

DU opens admissions to one-year PG programmes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi University has opened admissions to its one-year postgraduate programmes for the first time, offering graduates of its four-year undergraduate courses a faster pathway to a master's degree under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Admissions began on July 5 and are open exclusively to Delhi University students who have completed the four-year Undergraduate Curriculum Framework (UGCF) 2022. Admission to one-year postgraduate programmes is merit-based, following a four-year bachelor's degree and meeting specific course requirements, the university said. Registration is being conducted through the post-graduate admission portal. This move marks a key



milestone in the university's NEP 2020 implementation. Under the new structure, students who earn enough credits in their four-year undergraduate degree qualify for a one-year master's programme, bypassing the conventional two-year course. The university also announced admissions to

its two-year M.Sc. programme in Plant Molecular Biology and Biotechnology for GAT-B 2026-qualified candidates. Meanwhile, the undergraduate admissions process is underway under the Common Seat Allocation System (CSAS), with the university receiving 1,48,407 applications so far.

A total of 62,524 candidates have completed Phase II by filling in their programme and college preferences. The last date for submission is July 11. For conventional two-year postgraduate programmes, around 9,500 admissions have been completed so far, the university said. The current entry window will close at 11.59 pm on Sunday, while the third allocation list, including admissions to performance-based programmes such as MFA, B.P.Ed, M.P.Ed and Music, will be released on July 9. The second allocation list for B.Tech admissions has also been declared, with shortlisted candidates required to accept seats by July 8. For the five-year integrated law programme, the first spot admission round is underway, and candidates can apply until July 7.

Teachers' Association welcomes reappointment of Yogesh Singh as DU Vice-Chancellor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The reappointment of Prof Yogesh Singh as the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Delhi (DU) for a second consecutive full term marks a historic milestone in the university's history. For the first time since its establishment, a vice-chancellor has been entrusted with a consecutive second term. Welcoming the decision, the Delhi University Progressive Teachers' Association (DUPTA) described it as a visionary and historic step in the larger interest of the university and India's higher education system. An online meeting of the association was chaired by Prof Satyapal Singh, senior professor of Sanskrit, who joined from Mauritius. In his presidential address, he said that the Government of India's decision reflects its commitment to recognising merit, integrity, and visionary leadership. According to him, under the leadership of Prof Yogesh Singh, Delhi University has earned a distinct national and international reputation. Addressing the meeting, Department of Political Science Prof Sudhir Kumar Singh, General Secretary of DUPTA,



Yogesh Singh

stated that during the past five years, Delhi University has witnessed remarkable progress in academics, administration, and infrastructure under Prof Yogesh Singh's leadership. He noted that nearly 6,000 faculty members were recruited through a transparent and merit-based process, while significant administrative reforms, large-scale infrastructure development, and a disciplined work culture have contributed to an impressive improvement of nearly 200 positions in global university rankings. Prof. Sudhir Singh expressed confidence that, with his deep understanding of the university's challenges and

opportunities, Prof Yogesh Singh would transform Delhi University during his second term and lead it into the league of the world's top 100 universities within the next five years. Speaking on the occasion, Prof Chandramohan Negi from the South Campus remarked that the grant of a second consecutive term to a vice-chancellor for the first time in the university's history reflects Prof. Yogesh Singh's impartial, committed, and development-oriented leadership. The speakers also highlighted Prof. Yogesh Singh's distinguished academic achievements. He holds an M.Tech. in Electronics and Communication Engineering and a Ph.D. in Computer Engineering. A renowned academic in Software Engineering, he has supervised 23 doctoral scholars, published more than 250 research papers in national and international journals, and authored and co-authored several books, including one on software testing. Delivering the vote of thanks, Dr Rupesh Chauhan of Kirori Mal College said that Prof. Yogesh Singh's second term would mark the beginning of a new golden chapter in the history of Delhi University.

EV policy mandates public charging stations at all authorised dealership

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi's new Electric Vehicle Policy goes significantly beyond purchase subsidies, mandating that every authorised EV dealership in the city establish at least one public charging station within six months of the guidelines being notified. Apart from that, a minimum of three charging points for two-wheelers and three-wheelers and two for four-wheelers, as part of a comprehensive ecosystem framework covering manufacturing standards, grid planning, battery recycling, and skills development. According to a statement issued by the chief minister's office, the policy's eligibility requirements for vehicle incentives are tied directly to domestic manufacturing.

