

Governor directs VCs to ensure secure, reliable examination system

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Governor lieutenant general (ret'd) Gurmit Singh has directed the vice chancellors of the State universities to place special emphasis on ensuring that the university examination system is completely secure and reliable. He gave the direction while chairing a review meeting with the VCs at Lok Bhawan on Tuesday.

He said that robust checking and re-checking should be ensured at every stage of the examination system with effective use of modern technology and artificial intelligence (AI). This will help in ensuring that the examination

versities are recognised not only by their buildings, but also by their academic achievements, research and innovation. He said that to perform better in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) and National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), universities must pay special attention to research, patents, innovation, quality infrastructure and academic excellence.

In the meeting, the Governor directed the VCs to pay special attention to how capable and prepared each student graduating from their universities is to effectively face the

confer degrees, but to create capable, self-confident and dedicated youth dedicated to nation-building, who can make meaningful contributions to the country's development in accordance with the needs of the changing times.

Emphasizing the need to pay special attention to the moral education, mental health and overall well-being of the students, the Governor said that universities should develop such a positive and cooperative environment so that the personality of the students can develop in an all-round manner. The Governor also directed that the recruitment process for faculty and staff in universities be completely transparent, fair and timely, in accordance with established standards.

In the meeting, all the VCs presented detailed information about the achievements of their respective universities, ongoing academic and research work and future plans.

Secretary to the governor Ravinath Raman, legal advisor Kaushal Kishore Shukla, special principal secretary Amit Sinha, secretary Deepak Kumar, SN Pandey, Ranjana Rajguru and VCs of the State universities attended the programme.



system remains completely leak-proof and error-free and it will help in strengthening its credibility.

The Governor said that uni-

challenges of industry, employment, entrepreneurship and the 21st century. He said that the objective of universities should not be merely to

Patients throng district hospital as rain intensifies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Nainital

As monsoon intensifies, the BD Pandey District Hospital is receiving an increased number of patients. While Monday saw 550 patients at the outpatient department, the number remains nearly the same on Tuesday too. The doctors said that the majority were suffering from colds, fevers, viral infections and other seasonal illnesses.

A senior physician, Dr Mahiman Singh Dugtal said that the rain spells are affecting the children the most. "The elderly people are falling sick, too," he added. He further advised the people not to get drenched in the rain. "If they do, they should change into dry clothes at the earliest," he said.

"If fever, cough or other symptoms persist, they should immediately consult a doctor instead of taking medicine on their own," he cautioned.

Meanwhile, with two gynaecologists being on leave at hospital, the pregnant women

who need medical care are in trouble.

Notably, three gynaecologists normally operate in the district hospital. While two of them are currently on leave, the third one, Dr Draupadi Garbiyal is now holding the additional charge of chief medical superintendent and director, Health.

The hospital sources said that although normal deliveries are being conducted as usual, caesarean and complicated delivery surgeries are being affected. Many pregnant women who need immediate healthcare are being referred to higher centres.

Asked to comment, the in-charge PMS, Dr Draupadi Garbiyal said that they are aware of the problems the patients are facing. "Things will return to normal once one of the two doctors currently on leave returns," she added.

Apart from this, with the posts of ultrasound technicians remaining vacant at the

largest government-run health facility, technicians from other hospitals are being called in to do the service temporarily. Still, patients are not receiving timely services. Many of them are returning disappointed.

As per the hospital sources, the ultrasound technician, posted at the hospital, went on educational leave for higher education last year. Thereafter, a technician from Champawat district hospital was attached to Nainital. Meanwhile, during the recent transfers in the state, the technician posted at Champawat district hospital was also transferred and following this, he stopped coming to Nainital.

Queried over the matter, Dr Garbiyal stated that technicians from the Base Hospital are being called here for three days in a week. "We have taken up the matter related to permanent appointment of technicians at the directorate level," she added.

Electric bus services being expanded in Dehradun, Haridwar & Haldwani: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said that the State government is actively expanding the operation of electric buses in Dehradun, Haridwar and Haldwani. Additionally, electric vehicle (EV) charging stations are being established across the state to support the infrastructure needed for clean fuel-based vehicles. He said this while presenting capital grant and incentive subsidy checks to six primary beneficiary vehicle owners at a pro-

gramme organised under the Uttarakhand Swachh Gatisheelta Pariwartin Niti-2024 on Tuesday. The Transport department has also completed the subsidy and approval process for five other beneficiaries. On this occasion, the CM flagged off 11 clean fuel-based vehicles.

He highlighted that the

solar and other renewable energy sources, reflect the country's commitment to safeguarding the environment.

"The State's biodiversity, forest wealth, rivers and mountainous natural heritage are invaluable assets for the entire nation," Dhami said. He stressed that protecting the environment and natural balance of this sacred land is a collective responsibility. The State government envisions that development and environmental sustainability go hand in

Sanitation workers threaten to boycott garbage collection from Thursday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The protest by sanitation workers entered its ninth day on Tuesday, with the Safai Karamchhari Union warning that garbage collection across the city could come to a halt from Thursday if the State Government fails to respond to their demands.

The union had staged a protest at the State Secretariat on July 22 and submitted a memorandum to the Dehradun district magistrate (DM). Safai Karamchhari Union president Sonu Khairwal said that July 29 was set as the deadline for a response. He warned that if no concrete action was taken on their demands, which was passed by MCD board, by then, they would stop door-to-door garbage collection as well as lifting waste from roads from Thursday.

The demands of honorarium hike, the recruitment of 715 Paryavaran Mitras (sanitation workers) and cut-off date for regularisation be revised from 2018 to 2024 so that more sanitation workers can be made permanent,

Khairwal said. He added if these demands are not approved, the move could create serious sanitation and public health concerns, particularly during the ongoing monsoon. With garbage likely to remain scattered on roads and outside households, the accumulation of waste could increase the risk of diseases. He also said that the Municipal Corporation's efforts to clean drains and remove waste during the rainy season could be affected if garbage continues to accumulate on roads.

According to the union, the Municipal Corporation currently operates around 280 garbage collection vehicles and has 57 Self Help Group (SHG) workers engaged in the work. The workers said that if the State Government does not approve their demands by Wednesday, the 280 vehicles would remain parked at the Municipal Corporation and workers will not collect garbage from households or roads. The roads will remain with the garbage till the strike continues.

Bhimgoda Barrage receives highest discharge of 1.47 L cusecs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Haridwar

The Bhimgoda Barrage received the highest discharge of 1.47 lakh cusecs, a figure recorded as its highest water flow so far this monsoon season. Informing this, the executive engineer, Irrigation

tration has appealed to the people living on the Ganga banks and in low-lying areas to remain vigilant. Devotees and locals have been urged to avoid unnecessary travel to the riverbanks and to follow



department, Uttarakhand, Vikas Tyagi said that the barrage gates were opened to drain excess water to control water pressure in view of the continuous rise in the water level of Ganga. "We are monitoring the situation 24 hours a day," he added.

The district adminis-

safety guidelines, given the strong flow of the Ganga.

Tyagi further stated that frequent fluctuations in water flow are expected during the monsoon season. "Keeping this in view, we are making arrangements for water drainage as needed," he added.

Hepatitis Day: Awareness programmes held across Uttarkashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Uttarkashi

On the occasion of World Hepatitis Day, public awareness programmes were organised on Tuesday in all medical health units across Uttarkashi district and people were urged to be aware of hepatitis, get tested on time and adopt preventive measures.

The main programme of the

awareness. Notably, the theme this year was 'Hepatitis: Let's Break It Down'.

Addressing the event, another doctor of the hospital, Dr Ajay spoke about hepatitis A, B, C, D and E, explaining that this disease spreads through various means. He said that maintaining cleanliness, using safe drinking water, safe blood transfusions, using infection-free needles, adopting a safe lifestyle and vaccination are effective ways to prevent this disease.

During the programme, the people present were urged to get regular health check-ups done, be alert to the symptoms of hepatitis and also make people around them aware about this disease.



district was held at the District Hospital under the direction of the chief medical officer, Dr Shyam Vijay. Addressing the programme, the chief superintendent of the hospital, Dr B S Rawat said that despite hepatitis being a serious disease, it is possible to prevent it through timely testing, treatment and

Main accused of under-construction building theft held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Uttarkashi

Uttarkashi police arrested the main accused of the theft case involving an under-construction building and recovered the stolen

goods from his possession. Notably, machinery and materials used in construction works were stolen. A case was registered at Kotwali

Uttarkashi on July 21. The police arrested one of the accused within 24 hours since the occurrence of the theft. However, the main accused

had been absconding since the theft.

Formed under the supervision of the deputy superintendent of police, Uttarkashi, the police



lice team, led by the Kotwali in-charge Dinesh Kumar, arrested the main accused identified as Amit Kumar (36).

