2, as Barak Legends take on Nagaon Rangers before Guwahati Royals begin their campaign against Jorhat Stallions in the evening fixture.

Among the matches to watch out for will be the battle between Dibrugarh Warriors and Guwahati Royals, with the two sides meeting twice, first under lights on August 10 and again



on August 18. Charaideo Sunrisers and Guwahati Royals will also face off twice, on August 11 and August 19, setting the stage for another potentially compelling rivalry.

The schedule also throws up a number of repeat contests that could develop into marquee rivalries during the inaugural season. Tezpur Titans and Guwahati Royals meet on August 8 before renewing their rivalry on August 15, while Dibrugarh Warriors and Jorhat Stallions clash on the same two weekends, on August 8 and August 16. Barpeta Braves and Nagaon Rangers will face each other on August 7 and August 16, while Charaideo Sunrisers and Nagaon Rangers meet on August 9 and again on August 17.

The Barpeta Braves-Barak Legends contest will also get a second chapter, with fixtures scheduled for August 9 and August 17.

The final day of the league stage on August 20 could

prove decisive in determining the semi-final line-up, with Tezpur Titans taking on Barak Legends at 2:00 pm before Dibrugarh Warriors face Nagaon Rangers in the final league encounter at 7:00 pm.

The top four teams at the conclusion of the league stage will progress to the semi-finals on August 21. The second and third-placed teams will meet in the first semi-final at 2:00 pm, while the table-toppers will face the fourth-placed side in the second semi-final at 7:00 pm.

Following a break day on August 22, the inaugural Assam Premier League champions will be crowned on Sunday, August 23, with the grand finale scheduled for 7:00 pm. With eight teams representing different parts of Assam and a schedule featuring several repeat match-ups, the inaugural season is poised to create new cricketing rivalries while offering players a competitive platform to showcase their talent.

REC LTD Q1 FY27 profit jumps 23%, declares `4.25 interim dividend per share

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Board of Directors of REC Limited on Friday approved the standalone and consolidated financial results for the quarter ended June 30, 2026. REC reported a net profit of `4,149 crore for Q1 FY27, up 23 per cent from `3,362 crore in Q4 FY26. Net interest income stood at `5,212 crore compared to `4,961 crore in the previous quarter, registering a growth of 5 per cent.

Despite a dynamic operating environment, the company sustained a healthy net interest margin of 3.34 per cent, reflecting the strength of its lending portfolio and disciplined financial management. REC delivered an annualised earnings per share of `63.04 for the quarter ended June 30, 2026.

REC's standalone loan book stood at `5.90 lakh crore as on June 30, 2026, the largest for any CPSU-NBFC in India. Net worth grew 15 per cent year-on-year to `91,836 crore as on June 30, 2026, aided by growth in profits. The renewable energy portfolio continued to witness robust traction and grew to `78,596 crore, constituting 13.32 per cent of the overall loan composition. This reinforces REC's commitment to fostering sustainable infrastructure development and accelerat-



ing the growth of green energy in India. The infrastructure and logistics portfolio grew to `59,289 crore, accounting for over 10 per cent of overall loan assets.

Driven by sustained initiatives to improve asset quality, the company reduced its Stage-3 loan assets to total loan portfolio ratio to 0.11 per cent. The Capital Adequacy Ratio stood at 23.06 per cent as on June 30, 2026, against the regulatory minimum of 15 per cent mandated by RBI, indicating ample opportunity to support future growth.

In line with its consistent dividend distribution track record, the Board of Directors declared the First Interim Dividend of `4.25 per equity share of face value `10 each.

The strengthening fundamentals of the Indian power sector have contributed to improved financial position of power utilities, resulting in stronger credit profiles and, consequently, lower provisioning requirements. Reflecting its customer-

centric approach, REC proactively shared these benefits with borrowers by rationalising lending rates, resulting in a yield of 9.55 per cent in Q1 FY 2026-27.