Models seeking subsidies must be manufactured in India and comply with PM E-DRIVE, FAME-II, Phased Manufacturing Programme, and Production Linked Incentive requirements, including domestic manufacturing or assembly of critical components such as battery packs, battery management systems, motors, controllers, and chargers. This means imported or non-compliant vehicles will not qualify for Delhi's purchase incentives regardless of whether they are electric. "Model approvals have been given a defined timeline. A dedicated committee, which will include an expert from a recognised vehicle-testing agency, will verify safety, performance, and localisation requirements and either approve a compliant application or communi-



cate deficiencies within seven working days. This is designed to give manufacturers and dealers predictability rather than open-ended approval processes," it said. On charging infrastructure, Delhi Transco Limited has been designated to plan the network at a city level rather than through isolated individual projects. DTL will

aggregate locations, expected demand, and electricity load requirements across government agencies; conduct system-level siting and grid-readiness assessments; and set operating standards for approvals, timelines, uptime, and service quality across the network. A single-window digital

monitoring platform will manage site onboarding, approvals, monitoring, and reporting for charging projects, addressing delays that have historically held back charging rollouts across Indian cities. The platform will also support faster clearances and electricity connections for public and semi-public charging and battery-swapping stations. The policy plans charging where vehicles are actually used and parked, rather than only at dedicated public stations. This includes community charging facilities in RWAs and group-housing societies, dedicated infrastructure for electric buses and trucks at government sites, EV-ready electrical capacity in new public infrastructure, and exploration of energy storage and time-of-day tariffs to reduce costs

and manage grid load. Regarding batteries, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee has been tasked with facilitating battery collection centres through a public-private partnership model. DPCC will establish procedures for safe collection, storage, and transportation of batteries, monitor manufacturer compliance with Extended Producer Responsibility requirements, and promote unique battery identifiers for traceability, refurbishment, second-life use, and eventual recycling. Battery circularity is framed as a core part of the transition rather than an afterthought. On skills and employment, original equipment manufacturers must disclose their dealer and service networks and maintain adequate after-sales facilities across the city.

Gyan Bhadra presents new book to Special CP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Author and columnist Gyan Bhadra recently presented a copy of his latest book, 'New Delhi's Diplomatic Sleight of Hand for New World Order', to Divesh Chandra Srivastava, Special Commissioner of Police (Law & Order), Delhi Police here. The book explores India's diplomatic outreach to the developing world and is based on exclusive interviews conducted with labour ministers representing Non-Aligned and other developing countries who visited New Delhi in 1995 for the 5th International Conference of Labour Ministers of Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries, organised at Vigyan Bhavan.

The book revisits a significant chapter in India's diplomatic history and highlights the country's engagement with the Global South during a period of major international political, labour and economic transition. Drawing on first-hand accounts of participating ministers, the book examines the ideas, priorities and diplomatic initiatives that contributed to India's evolving role in the emerging world order. During the meeting, Bhadra briefed the special commissioner on the research underpinning the book and discussed its relevance in understanding India's diplomatic evolution and its continuing engagement with developing nations.

2 shooters with links to Bishnoi gang killed in encounter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chandigarh/New Delhi

Two alleged shooters linked with the Lawrence Bishnoi-Harry Boxer gang, suspected to be involved in the murder of a gym owner in Haryana's Hansi, were killed in a police encounter in Bahadurgarh in

the Jhajjar district, an official said on Sunday. The operation was carried out by a joint team of Delhi Police Special Cell and Haryana Special Task Force (STF) on Saturday night. Officials said the two shooters — Parvesh and Himanshu — opened fire at police teams

after they were intercepted. Police retaliated, and the accused sustained gunshot injuries. When taken to hospital, they were declared brought dead. Constable Ankit of the Special Cell sustained a gunshot injury to his leg during the operation, they added. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Bahadurgarh, Mayank Mishra, said on Sunday that the two shooters were intercepted past midnight, following a tip-off. Haryana Police had announced a reward of



₹1 lakh on each of the accused in connection with the killing of gym owner Kapil in Hansi on June 11. Kapil was conducting an outdoor exercise session with

a group of six to seven people when he was shot dead. A CCTV visual of the incident had gone viral on social media. Police said during investigation, it came to light that the murder was allegedly carried out by Parvesh and Himanshu — both residents of Hisar district — at the behest of an organised crime syndicate operated by Hariram alias Harry Boxer and Anil Pandit, which investigators said is associated with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang.

Man kills wife with tawa in Najafgarh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A 48-year-old man, jobless for the last two months and under stress, killed his wife by repeatedly hitting her with a 'tawa' following a domestic quarrel over a minor issue at their home in the Najafgarh area here. Dinesh Patel, a resident of Gopal Nagar in southwest Delhi, later appeared before the duty officer at the Baba Haridas Nagar police station on Sunday morning and informed police that he had killed his wife, Sarita Patel (43), police said. "A police team rushed to the house and found Sarita lying dead. They immediately secured the area, and FSL and the crime unit teams inspected the spot and collected evidence," said the police officer.



tors will record their statements," police said. According to the accused, he argued with his wife on Saturday night over a minor issue. During questioning, he told police that in a fit of rage he picked up a tawa (a large, flat or slightly curved metal cooking pan), repeatedly struck her, causing fatal injuries and surrendered on Sunday. Dinesh had been employed with an IT company but had reportedly been unemployed for the past two months. Investigators said Dinesh was allegedly distressed over his family's current circumstances and frequently argued with his wife over minor issues. During interrogation, he allegedly disclosed that he had another argument with Sarita on Saturday night and, in a fit of anger, struck her on the head with a tawa, resulting in her death. "Prima Facie, we suspect that he murdered her around 1-2am, stayed in the house with the body and then approached the police station around 8am. His sons were at their maternal grandmother's house when he attacked his wife," a senior police officer said. Police said the accused's in-laws also reside in Gopal Nagar in Najafgarh, and have been informed about the incident. Police said an FIR has been registered and investigation is underway.