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SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited Plot No-23, Shal Tower, 3rd Floor, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi- 110005

The Authorised ICICI Bank Officer under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notices to the borrower(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice.
Having failed to repay the amount, the Notice is issued to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken symbolic possession of the property described below, by exercising powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property. Any dealings with the property will be subject to charges of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower(s)/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs)	Name of Branch
1.	Lalit Mohan Singh- Deceased Through It's Legal Heir/ Sunita Devi/ LBHD00005774379 / LBHD00005774388/ LRHUD00005811942	Property Built Over Khalsa No-344 Min. Situated At Vill- Kishanpur Ghurdaura, Pargana Bhowar Cha Khata, Tehsil- Haldwani, District-Nanital, Haldwani Uttarakhand- 263139/ 24-July-26	January 22,2026 Rs. 15,23,577.99/-	Haldwani/ Rudrapur

The above-mentioned borrower(s)/guarantor(s) is/are hereby issued a 30 day Notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold after 30 days from the date of publishing this Notice, as per the provisions under Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
Date: July 29, 2026
Place: Haldwani & Rudrapur

Sincerely Authorised Officer,
For ICICI Bank Ltd.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

Registered Office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai- 400051

Corporate Office: ICICI HFC Tower, J B Nagar, Andheri Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai- 400059
Branch Office: 2nd Floor, Vishwakarma Complex, Plot No 17/18, Behind Yashoda Hospital, Kaushambi, Ghaziabad- 201010

Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Home Finance Company Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.
As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Home Finance Company Limited.
The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (B) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of property/ Date of Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs)	Name of Branch
1.	Vijay Kumar Aggarwal (Borrower), Shalini Aggarwal (Co-Borrower), A 1102 Gaur Cascades 11th Floor Raj Nagar Extn Block A Ghaziabad 201017 Uttar Pradesh, LHGHZ00001599609	Flat on Fourth Floor (Without Roof Right), Forming Part of Khata Katauni No. 210 (1418 To 1423 Fasli), Khosra No. 214 Kha, Situated At Mauza Dhorankhas, Pargana Parwa Doon Distt. Dehradun Dehradun 0 Dehradun 248001 Uttarakhand Along With One Car Parking on The Ground Floor Covered Area 101.27 Sq.mtrs. Having Super Area 111.40 Sq. Mtrs. Bounded By- North By: Open To Sky, South By: 30 Ft Wide Road on Ground Floor, East By: Open To Sky, West By: 40ft Wide Road On Ground Floor./ Date of Possession 23-07-2026	14-05-2026 Rs. 46,24,963/-	Ghaziabad (Kaushambi)
2.	Vijay Kumar Aggarwal (Borrower), Shalini Aggarwal (Co-Borrower), A 1102 Gaur Cascades 11th Floor Raj Nagar Extn Block A Ghaziabad 201017 Uttar Pradesh, LHGHZ00001599648	Flat on Fourth Floor (Without Roof Right), Forming Part of Khata Katauni No. 210 (1418 To 1423 Fasli), Khosra No. 214 Kha, Situated At Mauza Dhorankhas, Pargana Parwa Doon Distt. Dehradun Dehradun 0 Dehradun 248001 Uttarakhand Along With One Car Parking on The Ground Floor Covered Area 101.27 Sq.mtrs. Having Super Area 111.40 Sq. Mtrs. Bounded By- North By: Open To Sky, South By: 30 Ft Wide Road on Ground Floor, East By: Open To Sky, West By: 40ft Wide Road On Ground Floor./ Date of Possession 23-07-2026	14-05-2026 Rs. 1,31,887/-	Ghaziabad (Kaushambi)

The above-mentioned borrower(s)/ guarantor(s) is/ are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
Date: July 29, 2026
Place: Dehradun

Authorized Office
ICICI Home Finance Company Limited

नामान्तरण सूचना

सर्वसाधारण एवं संबंधित हितधारकों को सूचित किया जाता है कि **श्री राहुल शर्मा पुत्र श्री अशोक शर्मा** द्वारा भवनकर अभिलेखों में मांग पंजीका क्रमांक- 458 /20 मोहल्ला जसपुरिया लाईन, रामनगर स्थित नजूल लगान से गुरु सम्पत्ति पैमाइशी- 57.9700 मी० जिसकी चौहद्दी पूरब में सब्क नगरपालिका जसपुरिया लाईन 30 फिट यानि (९.17मी०) चौडा, पश्चिम में-मकानियत श्री अनिल कुमार शर्मा व मुकुश कुमार शर्मा उत्तर में- मकानियत कुलदीप शर्मा एवं दक्षिण श्री अनिल कुमार अग्रवाल है, पर पूर्व से श्री अशोक कुमार शर्मा पुत्र श्री रामकिशन शर्मा के नाम भवनकर दर्ज है, को भवन स्वामी उपरोक्त द्वारा पंजीकृत दाननामा दिनांक-26.09.2025 के आधार पर श्री राहुल शर्मा पुत्र श्री अशोक शर्मा को हस्तांतरित किया गया है। भवनकर अभिलेखों में नामान्तरण /संशोधन दर्ज किये जाने हेतु आवेदक द्वारा पंजीकृत नैमाना, भवनकर रसीद, नोटरीकृत शायधपत्र व आधार कार्ड प्रस्तुत किया गया है।

अतः उक्तानुसार सदाभित संपत्ति का मात्र गृहकर वसूली हेतु अभिलेखों में मांग पंजीका क्रमांक-458 /20 पर पंजीकृत नैमाने के आधार पर पूर्व भवन स्वामी श्री अशोक कुमार शर्मा पुत्र श्री रामकिशन शर्मा का नाम खारिज कर आवेदक श्री राहुल शर्मा पुत्र श्री अशोक शर्मा का नाम नामान्तरण /संशोधन दर्ज किये जाने में जिस किसी भी हितधारक को कोई आपत्ति हो तो इस सूचना के प्रकाशन की तिथि से एक माह की अवधि के भीतर मय सक्षम साक्ष्य अपनी लिखित आपत्ति इस कार्यालय में प्रस्तुत कर सकते हैं। बिना किसी सक्षम साक्ष्य प्रस्तुत अपत्तियों पर कोई विचार नहीं किया जाएगा। तदनुसार सूचित होते।

अधिशारी अधिकारी
नगरपालिका परिषद्, रामनगर नैनीताल

THE PIONEER
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PUBLIC NOTICE

My property which is duly registered under Serial No. 31, dated 03.01.2022, in Book No. 1, Volume 6039, at pages 37 to 58. The original copy of the said registration deed has been lost and could not be found despite an extensive search. Smt. Munni, resident of Namdev Colony, Haridwar Bypass Road, District Dehradun

I, Jayan M/o No. 2811614W L/Nk Patle Purushottam Fulchand, Vill – Khadijar, Post – Kurhadi, Tehsil- Gorgaon, Distt- Gondia, Maharashtra – 441801.That I have changed my incorrect name Jayan to Jayanbai Fulchand Patle as per Aadhar No. 9395 4681 3308 vide affidavit sworn before Notary & Advocate Kulvir Singh Panwar dt. 28.07.2026 Gol-UK.

मेरे पुत्र के सैन्य अभिलेखों के अनुसार, मेरा गलत नाम चंद्र वती दर्ज है जबकि आधार नं. 917572912325 के अनुसार मेरा सही नाम चंद्रकली M/o JC&474172X नाथय सूवेदार किशन पाल, ग्राम – बोढा, पोस्ट – तालबिबियाना, तहसील – अनुपशहर, जिला – बुलंदशहर, यूपी – 203390 है।

मेरे नाबालिग पुत्र के आधार कार्ड XXXXXXXX6212 में जुटिबश उसका नाम BABY TWO OF PUNITA (MOTHER NAME & PUNITA) गलत दर्ज हो गया है। जबकि मेरे पुत्र का वास्तविक नाम अथर्व चौहान (ATHARV CHAUHAN) है जोकि पुत्र के जन्म प्रमाण पत्र पंजी- संख्या B-2024:5-00092-000005 एवं स्थायी निवास प्रमाण-पत्र संख्या UK24ES0100323342 में भी दर्ज है। निविधि में मेरे पुत्र को उसके वास्तविक नाम अथर्व चौहान (ATHARV CHAUHAN) S/o PUNITA के नाम से जाना पहचाना व पुकारा जाए। PUNITA W/o RAMESH SINGH निवासी-लाइन जीवनगढ़, निकट गौरी शंकर मंदिर, जीवनगढ़, अम्बाड़ी, देहरादून, उत्तराखण्ड – 248125.

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTIFICATION FOR MORTGAGE OF PROPERTY: PROTIUM FINANCE LIMITED SME BRANCH RAJPUR ROAD, DEHRADUN, hereby by informed That Residential Plot part of Khalsa No. 4127 total area 426.95 sq. Mtrs., Village Gangoh Andar Hadood, Mohalla Makhdoomjahan, Kasba and Pargana Gangoh, Tehsil NAKUD SAHARANPUR, GANGOH, UP, 247341, is mortgaged with Protium Finance Limited, Link Deeds are damaged by termities (White ants) Namely 1- Sale Deed registered in SR NAKUD Saharanpur UP in Book No. 1, Vol. 9964 Pages 241 to 256 at Sr. No. 149 dated 04.01.2021. 2- Sale Deed registered in SR NAKUD Saharanpur UP in Book No. 1, Vol. 9964 Pages 257 to 272 at Sr. No. 150 dated 04.01.2021. 3- Sale Deed registered in SR NAKUD Saharanpur UP in Book No. 1, Vol. 9643 Pages 99 to 158 at Sr. No. 4655 dated 18.06.2020. 4- Sale Deed registered in SR NAKUD Saharanpur UP in Book No. 1, Vol. 10015 Pages 365 to 386 at Sr. No. 1506 dated 30.01.2021. Contact SILESH SINGHADVOCATE Mob. No.9897702025

PUBLIC NOTICE
My surname Riyaz is not mentioned in my passport bearing number N5134085, and the English spelling of my name has been incorrectly written as ABDULLA. In all my official documents, my correct name is ABDULLAH RYIAZ. Furthermore, the English spelling of my father's name has been wrongly recorded as AHMED, whereas the correct spelling is AHMAD.1, **Abdullah Riyaz, son of Shri Riyaz Ahmad, residing at C-15, Turner Road, Clementown, Dehradun, Uttarakhand**, hereby declare that the correct particulars of my name and my father's name are as stated above

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Monsoon mayhem disrupts lives of thousands in U'khand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The monsoon resulting in landslides and other factors has disrupted the routine life of thousands of people across Uttarakhand. A total of 111 roads are blocked in various parts of the State due to landslides and other factors resulting from the monsoon. Consistent rain since Monday night in various parts of the

State caused landslides and waterlogging which disrupted routine life in the State. In the provisional State capital Dehradun, the administration announced a holiday in all schools early on Tuesday morning. According to the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC), Dehradun has the maximum number of



A road near Maldevta in suburban Dehradun blocked by landslides on Tuesday
Pioneer photo

blocked roads. A total of 27 roads were reported blocked in Dehradun district on Tuesday evening, while 17 were blocked in Tehri district, 16 in Pithoragarh, 11 in Uttarkashi, 12 each in Chamoli and Uttarkashi, eight in Bageshwar, seven in Nainital, six in Pauri, five in Pithoragarh and two in Almora. It will be recalled that the State authorities had conducted a "pre-monsoon" mock drill to prepare for the rainy season about a week after the advent of the monsoon in Uttarakhand. As seen in the past, the authorities are holding meetings and issuing the usual directions to the departments concerned and the public after the impact of rain and its effects. In the suburbs of Dehradun, roads notorious for landslides and disruptions have been blocked yet again by the same. Landslides and road blockages in various parts of the State have disrupted the lives of thousands of citizens.