The company was recognised with the 'NBFC of the Year' Award at the 3rd Annual Bharat NBFC & FinTech Summit & Awards 2026 and the 'AI & GenAI Adoption Excellence Award' at the 2nd Bharat PSU Manthan & Excellence Awards 2026, underscoring its strong business performance, digital innovation, and leadership in leveraging advanced technologies.

REC Limited said it is strategically broadening its business footprint through targeted investments in conventional power, renewable energy and infrastructure & logistics development in the country. The company also continues to be a strategic partner to the Government of India in implementing government programmes, policy and reforms and is steadily fostering long-term growth.

Delhi Registrar restores members' rights over stilt parking in Dwarka Housing Society

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCS), Delhi, has set aside resolutions passed by Shakti Cooperative Group Housing Society Ltd, Dwarka, declaring them illegal and unenforceable insofar as they sought to extinguish members' vested rights over stilt parking spaces.

In its order dated July 7, 2026, the RCS held that stilt parking spaces allotted to members between 2000-2003, after payment of approximately `77,000 per slot, are transferable and inheritable along with the flats.

The dispute arose from resolutions adopted in the

Society's Annual General Body Meetings of 2019 and 2020, which mandated that stilt parking be treated as part of the common areas and required surrender of such spaces upon transfer of flats. Members led by Dr Aruna challenged these resolutions, contending that stilt parking had been separately allotted for consideration nearly two decades earlier.

RCS Krishna Kumar Singh (IAS) observed that the Society had collected separate payments, issued receipts and allotment letters, and permitted exclusive use of stilt parking for over 20 years. "Rights which have crystallised through contractual allotment, payment of consideration and long-

standing possession acquire a vested character and cannot subsequently be divested by a mere resolution of the General Body," said the order.

The RCS relied on the principles laid down in the Delhi High Court's ruling in Vijay Gupta vs Nav Nirman CGHS Ltd, which held that once a cooperative society has allotted parking spaces for consideration and such allotments have remained acted upon over a long period, the society cannot subsequently divest members of their accrued rights by passing a resolution. The RCS further clarified that reliance on the Supreme Court's judgement in Dr GN Khajuria vs DDA was misplaced, as the factual and

legal context was distinguishable. The order directs Shakti CGHS Ltd to restore original stilt parking allotments within 15 days; recognise such allotments in all future transfers, succession, or membership changes; and avoid any further action inconsistent with the Delhi Cooperative Societies Act, 2003 and Rules, 2007. The complaint was accordingly allowed, providing relief to members who had contested the society's attempt to redefine their property rights.

The decision underscores that cooperative governance must remain fair, reasonable, and consistent with statutory principles and cannot override vested contractual rights.

Ujjivan SFB to launch the third edition of its Rath Yatra flagship campaign

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Bhubaneswar

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Limited (Ujjivan SFB) is set to launch the 3rd edition of its Rath Yatra flagship campaign, called 'Bhakti Ra Dori', across Odisha from 20th to 24th July.

This activity is an experiential activation where participants pull a virtual chariot, using the sacred journey of a 'Rath Yatra' experience, as a metaphor for purpose, direction and financial progress.

Ujjivan SFB aims to celebrate Odisha's rich cultural heritage while reinforcing its commitment to empower-



ing aspirations, fostering financial inclusion and building deeper connections with local communities. The five-

day activation will be hosted across six Ujjivan SFB branches in Odisha.

Commenting on the initiative, Lakshman Velayutham, Chief Marketing Officer, Ujjivan Small Finance Bank, said, "The response to last year's Mann Ki Rath was genuinely heartening. When you meet customers in a space they care about, the connections go far beyond a transaction. This year, we have woven technology into the cultural realm to make it more personal. We want to celebrate Rath Yatra alongside our customers and communities in Odisha, with a renewed sense of faith to realise one's aspirations."

DAILY SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction—no maths involved.