Speaker hails 12 years of PM leadership

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta on Sunday attended a Sanskritik Sandhya held at Sanwariya Seth Tent in Sector 10, Rohini. The event was organised to mark twelve years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, during which he said the past twelve years have redefined the scale and pace of India's development while placing public welfare at the centre of governance.



The event was also attended by Union Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Tokhan Sahu, Delhi Mayor Praveesh Wahli, and Lok Sabha MP Yogender Chaudhary. Public representatives, social organisations, and residents from across the Rohini Assembly Constituency participated in the programme. Gupta described the twelve-year period as marked by decisive governance, rapid infrastructure development, digital transformation, expanded social welfare initiatives, and a renewed emphasis on inclusive growth. He said the government's commitment to transparency, efficient service delivery, and citizen-centric policymaking has strengthened public trust while accelerating India's journey toward becoming a developed nation. The Sanskritik Sandhya featured devotional bhajans celebrating India's civilisational heritage and artistic traditions, bringing together people from diverse sections of society.

The Pioneer Classified

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Rajesh Kumar Vishvkarma, S/o Shatrughan Sharma, R/o Kh. No.-20, Gali No.-8, Shivam Enclave, Village-Noor Nagar, Ghaziabad (U.P.) 201007 have changed my name from Rajesh Kumar Vishvkarma to Rajesh Kumar. Henceforth, I would be known by the name of Rajesh Kumar for all purposes.

PD(054)C I, Raghunath, Father of No.16035045F Rtn Patil Ruturaj Raghunath, R/o- A/P-Bhairapur, PO- Mattiwade, Teh & Sub Dist- Hukkeri, Dist- Belagavi, Karnataka- 591225, have changed my name from Raghunath to Raghunath Tukaram Patil, vide affidavit dated 04/07/2026 before Notary Public Delhi

PD(055)C I, Kale Shankarrao Baburao, Father of No.15434689M Hav Kale Avinash Shankarrao, R/o- At- Kalebadi Po- Naravane Teh- Man Dist- Satara State- Maharashtra Pin- 415540, have changed my name from Kale Shankarrao Baburao to Shankar Baburao Kale, vide affidavit dated 04/07/2026 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(056)C I, Hari Singh Yadav, Father of No.6498423A Hav Shubhram, R/o- Vill- Dadhiya, Teh- Mundawar, Dist- Alwar, Rajasthan- 301401, have changed my name from Hari Singh Yadav to Hari Singh, vide affidavit dated 04/07/2026 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(057)C

I, Kale Sangeeta Shankarrao, Father of No.15434689M Hav Kale Avinash Shankarrao, R/o- At- Kalebadi Po- Naravane Teh- Man Dist- Satara State- Maharashtra Pin- 415540, have changed my name from Kale Sangeeta Shankarrao to Sangita Shankar Kale, vide affidavit dated 04/07/2026 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(058)C I, Smt Bhagarthi Devi, Mother of No.6498423A Hav Shubhram, R/o- Vill- Dadhiya, Teh- Mundawar, Dist- Alwar, Rajasthan- 301401, have changed my name from Smt Bhagarthi Devi to Bhagrati Devi, vide affidavit dated 04/07/2026 before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(059)C I, Siradari Devi, Mother of No.15247072L/Nk Satyapal Singh, R/o- Vill & PO- Pachawar, Teh- Mahawan, Dist- Mathura, U.P.- 281308, have changed my name from Siradari Devi to Sirdari Devi, Vide Affidavit Dated 04/07/2026 Before Notary Public Delhi.

PD(060)C I, Mohammad Mustaqeem Ahmed S/o Shakeel Ahmed, R/o 8882, Naya Mohalla, Pul Bangash, Azad Market, North Delhi- 110006, have changed my name to MD Mustaqeem Ahmed.