Nanda Ki Chowki bridge approach road caves in a fortnight after inauguration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

A Rain during the early hours of Tuesday damaged the approach road to the newly built bridge at Nanda Ki Chowki. A portion of the road subsided after rain since Monday night causing a sinkhole on the approach road to the bridge. The Dehradun district administration clarified that the bridge itself is completely safe. The district magistrate Ashish Chauhan directed all departments to remain alert for 24 hours and take quick action during emergencies.

Chauhan inspected the spot with technical engineers and directed the Public Works Department (PWD) to repair the damaged road and restore traffic within three hours. At Paniwala Bend in Mussoorie, a new landslide zone damaged the road which hampered the traffic. The DM directed officials to restore two lanes within 15 days. Officials said that the two-lane work would be completed within 10 to 15 days. A retaining

structure will also be built for safety. The administration said action will be taken



if any negligence is found during the inspection. Officials have also been asked to check the reason behind the damage.

The DM also inspected several rain affected areas in Dehradun. These included Sauda-Saroli, Maldevta, Baldi River near Sahastrad-

hara, IT Park-Sahastradhara Road and Paniwala Band on Mussoorie Road. At Malde-

Officers, contractors responsible for Nanda Ki Chowki bridge case to be punished: Pandey

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Public Works Department (PWD) secretary Pankaj Kumar Pandey has said action will be taken against the officers and contractors responsible for the caving in of a portion of approach road of the newly constructed Nanda ki Chowki Bridge in Dehradun. The traffic on the important bridge remained disrupted due to the collapse of the approach road on Tuesday. The secretary also ordered the chief engineer PWD to conduct an inquiry and submit the report within three days.

Pandey however claimed that the newly constructed bridge is completely safe. He said that heavy rains on Monday washed away debris from beneath a portion of the bridge's approach road, causing it to cave in. He said that the newly constructed bridge is completely safe and efforts are underway to repair the approach road and restore traffic.

Pandey stated that the chief engineer of the PWD was dispatched to the site to repair the approach road and investigate

the cause of the incident. "If any official or contractor is found to be at fault, action will be taken against them," he said.

Pandey added that the river's flow is increasing due to the continuous rainfall, so efforts are being made to divert the flow and the officers of the Irrigation department have also been deployed at the site. He warned that if any newly constructed road collapses anywhere in the State, the reasons will be investigated and action will be taken against the responsible officers and contractor. The secretary averred that the department is working on a war footing to reopen the blocked roads and the entire status of the blocked roads is being updated live on the portal of the department.

Pandey claimed that efforts are being made to reopen the blocked roads within 24 hours. He informed that the debris is repeatedly flowing onto the Dehradun-Mussoorie road and a team of the department has been deployed there with necessary equipment.

Traffic restored at Nanda Ki Chowki after approach road damage; DM orders probe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Traffic was restored late on Tuesday evening on the old Dehradun-Paonta Sahib highway at Nanda Ki Chowki in Premnagar after a part of the approach road of the newly constructed bridge over the Tons river was damaged due to rainfall on Tuesday. The Dehradun district magistrate Ashish Chauhan ordered a preliminary inquiry into the damage to the approach road. The inquiry will look into the reasons behind the damage and the quality of the construction work.

The damage had affected the movement of vehicles on the route for hours. The district administration, Public Works Department (PWD) and other departments concerned started repair work at the site. After the repairs, the road was restored for traffic.

The DM said that if any negligence is found during the inquiry, action will be taken against those responsible as per the rules. The administration is also monitoring the condition of the road and bridge in view of the continuing heavy rainfall.

PWD says temporary repairs underway after approach road to Rs 16 crore Tons bridge caves in

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Public Works Department (PWD) engineer-in-chief Rajesh Chandra Sharma on Tuesday said that temporary restoration work is underway on the damaged approach road to the newly inaugurated Rs 16 crore bridge over the Tons river at Nanda Ki Chowki after rainfall caused a cavity to develop beneath the road, disrupting traffic on the Dehradun-Paonta Sahib highway.

The bridge, which was opened to traffic on July 12 remains structurally safe,

Sharma said, clarifying that only the approach road has been damaged. Sharma said that water flowing beneath the retaining wall created a cavity under the road. To stabilise the stretch, construction material was filled into large geo-bags, each with a capacity of about three cubic metres, before being compacted and reinforced.

He said that heavy machinery was deployed at the site to carry out the restoration work. Sharma said that a permanent solution will be

planned after engineers identify the exact reason for the water flow that caused the cavity. Based on the findings, the department will undertake permanent repairs to prevent a recurrence, Sharma added.

The damage comes just 16 days after the bridge was inaugurated as a replacement for the previous bridge that was washed away during last year's monsoon. Sharma has maintained that the bridge itself remains safe and that only the approach road requires restoration.

Congress workers hold protest, demand PWD minister's resignation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The workers of Uttarakhand Congress held a protest at Nanda Ki Chowki on Tuesday to vent their anger at the collapse of the approach road of the newly constructed bridge over the Tons River on Tuesday.

The Congress workers led by vice president

Addressing the workers, Dhasmana said, "The BJP government in the State is immersed neck-deep in corruption. The bridge over the Tons River got damaged during monsoon last year and it took a full year to rebuild it at a cost of Rs 16 crore. It was reopened only 16 days ago

health centres and other areas.

Dhasmana said that the school buildings are in a dilapidated state and many schools have no access roads. The condition of State highways and national highways is also very poor.

Later in the day a delega-

5.47 lakh voters get notices as Dehradun begins special revision

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Dehradun district magistrate Ashish Chauhan inspected the voter list revision work in Dehradun on Tuesday. He visited Ajabpur Kalan to check the door-to-door notice distribution process. Notices

DM visited the house of local resident Arvind Negi. A booth level officer (BLO) was giving him a notice because of a discrepancy in his name. The BLO also explained which documents were needed to



are being given to around 5.47 lakh voters whose details could not be matched with the 2003 and 2026 voter lists.

During the inspection, the correct the details. The DM asked officials to make the process simple for BLOs. He directed the assistant district election officer to pre-

pare a clear flowchart and checklist. These will help BLOs follow the correct process and avoid mistakes.

According to the draft voter list published on July 14, mapping of 11,90,805 voters has been completed in Dehradun district. Notices are also being issued where voter details are incomplete.

BLOs will visit the homes of these voters and hand over the notices personally. They will also upload photographs of the notice distribution on the Election Commission's designated app.

Notably, the Election Commission is conducting a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list. The exercise aims to correct errors in voters names and other details. It also aims to fix mapping-related issues in the voter list. The DM directed all electoral registration officers to complete the work carefully and within the given deadline.

Nanda Devi express to run upto Mumbai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Indian Railways is planning to extend the Dehradun- Kota Nanda Devi express to Mumbai. Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami was making an effort in this regard.

Railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has written a letter to Dhami in which he has informed that the proposals sent earlier by the Uttarakhand government including the extension of Dehradun-Kota, Nanda Devi Express to Mumbai are being seriously considered.

The minister said that appropriate action will be taken after detailed examination of the proposals given by the CM which will help in further strengthening the rail connectivity of Uttarakhand.

Expressing gratitude to the Railway minister, CM expressed confidence that a positive decision will be taken soon on the proposals

sent by the State government, which will give new strength to the rail connectivity system of Uttarakhand and will also accelerate the economic, tourism and social development of the state.

He said that Uttarakhand is a major tourism and pilgrimage state, attracting lakhs of devotees and tourists annually. Additionally, a large number of people from the State reside in various metropolitan cities across the country, especially Mumbai and Western India. Therefore, the expansion of rail services will prove extremely beneficial for the State's residents, travellers, pilgrims, and tourists.



Suryakant Dhasmana raised slogans against the State government and demanded resignation of Public Works Department (PWD) minister Satpal Maharaj. They also demanded that FIR should be registered against the engineers and contractors involved in the construction of the bridge.

and now a major portion of it has collapsed again. If this is the condition in the State capital, one can well imagine the condition of roads and bridges in the remote areas of the State." He said that over 200 link roads in both Garhwal and Kumaon divisions are blocked due to which villagers are unable to access

tion of the party met chief secretary Anand Bardhan and submitted a memorandum. The memorandum demanded immediate repair and reconstruction of all dilapidated roads, bridges and link roads across the State, and a high-level inquiry into the Premnagar bridge collapse case.