SOLUTION (24.7.26)

DOUBLE CROSSWORD

SATURDAY | JULY 25, 2026

ACROSS

DOWN

21 Studios exterior of certain males (5)

22 Shining example of a leader (4)

24 What a pity Sadie's lost, that is (3)

25 Stolen from the church in a foreign field (7)

26 Magical bit of bowling? (5)

27 Leather parts remade? (5)

28 With some warmth, soft-heartedly tied in a knot (5)

29 Not the right member to describe the bowling (4,3)

30 It's gold coloured, you can tell! (5)

31 Cries of "Sell out!" at the end of the day (5)

16 Can it help keep one's chest a bit warm in bed? (5)

18 Rhodesian name? (5)

19 One in a bottle of preventive medicine (7)

21 Right behind in support (6)

22 An intriguing thing to do (6)

23 It's of signal usefulness in the loft, say (6)

25 It's usually held to be transverse (5)

26 Transaction taking place in Greater Manchester (4)

28 A shot at goal, perhaps (3)

2 Easter puzzle? (6)

3 Deigns to change one's intention (6)

4 Like a fox's grisly end? (3)

5 Bear disaster at Birkenhead (5)

6 Bad situations bringing superficial damage (7)

7 Travel erratically out to the right (4)

8 Tales of a fabulous fellow (6)

12 Brainless as Billy? (5)

13 People who made pictures without a bit of pleasure (5)

14 Explosive part detonated, as is well known (5)

15 Cross this out, roughly, in part (5)

27 Drilled

30 D-re-ams

31 Follow

32 Cases

33 Dates

36 Sol-V-e

37 Not-iced

39 C-or-sage

41 Clear

42 A-part

43 Object-i-on

44 Cor-king

24 Drawing

26 Time sharer

28 Collector

29 After-ed

30 De-D-uce

32 Cut-backs

33 Sed-a-te

34 Ass-erts

38 C-hains

40, Ruby

21, Rai-me-nt

BRIEFLY

Volpato has tested positive for cocaine, says Police



Cristian Volpato, who represented Australia at the World Cup, has allegedly tested positive for cocaine and also for speeding, New South Wales state police said Friday.

They said the 22-year-old Volpato, who switched allegiances from Italy to Australia before the World Cup, was allegedly clocked at 50 kilometers per hour (30 miles per hour) over the designated speed limit when police stopped him on Sydney's Anzac Bridge early Friday morning.

He was subjected to a roadside drug test which returned a positive result for cocaine, police said in a statement on Friday.

Volpato made three appearances for the Socceroos at the World Cup.

British Open winner Ryan arrives back in New Zealand



Ryan Fox arrived back in New Zealand on Friday after carrying the British Open championship -winner's claret jug from one side of the world to the other, hankering for some sleep and a gourmet pie.

Fox was embraced at Auckland airport by his father, former All Blacks rugby player Grant Fox, as he arrived with his wife Anneke and two children. Fox birdied the final hole at Royal Birkdale last Sunday for his first major win.

"It's good to be back," he said.

A few hours later, media found the 39-year-old Fox at his local bakery, enjoying his favorite steak, bacon, jam and cheese pie. He hopes in coming days to be able to show off his trophy to New Zealand, to get in some fishing and maybe a round of golf.

But first, sleep. Fox has had a hectic schedule of travel and interviews since his win.

Glasgow 2026 gives CWG a fresh start

APARAJITA UPADHYAY n Glasgow

The OVO Hydro burst into a kaleidoscope of music, colour and Scottish pageantry on Thursday as the 23rd Commonwealth Games opened with an energetic indoor spectacle, celebrating Glasgow's heritage while signalling a fresh, more sustainable future for the Commonwealth movement.

King Charles III read aloud the message he had placed into the King's Baton at Buckingham Palace in March last year, which had since travelled through all 74 Commonwealth member nations during a 500-day global relay.

"It is my pleasure to declare the Games Open," King Charles III said before speaking on the theme of gathering and connecting for a common future with hope.

The British Monarch said the Baton had carried an additional message urging efforts to rid oceans and waterways of plastic pollution, "which can impact on human health."

"For these Games, the Relay has carried another message â€



to help remove the plastic pollution that harms our oceans and waterways, and can impact on human health.