PD(061)C

UNITY Small Finance Bank Limited					
5th Floor, Tower 1, Seawoods Grand Central, Sec-40, Seawoods, above Seawoods Darave Railway Station, Navi Mumbai – 400 706					
POSSESSION NOTICE					
(Under Rule 8 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002)					
Whereas the undersigned being the authorized officer of Unity Small Finance Bank Limited (hereinafter referred to as "USFBL"), Having its registered office at 5th Floor, Tower 1, Seawoods Grand Central, Sec-40, Seawoods, above Seawoods Darave Railway Station, Navi Mumbai – 400 706 under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (S4 of 2002), and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice dated mentioned below under Section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon you being the borrowers (names and addresses mentioned below) to repay the amount mentioned in the said notice and interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower mentioned herein below having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers mentioned herein below and to the public in general that undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on me under sub section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with the Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The borrowers mentioned herein in above in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the said property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the Charge of Unity Small Finance Bank Limited for an amount as mentioned herein under and interest thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.					
Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower (s)	Description of Immovable Properties is as Under	Demand Notice Date & Amount	Date of Possession	
1	Loan A/C. No(S): : USFBDLLOAN000005016220 & USFBDLLOAN000005006136 & SFBDELLOAN000005006441. 1. Sant Gopichand Education And Welfare Society, Represented Through/By Ram Karan Singh 2. Veena Rani Singh 3. Ram Karan Singh 4. Jayviri, S/o. Rampal Singh 5. Upender Singh, 6. Kavita Rani 7. KL Yadav, 8. Sardar Singh 9. Nagender Singh Add For Sr. No. 1 : Ahera Baghat Uttar Pradesh-250609. Add For Sr. No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 & 9 : Kharsa No. 196, 202, 203, 204, 207 Institute Situated At Harichandpur Baghat, Uttar Pradesh-250609. Add For Sr. No. 2 : D-375 Gali No.13 D Block Hardev Puri Loan Road, Mandoli, North-East Saboli Delhi-110094 Add For Sr. No. 3 : H. No. 195 Ahaida, Tehsil Baghat, Uttar Pradesh-250609. Add For Sr. No. 4 : Sanarpur Kaidwa, Shiv Mandir Baghat, Uttar Pradesh-110093. Add For Sr. No. 5 : C-4 East, Jyoti Nagar, Nand Nagri North-East Delhi-110 093. Institute Situated At Harichandpur Baghat, Uttar Pradesh-250 609. Add For Sr. No. 6 : B-23 Gali Number-01, Sadatpur Extn Karawal Nagar Road, Badarpur Khadar, North-East Delhi-110094. Add For Sr. No. 7: Rz F-357 Gali Number 03 Mahavir Enclave South-West, Delhi-110045. Add For Sr. No. 8 : Maharampur Shiv Mandir Baghat, Uttar Pradesh - 250615. Add For Sr. No. 9 : H.No. 11, 12 Street No 1 Chandra Lok, Mandoli Road, Nandnagri Shiv Mandir, Shahdara, Delhi-110093.	All That Piece And Parcel Of Immovable Property Kharsa No. 196 & 202 Land Area Measuring 0.1833 Hectare Le 2192 Sq Yds, & Kharsa No. 203, Land Area Measuring 0.102 Hectare Le 1220 Sq.Yds & Kharsa No. 204, Land Area Measuring 1 Bigha 5 Biswa & 5 Biswansi I.e. 3788 Sq.Yds & Total Land Area Measuring 8432 Sq.Yds. Situated At Waka Mauja Harichandpur, Tehsil Khokhra, Pargana & Janpad Baghat, U.p.p Belonging To Sant Gopu Chand Education And Welfare Society (Previously Known As Of Pabla Chauhida Harichandpur Vidhyalay & School Pabla Begamabad & Chauhida & Harichandpur Vidyalaya) & Sh. Gopichand College Of Pharmacy (Which Comes Under Sant Gopichand Education & Welfare Society) And Bounded As Under: East : Rasta 20 Ft, West : Rasta Then Railway Line, North : Agriculture Land, South : Rasta	10.04.2025 Rs. 3,90,45,120.68 (Rupees Three Crore Ninety Lakh Forty Five Thousand One Hundred Twenty And Paise Sixty Eight Only) As On 04/04/2025	30.06.2026	
	2	Loan A/C. No(S): : CFSLDELLOAN000005002338 1. Kashi Ram 2. Poonam S 3. Hariom K 4. Ajay Bansal Add For Sr. No. 1 to 4 : House No. 30, Part Of Kharsa No. 189, Ward No. 39, Garhi Katayia, Village Loni, Pargana & Tehsil Loni, District, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, 201102.	All The Piece And Parcel Of Residential Plot No. 30, Out Of Kharsa No. 189, Situated At Gadi Katya, Village – Loni, Pargana, Tehsil & District – Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh (Area Measuring 165 Sq.Yds.) Boundaries: East : Others Property West : Road 10 Feet, North : Property Of Devender South : Property Of Rakesh	09.07.2025 Rs. 27,33,468.68 (Rs. Twenty-Seven Lakh Thirty-Three Thousand Four Hundred and Sixty-Eight And Sixty-Eight Paise Only) As On 08.07.2025	01.07.2026
Place: Baghat, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh Date : 06.07.2026					
Authorized Officer Unity Small Finance Bank Limited					Sd/-

Woman falls to death in Lodhi Colony; family alleges murder

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A 28-year-old woman who had been married for barely two and a half months died on Saturday after falling from the third floor of an NDMC residential complex in Delhi's Lodhi Colony area.

The family of the victim alleged that her husband and in-laws murdered her over dowry demands and rejected the possibility of suicide. However, the police said all aspects of the incident are being verified, and an inquiry is underway.