Three gang rape accused arrested after police encounter in Rudrapur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Rudrapur

Udhham Singh Nagar police arrested three accused wanted in a gang rape case after an encounter late on Monday night. One of the accused was shot in the leg during the exchange of fire. He was taken to the district hospital for treatment.

The accused were identified as Joga Singh and Ravinder. The third accused was identified as Gurbaz, who suffered bullet wounds in a semi-encounter. He is a resident of Kalkatti village in Gadarpur. Singh and Ravinder are residents of Ajuwala village in Rampur district of Uttar Pradesh.

Chaos was witnessed on Tuesday when the Rudrapur police took the arrested accused to the crime scene for inspection and collection of evidence. During the process, the two accused allegedly attempted to escape from police custody. The locals also grabbed them and allegedly beat both the accused, fol-

lowing, which police arrested them and took them to the Rudrapur police station.

The Udhham Singh Nagar superintendent of police Ajay Ganpati said that three accused were travelling on a motorcycle in the Bagwara area. Our police team tried to stop them during checking. However, the suspects allegedly tried to escape after seeing the police.

The police chased them and surrounded the motorcycle. The accused then opened fire at the police team. The police fired back in self defence. During the firing, Gurbaz was hit in the leg. He was taken to the hospital, Ganpati said.

He said illegal country-made pistols, live cartridges and other evidence linked to the case were recovered from the accused. SSP Ganpati also visited the district hospital and questioned the injured accused. Police said further investigation into the case is underway.

Doon police on alert as rivers rise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Dehradun police have been put on alert due to rain in Dehradun and nearby mountainous districts on Tuesday. The Dehradun senior superintendent of police Pramendra Dobal said that police teams are patrolling sensitive areas in all police station areas. "We are keeping a close watch on rivers, streams and other

moving people from vulnerable areas to safer places.

The water level of the Ganga has also increased in the Rishikesh area. Police said this happened after water was released from the Srinagar Dam. Police teams are patrolling the Ganga ghats and warning people about the rising water level.



places that may be affected by the rain," Dobal said.

Police are using loudhailers to warn people living near rivers and streams. People have been asked not to go near the water. Police teams are also

Police officials have asked people to stay away from rivers and streams and follow safety instructions. Police teams will continue patrolling sensitive areas until the situation improves.

बैंक ऑफ इंडिया

Bank of India

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E-AUCTION

NOTICE

"APPENDIX-IV-A" (See proviso to rule 8(6)) Sale notice for sale of Immoveable/Movable property

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immoveable/ Movable Assets Under Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 Read with Proviso to Rule 8(6) of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described moveable/Immoveable properties Hypothecated / charged to the secured creditor, the constructive/Physical/Symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised officer of Bank of India, will be sold on "As is Where is", "As is What is" and "Whatever there is, Without Recourse" Basis. For detailed terms and condition of sale, please refer to the link provided in (a) <https://www.bankofindia.bank.in/> (b)<https://www.ebkray.in>.

DATE OF INSPECTION OF THE ASSETS	LAST DATE AND TIME OF SUBMISSION OF EMD AND DOCUMENTS ON OR BEFORE	DATE AND TIME OF E AUCTION
17.08.2026 From 11.00 AM to 04.00 PM with concerned Branch	Date : 24.08.2026 upto 04.00 PM by ONLINE	Date : 24.08.2026 from 11.00 AM onwards till 05.00 PM with unlimited extensions of 10 Minutes duration

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/Guarantor/ Mortgagee	Description of Immoveable/Movable Assets	Demand Notice Date O/s Amount	Name of Auth. Officer/Phone No./ E Mail I.D	Reserve Price EMD Bid Increment Value
1.	Branch: Roorkee Borrower: M/s Lal Chand Rajneesh Kumar	All that the part and parcel of the property situated at MPL No. 2096 & 2097, Gurukul to Puhana Main Road, Village Jhabreda, Pargana Mang-lour, Roorkee, Haridwar, Uttarakhand- 247664, admeasuring 275.46 sq mt owned by Mr Sharad Kumar (184.01 sq mt) and Mrs Shashi Singhal (91.45 sq mt) as per Sale Deed no. 3574 dated 16.08.1980, regd with S. R. Roorkee and sale deed No. 5253 dated 19.08.1993 regd with S. R. Roorkee.	25.06.2025 Rs. 2,94,05,666.05 + UCI+other legal expenses incurred	Mr. Sanjay Singh Basera Phone No. +91 85059 46825 E Mail I.D - Dehradun.ARD@bankofindia.bank.in	Rs. 4,27,76,704/- Rs. 42,77,670/- Rs. 1,00,000/-

However The measurement of above properties to verified by bidders at site and also from the revenue records prior to participating in auction.

Terms & conditions of E-Auction are as under:-

1. E-Auction is being held on "as is where basis" "as what is basis" and will be conducted "On Line" before submitting bid EMD shall be deposited through NEFT/Fund Transfer in working hours on or before 24.08.2026. 2. For downloading further details Process Compliance and Terms & Conditions, Please visit <https://www.bankofindia.bank.in> b. Website address of our e-Auction Service Provider M/s PSB Alliance e-auctionportal-psba@psballiance.com Bidder may visit: <https://www.ebkray.in> where "Guidelines" or bidders are available with educational videos Bidders have to complete following formalities well in Advance. Step 1: Bidders/Purchaser Registration Bidder to register on e-Auction Platform (link given above) using his mobile number and email-id. Step 2: KYC Verification Bidder to upload requisite KYC documents shall be verified by e-Auction service provider (may take 2 working days) Step 3: Transfer of EMD Amount to Bidder Global EMD Wallet Online/offline of fund using NEFT/Transfer using challan generated on e-Auction Platform. Step 4: Bidding Process and Auction Result: Interested Registered bidders can bid online on e-Auction Platform after completing. Step 1, 2 and 3Pease note Step 1 to Step 2 should be completed by bidder well in advance before e-Auction date. 3. To the best of knowledge and information of the [Authorised Officer, there is no encumbrance on the properties. However, the intending bidders should make their own independent regarding the encumbrances, title of properties put on auction and claims/rights/dues/affecting the property, prior to submitting their bid. The e-Auction advertisement does not constitute and will not be demand to constitute any commitment of any representation of the bank. The property is being sold with all the existing and future encumbrances whether known or unknown to the bank. The Authorised officer/Secured Creditor shall not be responsible in any way for any third party claims/right/dues. No claim of whatsoever nature will be entertained after submission of the online bid regarding properties put for sale. 4. Date of Inspection 17.08.2026 from 11.00 am to 4.00 pm with prior appointment with mentioned respective branches on the contact numbers given against respective branches. 5. Bids shall be submitted through online procedure only. 6. Bidders shall be deemed to have read & understood the terms & conditions of sale & be bound by them. 7. The Bid price to be submitted shall be above the Reserve price & bidders shall improve their further offers in multiples Rs. 10,000/- (Rupees Ten Thousand Only). & It shall be the responsibility of the interested bidders to inspect and satisfy themselves about the property before submission of the bid. 9. The Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) of the successful bidder shall be retained towards part sale consideration and the EMD of unsuccessful bidders shall be refund. 10. The Earnest Money Deposit shall not bear any interest. The successful bidder shall have to deposit 25% of the sale price including EMD already paid, immediately on acceptance of bid price by the Authorised Officer and the balance of the sale price on or before 15th day of the sale. The auction sale is subject confirm by the Bank Default in deposit of amount by the successful bidder would entail forfeiture of the whole money, already deposited and property shall be put to re-auction and the defaulting bidder shall have no claim/right in respect of property amount. 11. Neither the Authorised Officer/ Bank nor e-Auction service provider will be held responsible for any internet Network problem failure/any other technical failures/failure etc. in order to ward-off such contingent situation the interested bidders are requested to ensure that they are technically well equipped with adequate power back-up etc for successfully participating in the Auction event. 12. The purchaser shall bear the applicable stamp duties/Registration fee other charges etc and also the statutory dues, taxes, assessment charges etc. owing to any body. 13. The Authorised Officer/ Bank is not bounded to accept the highest offer and has the absolute right & discretion to accept or reject any or all offer (s) or adjourn/postpone/cancel the e- Auction or withdraw any property or portion there of from the auction proceeding at any stage without assigning any reason there for. 14. The Sale Certificate will be issued in the name of the purchaser (s) applicant (s) any and will not issued in any other name (s). 15. The Successful bidder/purchaser would bear all taxes including TDS @ 1% of sale price payable on purchase of property (if sale price is Rs. 50 lacs/- & above) and the taxes payable to service provider for conduction online sale. Also the fees payable for execution of sale certificate such as stamp duty, registration fee, etc. shall be borne by the successful bidder. 16. The sale be subject to rules/conditions prescribed under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 Further details/enquires if any on the terms and conditions of sale can be obtained from the respective branches on the contact number given. 17. This is also a mandatory notice of 15 days as per provision of the SARFAESI Act to the Borrower/Guarantors/Mortgagors of the above accounts informing them about holding of sale/Auction aforesaid.

Date: 28.07.2026

Place: Dehradun

Authorised Officer, Bank of India

IN FOCUS



Cubs of tigress Rani playing near a pond inside their enclosure at Nahargarh Biological Park ahead of International Tiger Day on the outskirts of Jaipur, Rajasthan

PTI

India coordinating with Ukraine to trace two missing seafarers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India on Tuesday said it is coordinating with Ukrainian authorities in the search for two Indian seafarers who were missing following an attack on a merchant vessel in Odesa port last week.

Four Indian crew members were onboard merchant ship MV AGN Ragnar when it was struck in Ukraine's Odesa port on July 25 and two of them were reported missing.