"Addressing plastic pollution

complements the immense global efforts required to protect thirty per cent of the world's ocean by 2030.

"Caring for the ocean's natural capital ensures our communities and businesses can continue to thrive and vital global food resources can be enhanced through the establishment of marine reserves and no-take zones, to



restore threatened marine ecosystems and diminished fish stocks."

The ceremony blended traditional Gaelic heritage with contemporary pop, rap, and electronic performance, drawing heavily on the creative identity of a city recognised as a UNESCO City of Music.

Moving away from expansive open-air stadium shows, organisers staged the opening ceremony entirely within the 14,300-capacity indoor bowl, a first in Commonwealth Games history.

In another first, athletes from the 74 nations paraded into the arena at the very beginning of the show

rather than at the the end. The Indian contingent was led by Olympic medalists Mirabai Chanu and Lovlina Borgohain.

With the male athletes dressed in navy blue suits and the female participants in sarees and blazers, the Indian contingent entered to a huge cheer from the audience.

As the 74 batons were planted into a 200-square-metre living stage garden featuring native Scottish flora, spotlit pipers encircled the perimeter to lead a rendition of "Flower of Scotland," providing one of the evening's central traditional moments. (PTI)

Glasgow CWG make history with first-ever braille design medals

APARAJITA UPADHYAY n Glasgow

When medals are draped around the necks of Commonwealth Games podium finishers here, some winners would notice something unusual beneath their fingertips.

For the first time in the Games' history, the medals feature braille and tactile elements, making them accessible to visually impaired athletes. The move ties in with Glasgow 2026's emphasis on inclusion, reflected in a record 47 gold medals across six Para sports — the biggest Para programme at a Commonwealth Games.

Overall, 215 gold medals will be on offer across 10 sports and six Para sports.

While every host city puts its own stamp on the medals, Glasgow's design is a departure from the familiar circular shape. The medals are fashioned as a Reuleaux triangle, inspired by the city's coat of arms.

The patterns on the surface are drawn from the Finnieston Crane, one of Glasgow's best-known landmarks and a reminder of its shipbuilding past. The textured finish is inspired by tartan, a symbol closely associated with Scotland, while the three levels

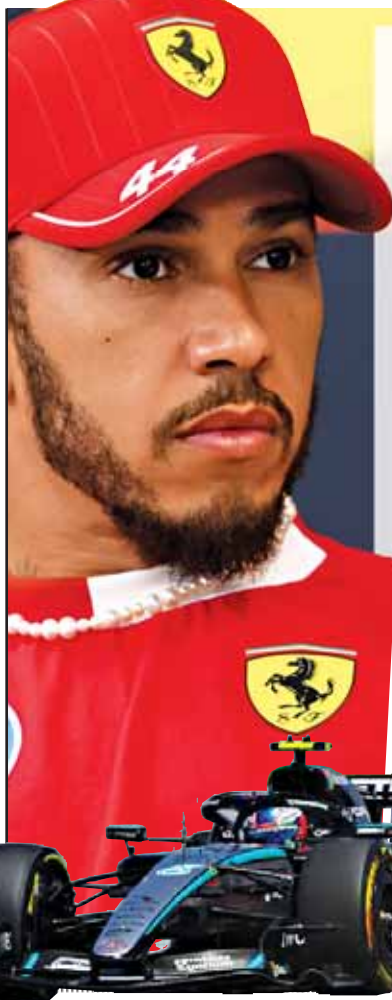


on the medal represent the three steps of the podium.

The medal was designed by award-winning Militsa Milenkova, a Bulgarian-born artist in residence at the Glasgow School of Art. Her design was chosen from entries submitted by artists from the school's Silversmithing and Jewellery programme.

"I wanted the medal to be a stand-out edition of the Commonwealth Games medals," Milenkova said.

"When I was thinking about the design, I wanted to try and fit Glasgow into one shape. I was naturally drawn to the symbol of the city — the coat of arms. That's where I took the distinctive shape from." (PTI)



Lewis Hamilton looks for a chance to pressure Antonelli

JAMES ELLINGWORTHAP n Mogyorod (Hungary)

Lewis Hamilton has a chance to pile pressure on Kimi Antonelli and Mercedes as the Formula 1 race heads to Hungary.