The deceased has been identified as Akriti, a resident of Pushp Vihar. She was found critically injured after the fall from B-Block of NDMC Flats at Palika Kunj and was

rushed to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, where doctors declared her dead on arrival.

Akriti was working as a sales executive at a private company in Chhatarpur. She had married on April 24 this year in what the family described as a love-cum-arranged alliance. Her death came less than three months after the wedding.

Police said that since the death occurred within seven years of marriage, mandatory proceedings have been initiated. The sub-divisional magistrate has been informed to conduct the mandatory inquest proceedings as required by law. Statements of family members and other witnesses are being recorded.

Her family has outright rejected the theory that she jumped from the third floor on her own. Her younger brother said the incident is being projected as a suicide to shield those responsible. He described his sister as the eldest among the siblings, a responsible and mentally stable person, and said the characterisation of her death as suicide does not reflect the person she was.

The family alleged that Akriti was subjected to physical assault and harassment by her husband after the marriage.

They further alleged that dowry demands were made after the wedding and that she was murdered by her husband and his family members over those



demands. The brevity of the marriage, the family said, makes the circumstances of her death all the more suspicious.

Her 24-year-old brother Amay Sutar has claimed that she is mentally strong and would have never taken her

said: 'Akriti had spoken to her mother around 6 pm on Saturday - hours before her death. She had said that she had left office for the day and was on her way home. Around 8 pm, the family received a call from Arastu saying Akriti was missing. Nearly 90 minutes later, the police informed them that a woman's body had been found at Palika Kunj.'

The family has questioned the circumstances surrounding the incident, pointing out that the building where Akriti's body was found is largely unoccupied. They further claimed that no bloodstains were found at the scene, leading them to suspect that the crime had been carefully planned. The postmortem report, they said,

will be crucial in establishing the exact cause of death.

The case falls under legal provisions that treat deaths of married women within seven years of marriage with heightened scrutiny, given the historical pattern of dowry-related violence in India. Under Section 304B of the Indian Penal Code and the corresponding provision under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, dowry death carries a mandatory minimum sentence if it is established that the woman was subjected to cruelty or harassment in connection with dowry demands before her death. The SDM inquest is a procedural requirement that will feed into the police investigation.

Police have not made any arrests so far and have not

confirmed whether the incident is being treated as an accident, suicide, or homicide. Further investigation is in progress.

Akriti's death is the latest in a pattern of cases that continue to surface in Delhi involving young married women who die under circumstances that their families allege are connected to dowry harassment. India's National Crime Records Bureau data consistently records thousands of dowry deaths annually, with Delhi among the states that report a significant number of such cases each year.

The family's insistence that their daughter was murdered rather than driven to take her own life adds urgency to the investigation that the police and SDM are now conducting.

Mission Kayakalp launched to upgrade infrastructure in schools

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Government launched 'Mission Kayakalp' to upgrade infrastructure in government schools, with repairs, modern laboratories, clean drinking water facilities and campus improvements planned across districts to create safer and better learning spaces for students.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the initiative aims to transform government schools into modern, clean and inspiring learning spaces rather than limiting them to centres of education.

She said the programme is being implemented with support from district administrations, the Education Department, CSR initiatives, social organisations, market associations and local communities, adding that public participation is helping speed up the transformation of school infrastructure.

According to a statement,



the initiative focuses on repairing school buildings, painting and whitewashing walls, waterproofing, improving rooftop drainage, renovating toilets, installing RO plants and water coolers, modernising science laboratories, developing facilities for children with special needs and increasing greenery on campuses.

In the North district, six government schools were inspected, following which two schools were selected for development.

At a cost of around ₹16.20 lakh, the sensory park for children with special needs at the school on Shankaracharya Marg has been renovated, while an RO plant and water coolers have also been installed. At the government school in Roop Nagar, the physics laboratory has been modernised to strengthen practical learning for students.

In the South district, large-scale improvement works have been completed at Ramanujan Sarvodaya Kanya

Vidyalaya, Mehrauli, at a cost of around ₹48.73 lakh, and at Sarvodaya Co-ed Senior Secondary School, Qutub Mehrauli, at a cost of nearly Rs 98.58 lakh.

The works at both schools include renovation of toilets, replacement of sanitary fittings, repairs to wall and roof leakages and damaged plaster, and repainting of the entire buildings with high-quality weather-resistant paint. Cleaning and beautification of the campuses and corridors, installation of two modern water coolers, and plantation drives to make the school campuses greener have also been carried out.

In the West district, extensive infrastructure improvement works are underway at government schools in Mohan Garden and Janakpuri under Mission Kayakalp. At the Mohan Garden school, works worth around ₹77.71 lakh include roof repairs and waterproofing, renovation of the drink-

ing water area, installation of a rainwater harvesting system, improvement of the sewer line and staff toilets, along with other civil and electrical works.

At the GSKV in Janakpuri, works worth around ₹38.77 lakh include waterproofing of the MP Hall, installation of a new RO plant and water cooler, replacement of toilet doors, and strengthening of the electrical system.