Two Indian crew members of MV Ragnar were safe and search for two others was continuing, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at a media briefing. "The search is underway for them and the



Indian side is in touch with local authorities. We are also in touch with the families of the two missing Indian seafarers. We are doing everything we can to

help," he said.

In the last few months, India has consistently underlined the importance to ensure the safety and freedom of maritime navi-

gation and unimpeded international commerce. Jaiswal said India has a clear position that the Russia-Ukraine conflict should be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy. "We have been very clear in articulating to both parties, and our partners and friends and to others also, that under no circumstances, commercial shipping or seafarers or civilians or civilian infrastructure must be attacked," he said. "We have condemned those attacks which have happened in the Black Sea region," he said. Jaiswal said six Indian vessels are currently located west of the Strait of Hormuz, in the Persian Gulf, and there are 125 Indian seafarers on board these ships.

LG Sandhu lays foundation stone for 1,500-dog Dwarka shelter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Lt Governor (L-G) Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Tuesday laid the foundation stone for a dog shelter with a capacity of around 1,500 stray dogs was laid in Delhi's Dwarka.

Spread over around 6,050 square metres in Dwarka Sector 29, the shelter will be developed by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) with corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds from GMR Varalakshmi Foundation, a private multinational conglomerate. Officials said construction work will begin shortly and expected to be completed by November this year. BJP MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Kailash Gehlot, Mayor PraveshWahi and other senior officials were also present.

The L-G said the shelter would provide facilities for the care and rehabilitation of stray dogs and asked the civic body to involve animal welfare organisations, veterinarians, dog lovers and subject experts so that the project is developed in a "sustainable and compassionate manner". He also visited Delhi's only cremation centre for small animals and reviewed its functioning.

Calling the project "an example of a public-private partnership", the L-G said the LG said, "This is backed by GMR and MCD won't have to spend a single penny," noting that the



shelter is being developed at zero cost to the MCD through CSR support extended by the GMR Varalakshmi Foundation.

A senior MCD official had earlier said the Dwarka shelter is among several projects being undertaken to strengthen the city's stray dog management infrastructure. "A five-acre MCD-owned plot at Mukundpur is under consideration for developing an integrated Animal Birth Control (ABC) centre, dog shelter and dog crematorium in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedure issued by the Animal Welfare Board of India and the Supreme Court's directions," the official had said.

BJP MLA Rajeshwar proposes youth advisory council for Gen Z

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh BJP MLA Rajeshwar Singh has proposed the creation of a youth advisory council at the State and the national level to enable the new generation, especially the Gen Zs, to become an integral part of policymaking in specific subjects of education, AI, competitive exams and startups among others.

The four-page letter by Singh, a former Enforcement Directorate officer, was sent to UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Union Education Minister Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday. It comes in the backdrop of the nationwide Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) protests, largely led by Gen Z students, following the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak case that led to the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan as the Union Education Minister.

Rajeshwar Singh was an ace investigator of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and a police officer of Uttar Pradesh. He was the Investigating Officer of high-profile cases like the ZG Scam and several anti-money laundering cases. He left the service and joined the BJP in 2022 and became MLA from Sarojini Nagar, Lucknow. According to the legislator, the proposed Youth Advisory Council would function like the advisory council of experts to the prime



minister. They would act as police makers on subjects like youth employment, education, Artificial Intelligence, competitive examinations, and the digital economy. "The next phase of governance should empower young people not merely as beneficiaries of Government programmes but as active partners in shaping public policy," the letter stated, "The proposed council will enable youth to share their ideas, aspirations and experiences becomes an integral part of policy-making," Singh, the MLA from the Sarojini Nagar assembly seat of Lucknow, said.

SC bars action against student protestors

The Bench issued a slew of interim directions to States where protests were held to preserve CCTV footage, drone recordings, body-camera footage, wireless communication records, PCR logs and other digital evidence pertaining to the protests.

"Although it has already been stated at the bar by the Solicitor General of India, on instructions, we also, as an abundant precaution, direct that all CCTV footage, drone footage, body-worn camera recordings, videography, wireless communication records, and PCR lodge collections related to the students' protest be preserved," it directed. It also ordered the police authorities to ensure that the personal information and digital data of the protestors, collected during the students' protests, are preserved and are not disclosed to the public domain for the time being.

The Bench emphasised that the authorities may not publish any public data/details of the protestors, especially students.

The law must take its course once there is violation of "defined protocol", the apex court said, adding that it will disclose details of the composition of the SIT at a later stage.

The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led march on July 20 in Delhi witnessed clashes between protesters and security personnel, who used lathis and teargas shells to disperse crowds attempting to move towards Parliament. The protests escalated and spread to several other states.

The protestors were demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET paper leak issue.

The agitation ended on Saturday with Pradhan's resignation and the Government agreeing to the demand for compensation to the families of those who had ended their lives and no FIRs against the protestors.

RAF fired pellets at July 20 protests, notes Delhi...

The meeting, attended by senior Delhi Police officers, focused on the circumstances surrounding the GD entry recorded on July 22 and the mention of a senior Delhi Police officer's presence in Zone-1 near Jantar Mantar when the force was allegedly used.

Officials said each round of plastic pellets contains four plastic projectiles, which are designed to be less injurious than metal pellets and do not penetrate the body. It was not immediately known whether plastic pellets were fired at any other locations during the protest.

While the Delhi Police has publicly denied these claims, neither the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) nor the RAF has issued a detailed response specifically on the reported use of plastic pellets.

The issue assumed political significance after reports emerged of protestors suffering serious pellet injuries during the clashes. Media reports cite at least four recorded cases, including a reporter from *Outlook* magazine, who was hit by a pellet gun. CRPF Director General GP Singh said the force

will conduct a professional post-event assessment now that the agitation has ended. Addressing personnel on the CRPF's 88th Raising Day, he also assured officers and jawans that he would take "complete responsibility" for decisions taken in the bona fide discharge of duty.

Minister returns Govt subsidy received over...

"Bhagirath Choudhary has communicated that he has refunded the subsidy to the bank concerned under the Scheme. The bank concerned has been directed to return the subsidy amount to NHB," Thakur added. The minister also stated that the existing NHB Scheme Guidelines do not contain any specific provision regarding conflict of interest or recusal in respect of applications submitted by public functionaries or their family members. Elaborating, Thakur said the schemes are open to all eligible applicants, including individuals, partnerships, companies, cooperatives and other eligible legal entities, subject to fulfillment of the prescribed eligibility conditions. Under the schemes, he said the project land should be owned by the applicant or held on lease for a minimum period of ten years, duly reflected in the revenue records.

Thakur was replying to a query by Lok Sabha MP Abhishek Banerjee, who wanted to know whether any serving Union Minister, Member of Parliament, or their immediate family members have received subsidy under schemes of the NHB during the last five years.

The minister further provided details of serving Union Ministers, Members of Parliament and their immediate family members, who have received financial assistance under the Schemes of the NHB during the last five years.

As per the list, Lumba Ram (MP of Sirohi, Rajasthan) in 2025 and Bhagirath Choudhary (Union Minister of State for Agriculture and MP of Ajmer, Rajasthan) in 2026 got the financial assistance.

Paper leak Bill debate opens amid Pradhan...

TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee said the amendment Bill on paper leaks will not wash away the 12 years of the "incompetence and failure" of the BJP-led Government even as he extended TMC's support to the proposed legislation.

NDA allies TDP and Shiv Sena urged the Government in the Lok Sabha to conduct the NEET-UG examination multiple times a year instead of just once, saying it would benefit students who are unable to appear for the exam on a specified date due to personal emergencies. While TDP MP Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu said that even if a close family member dies on the day of the examination, a candidate has no choice but to appear for the exam, Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde said that there is a need to change the system of holding this exam on a specified day only.

FROM PAGE - 1 PM Narendra Modi becomes world's...

Union Minister of State for PMO Jitendra Singh has posted clips on the introduction of the Bill to amend the anti-paper leak law, along with videos appealing to students to remain patient and asserting that the Government remained open to discussions during the protests held at Jantar Mantar. In the case of Jitendra Singh, multiple posts have been made every day in the past one week, as against an average of four to five posts a week earlier.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju has also uploaded several videos centred on the Bill and the paper leak issue. His posts include excerpts from his speeches in Parliament urging political parties to debate and support the Bill, describing examination paper leaks as a "serious national issue" rather than a matter of party politics. While Rijiju has been among the more active ministers on Instagram, his activity has also gone up substantially now to over a dozen posts every day.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has posted a video highlighting the Government's commitment to ensuring justice for the youth and bringing those responsible for examination paper leaks to justice through fast-track courts.

PM Modi on Sunday announced the constitution of a high-powered task force headed by Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani to recommend reforms to make the exam system leakproof. Union Minister Piyush Goyal has similarly posted videos highlighting the Government's efforts to tackle examination paper leaks, including the provision for fast-track courts. Women and Child Development Minister Annpurna Devi has used Instagram to focus on alleged examination and recruitment paper leaks in Jharkhand.

BJP IT department head Amit Malviya has also been among the party's most active voices on Instagram during the anti-paper leak protests.

Delhi drenched, roads drown

The CM began the inspection from Jan Seva Sadan and travelled by bus via Outer Ring Road and Madhuban Chowk to the DDA Sports Complex in Sector 33, Rohini.

"The roads of the capital are not merely a means of transport but are also an integral part of Delhi's identity, making their proper maintenance and safety, essential. I also directed that road widening, repairs of damaged roads, and the filling of potholes be taken up on priority," the CM said.