Hamilton has won the Hungarian Grand Prix eight times, making it his most successful event besides his

home British Grand Prix. It's a track where cornering ability, not raw power, tends to make the difference, which could suit his Ferrari.

"I think we've got a car that can compete. Mercedes is still the car to beat, and they won't be easy to beat this weekend, but I do think we've made subtle progress. Hopefully we can be fighting with them this weekend,"

Hamilton said on Thursday. It's the last race before F1's annual mid-season break, and the next race won't be until the Dutch Grand Prix on Aug. 23.

One Mercedes driver leads, the other is under pressure. "Still a lot of work to do, still a mountain to climb in the second half of the season, but I'm more focused than ever and really believe that we can fight," Hamilton said.

(AP)



Fernando Alonso links F1 future to better driving experience

ASSOCIATED PRESS n Mogyorod (Hungary)

Fernando Alonso has suggested his future in Formula 1 could depend on whether the cars become more enjoyable to drive.

Alonso and Aston Martin have struggled with a slow and unreliable car, the first produced with car design great Adrian Newey in charge. Alonso scored the team's only point so far this season at the Monaco Grand Prix.

The two-time F1 champion turns 45 next week and signed what was described as a "multiyear" extension in 2024. He confirmed he still has a contract for 2027 with Aston Martin, "so I'm not moving."

"For me, I'm relaxed. As I've said many times, I'm thinking. I need to know what I do next year and in the years to come. I feel fresh, I feel motivated, I feel fast, but I need to



enjoy also what I do," Alonso said ahead of the Hungarian Grand Prix.

Alonso was sharply critical of the last two races in Britain and Belgium, where the cars ran out of battery power on the long straights.

"I think it's not fun to watch, it's not fun to drive, and we've been

repeating the same thing every single Grand Prix," he said. "It's not the same adrenaline that I used to have driving a Formula 1 car. That's something that I need to put on the table. It's not a problem with the competitiveness of the team. It's just a problem of whether Formula

1 gives me the adrenaline that I need to live."

Aston Martin is bringing a major package of upgrades to its car for the Hungarian Grand Prix. An engine upgrade from supplier Honda is expected later, but Hungary's relatively slow and twisty track could make up for the Aston Martin's lack of power. Alonso said he still believed Newey and Honda could deliver a world-beating car and engine combination given time.

"I think I have a pretty clear picture of the team, that we will fix all the problems. They take time, but I have no doubts, zero doubts, that Adrian will provide the best car on the grid sooner or later," he said.

"I would like to see the first step on this package... and I think there's going to be more to come next year, that's for sure, and in the years to come. On the power unit, I have no doubts as well."

Formula 1 parent company agrees to \$3M Las Vegas GP settlement

MARK ANDERSONAP n Las Vegas

Formula 1 parent company Liberty Media, which also promotes the Las Vegas Grand Prix, has agreed to a settlement of about \$3 million to end a class-action lawsuit brought by spectators regarding the inaugural 2023 race.

The opening-night practice session on November 16, 2023, was halted after nine minutes when Carlos Sainz Jr drove over a water valve cover that severely damaged his Ferrari. Practice didn't resume until the early morning hours of November 17, ending at about 4 am local time.

Fans were removed from



the viewing areas before the 90-minute session took place.

Those who had tickets for only that practice session or bought three-night tickets are eligible for compensation under the settlement. Claims

must be filed by August 27.

Liberty Media and the Las Vegas Grand Prix did not admit fault under the settlement. A final approval hearing is scheduled for November 4 at US District Court of Nevada. (AP)

Joseph declined selection for Pakistan Tests, says Sammy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Tarouba

West Indies head coach Darren Sammy has claimed that pacer Alzarri Joseph declined selection for the two Test home series against Pakistan beginning on Saturday. While announcing the squad for the series, Cricket West Indies said Joseph was unavailable due to personal reasons, Sammy divulged more details on the subject.