In the North-East district, major improvement works have been completed at the government school in Gokalpur at a cost of around ₹6.70 lakh and at Mani Ben Patel Bharatiya Mahila Sarvodaya Vidyalaya in Shahdara at a cost of nearly ₹2.90 lakh.

The works at both schools include renovation and deep cleaning of toilets, replacement of sanitary fittings and old taps, repairs to seepage and damaged plaster, and repainting of the buildings with high-quality paint.

CM addresses public gatherings at Viksit Bharat Sankalp Sammelen

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday addressed public gatherings at the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Sammelen held across the Hari Nagar, Janakpuri, and Rajouri Garden Assembly constituencies in west Delhi.

On the occasion, she told the residents that the vision of a Viksit Bharat under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership over the past twelve years is now being channelled into the mission of building a Viksit Delhi through the double-engine Government.

The Chief Minister said India has established a new identity on the global stage over the past twelve years, setting benchmarks across economic growth, modern infrastructure, the digital revolution, women's empowerment, social secu-



rity, healthcare, education, and welfare for the poor.

She said that under Modi's leadership, the benefits of development have been ensured to reach the last person in society.

She said the Delhi Government is working with the same vision.

She listed the areas in which the current Government has taken decisions since assuming office, including the Clean Yamuna Campaign, air pollution

control, improvements in water supply and sewerage, road and drainage network strengthening, health and education infrastructure development, the Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy, green energy initiatives, large-scale plantation drives, and digital governance.

On pollution and the environment, the Chief Minister outlined what she described as a comprehensive campaign for a pollution-free, clean, and green capital.

भारतीय जनसंघ के संस्थापक

“एक देश में दो विधान,
दो प्रधान और
दो निशान-नहीं चलेंगे।”

के उद्घोषक,

प्रखर राष्ट्रवादी एवं महान शिक्षाविद्

डॉ. श्यामा प्रसाद मुखर्जी जी

की 125वीं जयंती पर

कोटिशः नमन

नरेन्द्र मोदी
प्रधानमंत्री

रेखा गुप्ता
मुख्यमंत्री, दिल्ली

सत्यमेव जयते
दिल्ली सरकार

DIP/Shabdarth/Display/053/26-27

IN FOCUS



Water being released from the Tunga Reservoir following rainfall in the catchment area at Gajanur in Shivamogga district, Karnataka on Sunday PTI

Delhi sees warmest July day in two years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Delhi recorded its warmest July day in two years on Sunday as the maximum temperature touched 38.6 degrees Celsius, while the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast moderate rain under an orange alert for Monday after showers and waterlogging hit parts of the city. The national Capital witnessed moderate rainfall during the afternoon, with Chhatarpur receiving 49 mm till 2.30 pm, the highest in Delhi-NCR. Waterlogging was reported from parts of Chhatarpur following the showers.

Rain accompanied by strong winds disrupted flight operations at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) on Saturday evening, forcing several aircraft to divert to nearby airports.

Airlines have also warned passengers of possible delays and disruptions as bad weather continues to affect operations in both Delhi and Mumbai. According to airport officials, 15 Delhi-bound flights were diverted because of unsuitable weather conditions over the national Capital.

Of these, nine flights were diverted to Jaipur, while two each landed in Amritsar and Lucknow. One flight each was

diverted to Mumbai and Chandigarh. Airport authorities said flight movements may continue to be affected depending on weather conditions. Air India has advised passengers travelling to and from Delhi and Mumbai to check their flight status before leaving for the airport. In a post on X, the airline said, "Adverse weather conditions may impact flight operations to and from Mumbai and Delhi."

IndiGo also issued a travel advisory, saying bad weather in Delhi and Mumbai has affected flight schedules. The airline said it is closely monitoring the situation and requested passengers to stay updated through its website or mobile app before travelling.

Gurugram recorded 35 mm of rainfall, followed by Mehrauli (18 mm), Greater Noida (17 mm), Najafgarh (8 mm) and Janakpuri (7 mm). According to the IMD, the maximum temperature settled at 38.6 degrees Celsius, two notches above normal, making it the highest July maximum in the city since July 11, 2024, when it had touched 38.8 degrees Celsius. The minimum temperature was recorded at 29.2 degrees Celsius, 1.3 notches above normal. It was the highest July minimum since July 2, 2024, when the city had recorded 30.7 degrees Celsius.



VHP urges cops to quiz Opposition leaders

Priyanka Vadra had suggested that influential people and not just junior staff, could be behind the switching off of CCTV cameras and the embezzlement offerings worth "thousands of crores". Kejriwal alleged the theft of around ₹200 crore in cash, along with Lord Ram's garland, *charan padukas* (divine footprints), diamonds, jewellery, silver bricks, and lamps, and openly questioned why the Uttar Pradesh Police, ED, and CBI have remained silent. Yadav claimed a massive ₹20,000-crore scam, alleging that cash and valuables donated by devotees from across India and abroad have vanished, with involvement of junior employees, former trust general secretary Champat Rai (who has already resigned) and "several influential people". While, Sanjay Singh alleged that over ₹200 crore was stolen from donation boxes and that more than 50 employees were involved.