Accompanied by senior officials, she travelled along various routes to assess the city's on-ground situation during the monsoon and review key works related to civic amenities. During the inspection, the CM reviewed waterlogging-prone areas, the cleanliness of major roads, and the condition of debris and garbage accumulated along roadsides.

Relentless rain through the morning inundated several parts of the city, with waterlogging reported from Connaught Place, Janpath, ITO, several roads in Lutyens' Delhi, Bharat Mandapam Road, Barakhamba Road, Mathura Road near ITO, Kalindi Kunj and other low-lying areas. Traffic congestion due to waterlogging was also reported on NH-8 near Shankar Vihar, Zakir Hussain Road, the Delhi Cantt-Naraina Flyover-Mayapuri stretch, ITO, Old Rohtak Road, the Madhuban Chowk-Netaji Subhash Place stretch, Peeragarhi, NH-48 near AIIMS, the Delhi-Noida Road, Kalindi Kunj and Vikas Marg, among other arterial roads.

Continuous downpour has led to airlines issuing travel advisories for passengers, warning of potential flight delays at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport.

According to civic bodies, as many as 130 complaints of waterlogging, uprooted trees and power outages across the national capital. The MCD said its central control room received 36 complaints between 2 pm and 6 pm, including reports of 20 waterlogging and 16 fallen tree complaints from several parts of the city. Delhi Government's PWD has received around 60 complaints of waterlogging and 15 of fallen trees, most of which were resolved within an hour. In the NDMC area, the civic body said it received 38 rain-related complaints, comprising 19 cases of waterlogging, six tree falls and 13 power outages

Govt summons Meta after PM Modi video...

In the nearly 3-minute video, the PM had reassured students that the Government viewed paper leaks and examination irregularities with utmost seriousness and would take strict action against the accused.

Over the last few weeks, Meta has faced regulatory scrutiny on a number of issues. The IT ministry issued a notice to WhatsApp earlier, questioning the Meta-owned platform's proposed username feature, as the Government flagged concerns that it could materially increase online fraud, phishing, digital arrest scams, and impersonation attacks.

The Government also slapped a stern notice on Meta over Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Material (CSEAM) in paid advertisements on Instagram. MeitY (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology) ordered Instagram to disable all ads and content promoting and facilitating access to CSEAM, and demanded a detailed explanation bound to a deadline.

Just a few weeks back, Meta's announcement of Muse Image, which was then touted as its most powerful AI image generator, drew criticism and user concerns over data privacy, image scraping and consent, and the Indian Government had said, at that point, that it will assess Meta's Muse AI image generator under the existing legal framework. Subsequently, however, the social media platform scrapped the controversial feature, which enabled users globally to create

AI images using public Instagram accounts. "We've heard the feedback that this feature missed the mark, so it's no longer available," Meta had said in a global post.

20 people killed in PoJK in poll violence

Maulana Fazlur Rehman of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) called the Rawalakot shooting "open terrorism" by forces "intoxicated with power" against unarmed people asking for their rights. He said the state failed to address these issues before they turned violent.

Elections are taking place in phases amid heavy security, while sit-ins and marches continue. JKJAAC leaders say they will keep pushing for their demands.

Violence like this has happened before. Protests began between June 5 and 7, 2026, after the JKJAAC was banned under anti-terrorism laws and the Supreme Court reserved 12 out of 45 Legislative Assembly seats for refugees from Indian-administered Kashmir and their descendants living in Pakistan. The JAAC, which includes traders, lawyers, activists, and civil society groups, said these reserved seats reduce local representation and political influence for the region's estimated 4 to 5 million residents. Economic issues such as high electricity bills, rising food prices, and unemployment have also fuelled the movement, with earlier protests reported from 2023 to 2025.

Reacting to the developments, the Ministry of External Affairs' Randhir Jaiswal said at his bi-weekly media briefing. He reiterated that the entire Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, including the areas currently under Pakistan's "illegal and forcible occupation", are parts of India.

"India's position on this matter has been clear, consistent, and well known. The entire Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh, including the areas currently under Pakistan's illegal and forcible occupation, are integral and inalienable parts of India."

"As we have stated earlier, the ongoing mass protests in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir are the direct consequences of Pakistan's economic exploitation, its denial of the people's fundamental rights, and its administrative oppression," he said.

Jaiswal also responded to a question about many Pakistani experts discussing a shared Indus Valley civilisation between India and Pakistan in the context of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), and whether it was an attempt at cultural appropriation. "A country which has been promoting cross-border terrorism, which has been promoting religious fundamentalism and violence for decades, cannot have any claim to any pluralistic cultural legacy," he said. "Their abysmal track record on the protection of minorities and their cultural rights makes such desperate attempts look even more phoney," he added.

Schools to conduct monthly counselling to cut dropouts: Delhi Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi Government directed all Government schools and Special Training Centres (STCs) to hold monthly counselling sessions for parents and guardians of out-of-school children (OoSC) during current academic session to improve attendance, prevent dropouts and facilitate their mainstreaming into the formal education system.

The directive, issued under the Samagra Shiksha programme and in accordance with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, mandates Heads of Schools (HoSs) to organise monthly parental counselling sessions for children enrolled in STCs and mainstream schools.

According to the circular, out-of-school children are those aged 6-14 years who have never been enrolled in school, dropped out before completing elementary education or remained absent for prolonged periods, leading to their exclusion from the formal education system.

The DoE said the primary objective of Samagra Shiksha is to identify, enrol, retain and successfully mainstream every out-of-school child through sustained academic and community support.

The department stated that such children often face challenges including irregular attendance, learning gaps, migration, socio-economic constraints, lack of parental awareness and inadequate learning support at home.

It said regular counselling of parents would strengthen collaboration between schools and families, enabling timely intervention before children become irregular or discontinue schooling. The monthly sessions will focus on improving attendance, reviewing academic progress, addressing behavioural, emotional and learning-related concerns, encour-



aging parental support for homework and school participation, preventing dropouts and creating awareness about government educational initiatives and entitlements, it added.

Schools have also been asked to discuss the academic progress of each out-of-school child, counsel parents on their role in mainstreaming children, identify challenges affecting their education and prepare follow-up action plans. Under the circular, Heads of Schools have been directed to inform parents at least three days in advance through telephone calls and student diaries, ensure their participation and maintain records of the counselling sessions.

Cluster Resource Centre Coordinators (CRCCs) will monitor the sessions, prepare action-taken reports and submit them to District Urban Resource Centre Coordinators (DURCCs), who will compile district-level reports and forward them to the OoSC Cell under Samagra Shiksha on the same day, it read.

The DoE added the initiative aims to improve attendance, reduce absenteeism and dropouts, strengthen retention and mainstreaming, enhance parental participation, improve learning outcomes and contribute towards universal access, enrolment, retention and completion of school education under Samagra Shiksha.

India blames Pakistan for SAARC stagnation amid Maldives push

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

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



External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal

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

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

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

MHA approves ad hoc promotions to ease officer shortage in Ladakh

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ New Delhi

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



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

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

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

SC slams CBI, Delhi Police over silence in Indiabulls probe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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



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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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



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

West Bengal launches anti-corruption helplines

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

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



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

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

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

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

Omar hits out at Mehbooba: 'If' is not a genuine apology

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday 'literally' took a masterclass to explain the difference between regret and forgiveness. The tutorial was delivered promptly by Omar shortly after the former Chief Minister and People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mehbooba Mufti, expressed regret over her recent remarks at Delhi's Jantar Mantar, which had triggered a political controversy. Responding to the controversy, Mehbooba Mufti said she had attended the protest at the request of Kashmiri students studying outside Jammu and Kashmir. During an interaction with journalists at Jantar Mantar, Mufti used the word "bahana" (excuse) to refer to militancy, a remark that drew criticism. "I said that militancy becomes a bahana (an excuse). I did not use that word accidentally or in haste. I thought about it before saying it."

However, she said the remark had subsequently been interpreted differently from what she intended. "That single word was blown completely out of proportion." Speaking to media persons on the sidelines of the Mega Job Fair 2026 at Amar Singh College, Srinagar, Omar Abdullah said there is a clear difference between expressing regret and seeking forgiveness.



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

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

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

Mobile disaster alerts reach all networks, remote areas: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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



Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai

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

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



States Focus



SIR: 1.5 LAKH VOTERS MARKED UNDER ASDD IN MEGHALAYA

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

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

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



MPPSC CANDIDATES CAN NOW VIEW MAINS ANSWER SHEETS

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

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

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

NCPI MPs attend NDA Parliamentary party meet

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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



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

She also said that everyone should support the anti-paper leak bill, which will come up for discussion this afternoon. Another lawmaker, Kakoli

BJP alleges ₹400 crore veterinary doctor recruitment scam in Karnataka

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

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

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

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

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

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



BJP's Karnataka unit president BY Vijayendra

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

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

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile, the Karnataka

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

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

RSS condemns Mohandas' remarks on CJP protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

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

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

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

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

Mohandas allegedly said



TG Mohandas

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

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

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

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

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



Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis

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

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

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

will cater to residents of Karjat and Jamkhed talukas. It will have one judicial officer and 21 supporting staff posts, including personnel for the Government pleader's office.

The Cabinet approved ₹3.30 crore for establishing the court and the Government pleader's office.

Exclusive special courts will be established at Ahilyanagar, Parbhani, Solapur, Nanded and Yavatmal for cases under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

Each Exclusive Special Court will be provided with one judge. The Cabinet sanctioned ₹4.51 crore for establishing these courts.

Palaniswami slams Union minister's response on Mekedatu dam row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chennai

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

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

He urged the Central

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

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



AIADMK Chief Edappadi K Palaniswami

YSRCP stages protests over DSC irregularities, TDP rejects charges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Amaravati

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

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

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

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

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



order a CBI inquiry into the recruitment process."