"Yeah, it is a big loss. Mr Joseph has declined selection. That's the reality of the situation," Sammy said at a press interaction ahead of the series opener.

"He was selected. I mean, he's now coming back from injury. And for reasons since, he has declined the selection. That is a decision that is way over my head. I leave that with the directors to come up with whatever solutions where contracted players get to decline selection," said the coach.

Joseph has played 42 Tests for



the West Indies, picking 130 wickets. He has played across formats for the regional team.

Despite Joseph's absence, Sammy remains confident of his side's bowling abilities. The attack includes Shamar Joseph, Kumar Roach, Jayden Seales and allrounders Justin Greaves and Keemo Paul. Spin options include Jomel Warrican, rookie Joshua Bishop and captain Roston Chase.



Spain coach De la Fuente says Argentina's conduct after World Cup final was unacceptable

GRAHAM DUNBARAP n Geneva

As FIFA investigates Argentina's conduct after the World Cup final, Spain coach Luis de la Fuente has described the incidents as "intolerable and unacceptable."

FIFA asked one of its disciplinary prosecutors Monday to report back on testy on-field confrontations after Spain's 1-0 win in extra time Sunday to dethrone the defending champion.

Argentina midfielder Leandro Paredes physically tangled with Spain players Eric Garcia and Gavi, and Spain captain Rodri was hit in the stomach as he ran past Argentina defender Nahuel Molina.

"It cannot be allowed," De la



Fuente told Spanish public broadcaster TVE on Thursday, adding he did not see the incidents at the time while "celebrating with other people."

"In any case, I find it intolerable and unaccept-



able from players of that caliber, whom I had been praising in the days before and who have a magnificent coach," the Spain coach said.

FIFA has given no details of the remit for its investigator, or if witness statements could be sought from

Spain players and staff. Argentina assistant coach Roberto Ayala apologised on Wednesday for his confrontation with Dani Olmo, which he described as a shove and not a punch.

Coach praises Spain's restraint: De la Fuente praised his players in the TVE interview for how they handled the situation at MetLife Stadium.

"I want to highlight our behavior in the face of that kind of aggression and provocation," the coach said. "Our players always kept their composure and behaved like true professionals." The Spain squad stood in a guard of honor for Argentina players walking to the podium to get their medals from US President Donald Trump. Minutes later, when Rodri lifted the trophy, most of the Argentina squad turned their backs on the ceremonial moment. (AP)

India, Pakistan get direct quarterfinal entry in Asian Games cricket draw

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n New Delhi

Defending champions India and Pakistan have been given direct entry into quarterfinals of both the men's and women's cricket competition of this year's Asian Games.

The Indian women's team will open its campaign against Japan, while the men's opponents will be decided after the preliminary stage. The women will be up against either Bangladesh or China in the semifinals.

The men's cricket competition will start on September 24 and conclude on October 1. The men's team might face



Pakistan in the semifinals.

The women's event will be held from September 17 to 22. The potential of a clash with Pakistan is not ruled out in the women's final. The men's competition features 10 teams. The preliminary stage will feature Afghanistan, Japan, and Nepal in Group A and Hong Kong China, Malaysia and Oman in Group B. Both competitions will be played in

the T20 format at the Korogi Athletic Park in Aichi prefecture. Shreyas Iyer will captain the Indian men's team, while Harmanpreet Kaur will captain the Indian women.

Cricket is part of the Asiad schedule for a fourth time, having earlier featured in 2010 Guangzhou, 2014 Incheon, and 2023 Hangzhou Games.



WC medal, LA Olympics hockey star Manpreet's last 2 goals



SAUMOJYOTI S CHOUDHURY n New Delhi

Talismanic Manpreet Singh has achieved plenty in his hockey journey, but the veteran midfielder still rues one missing trophy from his cabinet — a medal in the World Cup — a feat he wants to attain in the upcoming mega-event before drawing curtains to his illustrious career after the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. To his credit, former captain Manpreet has two Olympic medals — back-to-back bronze in Tokyo and Paris — two Asian Games gold (2014 Incheon and 2022 Hangzhou) and a bronze (2018 Jakarta), besides multiple other titles.