Kumar has urged police to record the leaders' statements under the law so they can disclose the factual basis of their claims and hand over all supporting documents. The letter makes its position crystal clear: if the leaders provide credible material, it will help the investigation. But if their allegations turn out to be "knowingly false or reckless" and made "without any supporting basis", the investigating agency should consider legal action.

Two LeT ultras cornered in J&K

To prevent any escape through the dense foliage, the Army's specialised counter-insur-

gency unit, Victor Force, has deployed additional personnel to seal all possible exit routes and illuminated the area overnight.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha visited Chandanwari on Sunday and reviewed the ground situation and pilgrim facilities at the camp.

Speaking to the media persons, the Lieutenant Governor said: "Having closely monitored the holy Yatra over the past four years, I have noted a massive surge in pilgrim numbers this year. I strongly urge those without prior registration to remain patient and wait for their turn. This cooperation is essential for a smooth and seamless Yatra experience.

SIR: Over 22 lakh voters dropped from three...

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) RS Gopalan said the draft electoral roll comprises 1,60,19,176 male voters, 1,53,65,083 female voters and 2,775 third-gender electors.

"The voters, whose names were not there in the draft electoral roll, can submit their claim or objection either through the BLO or through the ECINET mobile app or voters.eci.gov.in," Gopalan said at a press conference.

He said that claims and objections will be heard till August 4 and the final electoral roll will be published on September 6. "If someone's name does not feature in the draft voter list, the person needs to fill up a form and submit it to poll authorities along with a declaration form and other documents," the CEO said.

As per the draft electoral rolls in Manipur which published on Sunday, 1,08,283 voters had either

stop running your shops at their expense," he said.

"Your intention is not to find out about the theft or to catch the thieves, your intention is what it was before the temple was built, that to make the Hindu community emotional and then rob them, snatch votes from them and now also snatch notes from them," Khera said. If they had to catch the thieves they would not have been demanding answers from Priyanka Gandhi, he said. The VHP has written to the Ayodhya police, urging it to examine the claims made by several opposition leaders, including Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal, on the alleged theft of donations at the Ram temple and summon them to substantiate the allegations. The RSS affiliate demanded that action be taken against them if it is found that they have made "wild allegations" intended to create and

promote feelings of "hatred, ill will and enmity". In a letter dated July 4 to Ayodhya Deputy Superintendent of Police Ashutosh Tiwari, the investigating officer in the case, VHP international president Alok Kumar said the leaders have made specific allegations that have been widely circulated through television channels, social media platforms and other electronic media. The VHP urged the investigating officer to call them to disclose the factual basis of their claims, the source of their information and any documents or material supporting them. Kumar said the leaders have publicly made specific allegations and have even attributed definite figures, including allegations involving amounts exceeding ₹20,000 crore. "The allegations made by the above named and other persons lead one to believe that they are acquainted with the facts and circumstances of the case," the letter said.

CSAM. The company reported that upon being alerted, it disabled the offending advertisements, suspended the violating accounts, and blocked the associated URLs.

Authorities have repeatedly warned technology companies that any failure to crack down on CSAM and other harmful content could invite regulatory scrutiny and legal action. Meta has come under regulatory glare for the second time this week.

Meta faces fresh scrutiny over CESAM ads

According to a person privy to the development, the Government is expected to seek answers on how such advertisements were even approved, what corrective measures Meta has taken since the allegations surfaced, and what safeguards it plans to put in place to prevent similar incidents in the future.

"If the allegations are found to be true, they will be held accountable for the advertisements, for which the platform receives revenue," one of the sources said.

Authorities have repeatedly warned technology companies that any failure to crack down on CSAM and other harmful content could invite regulatory scrutiny and legal action. Meta has come under regulatory glare for the second time this week.

In its response to the notice, Meta acknowledged that no moderation system is perfect but highlighted a zero tolerance policy towards

CSAM. The company reported that upon being alerted, it disabled the offending advertisements, suspended the violating accounts, and blocked the associated URLs.

Authorities have repeatedly warned technology companies that any failure to crack down on CSAM and other harmful content could invite regulatory scrutiny and legal action. Meta has come under regulatory glare for the second time this week.

A voice that brought Bhima alive falls silent...

She raised her three sons on her own. Two have since passed away, he added.

Noted theatre personality Habib Tanvir discovered her talent and recommended she perform before then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

That performance changed her life. She joined Bhilai Steel Plant in 1986, where her talent was nurtured. She travelled worldwide as India's cultural ambassador, performing in the US, the UK, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Japan, Russia, Australia, Turkey, Tunisia and other countries.

Wherever she performed, audiences unfamiliar with Chhattisgarhi were captivated by her storytelling, acting and music.

Whenever she returned from overseas tours, she spoke to journalists about one thing she missed most - bisi, Chhattisgarh's dish made by soaking leftover rice in water overnight.