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

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

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

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

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

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

16 Maoists surrender before Jharkhand Police

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ranchi

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

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

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

Two sub-zonal commit-



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

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

the officer said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

BJP MLAs welcomes Pradhan upon return to Odisha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhubaneswar

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

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

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



welcome their leader.

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

ination held on May 3.

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

"Of the 79 MLAs, 26 legislators, including five ministers, were present at the airport to welcome Pradhan. This reflects his acceptability among party lawmakers," a political observer said.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das, on the other hand, said, "Neither has Pradhan resigned on moral grounds nor has Prime Minister Narendra Modi sacked him. He had to tender his resignation under pressure from students and youths of the country."

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

Rajnath unveils policy reforms for ICG

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This measure ensures that the families of brave person-

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No paper leak case in Punjab, Opposition lying: Cheema



Harpal Singh Cheema

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chandigarh

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

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

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

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

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

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

Students must be protected, not arsonists: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

"Students and arsonists or rioters are different. Students must be protected. Arsonists cannot. The court says this. Dissent is okay, danga (riot) is not. Students, okay; arsonists, not. Protests are okay; provocation is not," he said. Poonawalla asserted that the Government is already committed to ensuring that no cases are pursued against genuine protesters.

"But cases will continue for arsonists. There can be no blanket suraksha kawach (protection shield) for those who assault, molest, etc with established criminal antecedents," he added. Citing CJI's observations, Poonawalla also said the court has noted that the allegations "prima facie warrant consideration of a fair and independent probe, which must also address the concerns of families of over 200-250 injured police personnel."

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



BJP spokesperson Shehzaad Poonawalla

tions alleging police brutality during the demonstrations. BJP national spokesperson Shehzaad Poonawalla said the Supreme Court has dealt with the matter in a "mature" and "sensitive" manner. "SC has weighed in very maturely and sensitively. It must be welcomed by all," he said in a post on social media. "Students and arsonists or rioters are different. Students must be protected. Arsonists cannot. The court says this. Dissent is okay, danga (riot) is not. Students, okay; arsonists, not. Protests

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

TONY DAS
■ Guwahati

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Srinagar

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Parliament panel summons Meta, X, Google over regulation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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



BJP MP Nishikant Dubey

21 crore screened, 6 lakh treated for Hepatitis: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

Highlighting the pro-



Union Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel

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

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

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

Immunoglobulin (HBIG) for newborns of infected mothers.

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

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



Editor's
TAKE

The human firewall against AI exploitation

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

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

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

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

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

Balen Shah@100: A new reckoning

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



ASHOK K MEHTA

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIC TALK



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



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

2ND OPINION

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a spiritual teacher

Can Parliament become 'Mangal Milan'?

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

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

O PRASADA RAO | HYDERABAD

Sporting glory deserves the spotlight

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

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

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

VINOD JOHRI | DELHI

A wider vision for education

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

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

R NARAYANAN | NAVI MUMBAI

RESTORING TRUST AND CREDIBILITY IN INDIA'S EXAMINATION SYSTEM

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

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

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

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

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

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

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

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

Why Chhattisgarh is betting on trust-based governance

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



VISHNU DEO SAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

The writer is the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



RUPAK CHATTOPADHYAY

ists the country desperately needs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



The writer is the President and CEO of the Forum of Federations, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Beyond policy: Putting mothers at the heart of child care



SUMANTA KAR

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Order Order

Kolkata court sends 16 NEET protesters to jail

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

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

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

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

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



Court orders mental health test in Assembly breach case

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

The order came after the counsel for the accused submitted that Singh was suffering from bipolar disorder and sought directions for the constitution of a medical board. Additional Sessions Judge Ankur Jain was hearing the plea filed by the accused under the Mental Healthcare Act and ordered that he be produced before the Director of IBHS whenever required.

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

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

Delhi HC asks ECI to limit SIR burden on teachers

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

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

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

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



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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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



for petitioners who were alleging police brutalities on the protesters.

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

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

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

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

several other States," he said.

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

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

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

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

Delhi court allows woman to lead defence in cheque bounce case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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



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

posted the pleas for further hearing on October 13.

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

Ghost student scam: Court sentences TN school officials



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ranipet

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

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

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

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



is to be solemnised on Wednesday.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

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

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

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



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

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



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Prayagraj

The Allahabad High Court has refused to entertain a petition filed by a businessman on behalf of Mohammad Ali Jauhar University against the demolition of its buildings, observing that the pleader is an outsider and not an official of the institution.

As the matter came up before the court, a preliminary objection was raised by the Additional Advocate General (AAG) Anupam Trivedi on the maintainability of the petition.

"This writ petition is being sworn by a person, namely Mohammad Yusuf, who is by occupation a businessman and is being appointed as a pairokar (pleader) of Mohammad Ali Jauhar University." A university is

always represented through its Registrar or any official working there. A stranger cannot approach on behalf of the university, the AAG argued. Following preliminary objection regarding the maintainability of the petition, Justice Saurabh Shyam Shamshery, in his order passed on Monday, refused to hear the matter.

"After going through the records of writ petition, Court finds merit in the objection

raised by learned Additional Advocate General appearing on behalf of State," the judge said. The court finds that "in the interest of justice, the present writ petition can be disposed of so that proceedings initiated against the petitioner Trust/University be brought to its logical conclusion," the judge said.

Meanwhile, the Moradabad Divisional Commissioner's court had on Monday granted interim relief to the universi-

ty, founded by Samajawadi Party leader Azam Khan, staying the proposed demolition of 38 buildings on its campus until the final hearing in the case.

Divisional Commissioner Anjaneya Kumar Singh told PTI that the interim stay was granted after the university's counsel submitted an application. He said the proceedings cannot be held on Tuesday, the scheduled date for hearing, as a condolence meeting has been planned following the death of an advocate in Moradabad.

"The application moved by the university's counsel has been accepted and demolition of any structure has been stayed till further orders. The stay will remain in force until the final hearing in the matter," Singh said.

INTERVIEW / BUILDING ENGINEERS OF TOMORROW

BEYOND PLACEMENTS & CODE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

From preparation to performance in 90 days

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

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



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

single preparation strategy that works for everyone. Focus on building on your strengths while systematically improving weaker areas. During the final 90 days, mock tests should become an integral part of your preparation. Start by taking one mock every week and gradually increase the frequency as the examination approaches. However, simply writing more mock tests will not improve your performance. The real learning begins once the test is over. Spend time analysing every mock carefully. Understand why you got certain questions wrong, identify the questions you should have attempted and recognise where you lost valuable time. Often, the biggest improvements

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

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

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

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

Empowering Generation Z through NEP 2020



PROF (DR) RACHITA RANA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How debate shapes future-ready talent

ANJALI TIWARY
Founder and CEO, Indian Debating League

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

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

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

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



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

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

it survive scrutiny?"

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

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



FROM THE WORLD

NEPAL

Curfew continues in border districts

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

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

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

LIBYA

Protests spark blackout fears

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

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

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

7.1-magnitude earthquake shakes southern Japan

MARI YAMAGUCHI ■ Tokyo

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

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

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

The US Geological Survey



Damaged AEON Mall after an earthquake in Kashima, Japan

AP

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

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

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

Takaichi later told

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

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

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

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

Local fire departments received many emergency calls reporting fires and

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

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

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

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



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

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

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

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

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

Misri concludes China visit after talks on bilateral ties

KJM VARMA ■ Beijing

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

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



Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Bunia

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

The outbreak continues to spread faster than health officials

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

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

"We can never again wage war against the Ebola teams. We have lost members of our families. As a community, we have a vested interest in fighting Ebola to return to normal life," said Fabrice Mumbesa, a resident of Mongbwalu, a mining town at the center of the outbreak where residents previously burned down several treatment centers. (AP)

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

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

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

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

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



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

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

India helps construct school building in remote municipality in western Nepal

SHIRISH B PRADHAN ■ Kathmandu

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

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

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



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

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

Darchula district, it said.

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

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

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

ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL ■ Hanoi

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS ■ Nicosia

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

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

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

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

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

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



Antonio Guterres

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

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

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

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

Industrial production rises by 7.3% in June: Govt data

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Gold prices retreated by ₹2,640 to ₹1.47 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday, and silver dropped ₹5,200 per kg, tracking weak global trends and a firm rupee. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity depreciated by ₹2,640 to ₹1,47,000 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from Monday's closing level of ₹1,49,640 per 10 grams,

according to the All India Sarafa Association. Silver also witnessed selling and tumbled ₹5,200 to

Rupee settles at 95.88 against US dollar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

The rupee stayed on upward track for the third straight session and ended 11 paise higher at 95.88 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, supported by lower crude oil prices amid signals of easing West Asia crisis. According to forex traders, the sustained outflow of foreign capital amid selling pressure in domestic equity markets, as well as an elevated dollar index ahead of the US Federal Reserve's policy decision, capped gains for the local currency. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 95.75 and touched the

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

The Pioneer

DEHRADUN | WEDNESDAY | JULY 29, 2026

Macroeconomic fundamentals strong: Union minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Index of Industrial

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Samsung says foldable smartphones account for over 20 % of flagship sales in India

JOYEETA DEY ■ New Delhi/London

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

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

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

ship sales are from foldables. And year by year, it (foldable sales) is growing. "Based on whatever the experience or the requirements are for the consumer, that's where we are focussing. I expect there will be an expansion in the con-

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

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

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

Govt orders sugar dealers to limit stocks to 30 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

able financing, attracting long-term FDI, promoting trade facilitation and digital platforms, and advancing free trade agreements," he said.