But one goal the 34-year-old star midfielder is still chasing is an Indian podium finish at the World Cup after 51 long years. India's last medal at the World Cup was a gold at the 1975 edition.

And Manpreet is confident of breaking that jinx in the upcoming edition to be jointly hosted by The Netherlands and Belgium from August 15 to 30. "An athlete never stops, personally I want to represent my country for the longest time and win as many medals as possible," Manpreet told PTI.

"We won back-to-back medals in Olympics, but a World Cup medal is still missing and I want to achieve that and fill that gap because the only World Cup medal we won was back in 1975.

"I am pretty confident this time and I have belief in the team. The mindset we showed during last two Olympics to win medals, we have to approach the same way and we will go with the same mindset to win medal." Manpreet very well knows he is standing at the fag end of his career, but he is backing his fitness to continue till the Los Angeles Olympics.

"As an athlete my personal goal is to play till LA 2028, maintain my fitness and give my 100 per cent, never to give up."

(PTI)

India U20 men to face Singapore in 2 friendlies



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Bengaluru

The Indian U20 football team will play two international friendly matches against Singapore behind closed doors here, on August 3 and 6 as part of its preparations for the 2027 AFC U20 Asian Cup Qualifiers. The two matches will be played at the Centre for Sports Excellence here, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said in a release on Friday.

India and Singapore have met twice earlier in official U20 men's competitions, in the AFC Youth Championship. India won both matches; a 4-1 victory in 1966 was followed by a penalty shootout triumph in the quarterfinals during their title-winning campaign in 1974.

The two sides also played a pair of U19 international friendlies in Goa in 2017, with India winning the first 7-2 before Singapore claiming the second 1-0.

Comeback from injury was very difficult: Mayank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Harare

India pacer Mayank Yadav has described the two-year injury-enforced absence from international cricket as the most difficult phase of his young career, admitting that battling repeated setbacks at the age of 22-23 tested him mentally.

Playing his first game for India since October 2024, against Zimbabwe at the Harare Sports Club on Thursday, the injury-prone speedster cranked up serious pace from the get-go. He said the dream of representing the country kept him going during the difficult rehabilitation period.

"It was very difficult. The two-



year gap was very challenging for me as a person... I was only 22-23 years old at that time, so that always affected me that I had to go through so much at such a young age," Mayank said at the post-match press conference after helping India win the opening T20I comfortably.

Shreyas Iyer's look to continue revival, seal T20I series against Zimbabwe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n Harare

On recovery path with their maiden win under new captain Shreyas Iyer, India will look to sustain the winning momentum for an unassailable lead against Zimbabwe when the two teams face off in the second T20I here on Saturday.

After being swept away by Ireland (0-2) and England (0-4), three-time T20 World Cup winners India produced a far



better show in their series-opener here on Thursday, beating Zimbabwe by seven wickets to take a 1-0 lead.

India's F1 push: Sports Ministry grants NSF status to motor-sport body FMSCI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA n New Delhi

The Sports Ministry has provisionally granted the status of National Sports Federation (NSF) to the Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India (FMSCI), a significant upgrade for the body that is coordinating with the government to bring Formula 1 back to the country.

The FMSCI had applied for recognition on June 11 this year and the approval of its request means that it would now be eligible for financial

grants from the ministry. "...the request of Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India (FMSCI) for provisional recognition as National Sports Federation (NSF) has been considered and it has been decided to grant provisional recognition to FMSCI as an NSF with effect from the date of issue of this letter," the Ministry order dated July 23 stated.

FMSCI has been in regular talks with the ministry on not just the issue of recognition but to also chart the way

forward for F1's India comeback.

The Ministry has asked FMSCI, which is based in Chennai and headed by Arindam Ghosh, to amend its constitution/Memorandum of Association (MoA) to conform with the provisions of the National Sports Governance Act and the rules framed in it within stipulated time-lines. To grant recognition to the body which came into existence in 1971, the government has relaxed some norms related to the minimum state units affiliation required for NSF status.