The value of the INR is market-determined, with no target or specific level or band, he said.

The RBI regularly monitors the foreign exchange market and intervenes in situations of excess volatility. Further, the RBI monitors key developments across the globe which may have an impact on the USD-INR exchange rate, he said.

In reply to another question, Chaudhary said, Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) posted the highest-ever net profit of ₹10,177 crore in 2025-26.

"The financial health of RRBs has improved in recent years. RRBs posted the

highest ever consolidated net profit of ₹10,177 crores during 2025-26. RRBs have also shown consistent improvement in key financial parameters like Capital to Risk Weighted Asset Ratio (CRAR), deposits, advances, Non-Performing Asset (NPA), Credit-Deposit Ratio (CD ratio) etc," he said.

Government regularly reviews the progress made by RRBs in deepening financial inclusion in rural and remote areas, he said.

The targets for various financial inclusion schemes like Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Atal Pension Yojana (APY) are set by DFS and periodically monitored, he added.

Delhi High Court ordered winding up of Paytm Payments Bank, says RBI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

The High Court of Delhi has ordered that Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL) be wound up, the Reserve Bank said on Tuesday.

In April this year, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had cancelled the banking licence issued to PPBL for non-compliance with norms, saying the affairs of the bank were conducted in a manner detrimental to the interest of its depositors.

The central bank also announced it would be making an application for winding up of the bank before the High Court.

Girikumar M Nair, former CGM of State Bank of India, was appointed as liquidator of PPBL.

"By an Order dated July 08, 2026 read with the Order dated July 22, 2026, the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi has ordered that PPBL be wound up under the provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 read with the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013," it said.

Further, the High Court appointed Nair as the

Official Liquidator of PPBL.

As per the Order, the RBI said the official liquidator shall exercise all the powers prescribed under the provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 along with applicable provisions of the Companies Act, 2013.

In terms of the said Order, the official liquidator, with effect from July 8, 2026, exercise all the powers of the Board of PPBL, it added.

PPBL, an associate firm of Vijay Shekhar Sharma-promoted fintech firm Paytm, came under the regulatory scanner on multiple occasions earlier, including in March 2022 when the central bank barred it from onboarding new customers.

While cancelling the licence, the RBI had said the affairs of the bank were conducted in a manner detrimental to its own interests as well as its depositors.

Earlier, PPBL was directed to stop onboarding new customers with effect from March 11, 2022 amid "material supervisory concerns" observed in the bank.

The bank was also directed to appoint an IT audit firm to conduct a comprehensive system audit of its IT system.

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

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

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

Stock markets end flat; Sensex dips nearly 70 points

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Foreign institutional investors

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

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

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

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

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

PROSPECT



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

PIONEER PHOTO



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

PIONEER PHOTO

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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



Hudco Chairman and Managing Director Sanjay Kulshrestha said.

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

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

Experts push universal screening to end viral hepatitis by 2030

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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



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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

The scheme provides 100 per cent guarantee coverage for MSMEs and 90 per cent guarantee coverage for non-MSMEs and the scheduled passenger airline sector, up to a credit flow of ₹2,55,000 crore, which includes ₹5,000 crore specifically earmarked for the scheduled passenger airline sector.

ted to advancing this movement through awareness, evidence-based dialogue and collaborative action."

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

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

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

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

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

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

Tata Sons chairman's pay climbs to ₹158.7 crore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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



N Chandrasekaran

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

DAILY SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

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

SOLUTION (28.7.26)

6	7	3	1	5	9	4	2	8
8	1	2	7	6	4	3	9	5
5	4	9	8	2	3	6	1	7
7	6	8	5	1	2	9	3	4
1	3	5	9	4	6	8	7	2
9	2	4	3	8	7	5	6	1
4	9	1	2	3	8	7	5	6
2	8	7	6	9	5	1	4	3
3	5	6	4	7	1	2	8	9

DOUBLE CROSSWORD

WEDNESDAY | JULY 29, 2026

ACROSS

3 Fellows seemingly half sane but of great intelligence (5)

8 Letters to Jack from a Gulf state (5)

10 Nice change at the medical centre for old people (5)

11 One way to address a person of class (3)

12 Music group at number ten, possibly (5)

13 Charming women get it at church in various ways (7)

15 One doesn't feel right out of them! (5)

18 Hugh, we're told, is just a "hack" (3)

19 Being in the way, a tree could be removed (6)

21 Garden structure by Olga, cleverly (7)

22 A book can be a good one about

DOWN

1 He's apt to get into the salad, etc. (5)

2 Walked in a charmed manner? (7)

4 Archer, one of the immortals (4)

5 Rest period for which one can set seats out (6)

6 He'll do something dramatic (5)

7 Join one for a close finish (5)

9 Bird after coal, maybe (3)

12 Old prison's modern entrance (7)

14 That woman from Motherwell (3)

16 A woman with contrary ways about her can be fun (5)

17 To astound the team leader is no ordinary feat (5)

19 Inclined to be biased (7)

20 Booklet concerning a car crashed during a race (5)

21 Frivolous injection of money into a new play (5)

23 They shouldn't take long to read (7)

24 Hot vocalist? (6)

25 Spot cash for fish (3)

27 Decree in gold and possibly red (5)

28 Solo arranged by an egghead for free (5)

30 Is it peripheral in the field of betting? (5)

32 Where to end a united state in the United States (4)

33 Gosh, a French horn! (3)

15, Gil-E-T

16, Se-Amy

18, V-Ald

19, Ser-Ious

21, Lather

22, Shrine

23, Eleven (II)

25, Tents

26, Otto

28, So-p

19, Swear

22, See-m

24, Rap

25, Tightly

26, Oiled

27, Photo

28, Si-Eve

29, Tuiton

30, Trios

31, Pen-N-Y

2, Re-lies

3, O-port-O

4, Wad

5, Angus

6, Secula-R

7, Prop

8, Tob-I-as

12, Crowd

13, Joker

14, Sloop-p

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



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

It was followed by Reliance Jio which reported a net addition of 22.91 lakh subscribers, comprising 21.46 lakh in mobile segment and 1.44 lakh in fixed line segment.

Together, the two private telecom operators accounted for 54.54 lakh, or about 87 per cent, of the total net addition of 62 lakh subscribers in June.

"The number of total telephone subscribers in India increased from 1,343.1 million at the end of May 2026 to 1,348.08 million at the end of June 2026, thereby showing a monthly

growth rate of 0.37 per cent," sector regulator TRAI's monthly data subscriber report for June 2026 said.

The total number of wireless connections in June increased to 130 crore from 129.4 crore in May. The total wireless connections comprised 114.7 crore consumer sim, 13.47 crore M2M sim and 1.78 crore fixed wireless access connections.

Vodafone Idea reported net addition of 1.63 lakh wireless subscribers.

State-run BSNL added 94,006 subscribers during the reported month.

MTNL lost 11,284 mobile subscribers in June. The wireline subscriber base declined 1.67 per cent on monthly basis to 4.78 crore in June, from 4.86 crore in May, mainly due to BSNL losing 7.96 lakh fixed line subscribers.

Only Airtel, Reliance Jio and STPL added new subscribers, while rest all the companies including Vodafone Idea, MTNL, APSFL, Tata Teleservices, Quadrant reported decline in fixed line connections.

As per the information filed by 1,580 operators for June 2026, the total number of broadband subscribers increased to 108.75 crore from 108 crore in May.

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar Advertisement No. 8/2026

Online applications are invited for the post of Officer on Special Duty in various Constituent/University Colleges of the University on the prescribed application form. Online registration of application for these posts will start w.e.f. 29.07.2026 and end on 18.08.2026. Last Date for submitting Hard Copy of the Online submitted application is 28.08.2026. For further details visit University Website: <http://www.gndu.ac.in>.

Amritsar
28-07-2026
2426/12/2026-27/13750 Dated CHD :- 28/07/2026

MADHYA PRADESH PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES CORPORATION LIMITED

(A Government of Madhya Pradesh Undertaking)

Oil Fed Building, 01, Arera Hills, Bhopal

URL: <https://mpphscs.mp.gov.in>, Phone : 0755-2578915

Dated : 28.07.2026

TENDER NOTICE

Tenders for following item/Services floated on website and Portal from Dated 28.07.2026 to next 30 days :

- Online Tender RFP No. T-937/MPPHSC/Selection of an Agency for time-bound Provision of Tele-ECG (STEMI) Diagnostic and Reporting Services under National Health Mission, Madhya Pradesh 2026 Dated : 27.07.2026 Uploaded on portal & Website.
- Online Tender EOI No. 08/Software Data Extraction, Engagement of a Service Provider for Supply and Implementation of an AI based Software Solution for Data Extraction from Documents and Analysis of Equipment/ Device Specifications, on a Locally-Hosted Basis, for the Department of Public Health & Family Welfare, Government of Madhya Pradesh Dated : 27.07.2026 Uploaded on Website.
- Tender (s) for AYUSH-Kachhi Aushadhiyan (Ayurved and Unani).
- Tender (s) for Various Equipment.
- Tender (s) for Various Drugs.
- Tender (s) for Various Surgical & Consumables.

All Prospective bidders are requested to visit "www.mptenders.gov.in/<https://mpphscs.mp.gov.in>, <https://gem.gov.in>" for further details.

M.P. Madhyam/127237/2026 CGM (TECHNICAL)



Snippets of The Pioneer Dialogue organised in association with UCOST on Science, Technology and Innovation for a Prosperous Uttarakhand presided over by CM Pushkar Singh Dhami with MLA Munna Singh Chaunhan as the guest of honour along with invited guests, youth and prominent citizens from across the State

Pioneer pic