Jurgen Klopp expected to be named new Germany coach after WC failure

ASSOCIATED PRESS n Frankfurt (Germany)

Jurgen Klopp was expected to be named Germany's new coach Friday, tasked with bouncing back from another disastrous World Cup. The German soccer federation was expected to announce at a news conference Friday morning that it has agreed a contract with Klopp for his first coaching job since he left Liverpool in 2024. German media reported his deal will run through the 2028 European Championship and 2030 World Cup. The former Liverpool manager has been the preferred candidate ever since Julian Nagelsmann resigned following Germany's shock loss on penalties to Paraguay in the World Cup round of 32 on June 29.

Germany has not won a knockout game at any men's World Cup since it won the title in 2014. Klopp held talks with Germany officials in New York while working there as a TV expert at the World Cup, and the federation said on July 11 they reached an agreement on "essential key points" of a contract. Klopp hasn't coached since he left Liverpool in 2024, citing fatigue. Since then, he's been head of global soccer for Red Bull's network of clubs around the world. He said this month he felt "recharged" and ready for another coaching job.

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE	
Sr.DEN/HQ/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against following tenders Nos. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.	
Tender No./Date	70-DRM-MB-26-27 Date: 24.07.2026
Name of work	Provision of Divyangjan facilities at Moradabad, Daultpur, Harthala, Katghar
Tender Closing Date	18.08.2026
Advertised Value(₹)	₹1,65,42,020.84
Earnest Money(₹)	₹3,30,900/-
Tender Cost (₹)	₹0.00/-
Bidding Start Date	04.08.2026
Period of Completion	6 Months
No. 75-W/23/WA/Publication Dated: 24.07.2026 2570/2026	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE		
Sr.DEN/IV/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against following Tender Notice, closing date & time are mentioned against each column. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.		
Tender No.	140-DRM-MB-26-27 Date - 23.07.2026	141-DRM-MB-26-27 Date - 23.07.2026
Name of Work	Interlocking of L.C. gates TVU > 20000 in the left over sections over Moradabad Division under the jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/II, Sr.DEN/III, Sr.DEN/IV and Sr.DEN/HQ/MB.	Construction of precast S&T building in connection with interlocking of L.C. gates TVU> 20000 in the leftover sections under Sr.DEN-IVMB.
Tender Closing Date	18.08.2026	18.08.2026
Tender Closing Time	16:00 Hrs.	16:00 Hrs.
Advertised Value (Rs.)	99,33,117.26	74,42,533.35
Earnest Money (Rs.)	1,98,700.00	1,48,900.00
Period of Completion	8 Months	6 Months
Bidding Start Date	04.08.2026	04.08.2026
Tender No.: Sr. DEN-IV/Pubication/26-27 Dt. 23.07.2026 2557/2026		
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE		

The Pioneer

in association with



Uttarakhand State Council for Science and Technology

presents

MAINSTREAMING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR A PROSPEROUS UTTARAKHAND

Chief Guest

Pushkar Singh Dhami

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Govt. of Uttarakhand

Guests of Honour

Pradeep Batra

Hon'ble Science & Technology Minister Govt. of Uttarakhand

Munna Singh Chauhan

Hon'ble MLA, Vikasnagar Uttarakhand

Speakers

Prof. Durgesh Pant

Director General Uttarakhand State Council for Science & Technology

Banshidhar Tiwari

VC, Mussoorie Dehradun Development Authority DG, Information & Public Relations, Uttarakhand

Dr. BKS Sanjay

President AIIMS Guwahati

Prof. Shivendra Kumar Kashyap

Vice Chancellor, GB Pant University of Agriculture & Technology

Prof. Surekha Dangwal

Vice Chancellor Doon University

Date

27 July 2026 (Monday)

Time

10:30 am to 02:30 pm

Venue

IRDT Auditorium, Survey Chowk, Dehradun.

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