She once asked staff at a luxury hotel to serve plain rice, which she soaked overnight and ate the next morning.

She also appeared in Shyam Benegal's

acclaimed TV series 'Bharat Ek Khoj', introducing Pandavani to millions.

Despite international fame, she remained rooted in village traditions. Friends recalled that success never changed her lifestyle. She continued chewing paan, spoke in her native dialect and mentored younger artists to keep Pandavani alive.

One of her favourite performances was Draupadi Cheerharan, through which she urged audiences to reflect on violence and injustice against women, Nirmal said.

Many universities later conferred honorary doctorates on her for her contribution to Indian culture.

She received the Padma Shri (1987), Padma Bhushan (2003) and Padma Vibhushan (2019), India's second-highest civilian award, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award and numerous other honours.

Her death marks the end of an era for Indian folk arts.

State-owned Steel Authority of India Limited's Bhilai Steel Plant (BSP) expressed grief, calling it an irreparable loss to Chhattisgarh's cultural heritage and India's folk arts.

She joined the Bhilai Steel Plant in 1986, where her extraordinary talent was nurtured and encouraged. Following her Padma Bhushan award in 2003, BSP honoured her with a promotion and other recognitions, it said.

She remained one of SAIL-BSP's most distinguished employees, bringing global recognition to the organisation, Chhattisgarh and India through her artistic achievements.

Her life of dedication, perseverance and commitment to preserving India's cultural heritage would continue to inspire generations, it added. (PTI)

Ram temple donation row: Vetting lapses exposed

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ Ayodhya

In the Ayodhya Ram Temple donation scandal, eight people, including a school-teacher, a former mechanic, and some with family ties to the trust, are accused of stealing cash offerings.

Most were contract workers hired through an outsourcing agency. Sainik Security Services of Varanasi provided staff through SBI, starting with housekeeping jobs that later changed to donation counting.

This case stands out. It reveals that outsourcing agencies, though they promise efficient staffing, often rely on vetting processes that are too basic and inconsistent for high-trust, cash-handling jobs. When low-paid contract workers manage large donations, poor screening can turn cost savings into major risks.

In India, standard vetting for outsourced roles usually falls short for sensitive positions. A process that should have been tightly controlled ended up full of gaps.

Most of the accused were low-paid contract workers hired through Sainik Security Services, an agency based in



Varanasi. The company says it sent 22 workers to the State Bank of India's Ayodhya branch for housekeeping jobs. At some point, several of them were moved to the temple's donation-counting team. Six out of the eight people arrested came from this group.

Investigators want to know how people earning just ₹10,000 to ₹15,000 a month could suddenly afford houses worth ₹65 lakh, farm-houses, and expensive bikes and cars. In India, standard background checks for out-

sourced staff typically cover identity, address, education, work history, and basic criminal records.

For jobs involving cash, RBI guidelines say police should verify the last two addresses and update records regularly. But in reality, many agencies and employers skip steps to save time and money.

Instead of ongoing checks, agencies often do just one background check at the start. They also tend to skip extra screenings, such as financial stress tests or

integrity checks, for people handling cash. In Ayodhya, these gaps were obvious. Some of the accused reportedly exploited CCTV blind spots and hid money in the washrooms during counting sessions.

One of the accused, a primary school teacher, reportedly explained the method during questioning.

Another had family connections to someone in the temple trust. One key person started as a driver for a senior trust official and later got access to the dona-

tion room keys. His nephew was also part of the counting team. Police found over ₹20 lakh with one accused, and the total amount seized is in crores.

The Contract Labour Act mainly covers wages and welfare benefits. It does not require thorough background checks. That job usually depends on the contract between the main employer, like the temple trust or SBI, and the agency. When these rules are not enforced or are ignored, issues arise.

The SIT is now checking if proper police verification was done and how the hiring process worked. This issue goes beyond just one case. Across India, outsourcing agencies try to keep costs low. Careful screening takes more time and money.

For short-term or low-level jobs, agencies usually rely on basic Aadhaar checks and self-declared documents. Personal connections and recommendations often outweigh warning signs. After hiring, there is rarely any follow-up to monitor changes in lifestyle or assets.

Jobs that involve handling cash need stronger protections. Good practices include

required police checks, financial background checks for anyone dealing with money, regular re-screening, and clear audit trails.

The main employer should carefully review the agency's vetting records rather than simply accepting certificates. It is also important to have dual-control systems, improved CCTV coverage, and independent audits of donation flows. In a place that relies on public trust and voluntary donations, weak vetting is more than just a paperwork issue.

This kind of failure damages the trust that brings millions of devotees to Ayodhya. The temple trust and its banking partners handed over a critical job without making sure strong safeguards were in place. The result is an alleged inside job that now affects one of India's most respected sites.

These arrests are a warning. Unless outsourcing agencies and the organisations that hire them treat background checks as essential, not just paperwork, similar problems will keep happening wherever cash is handled with little oversight. Faith deserves better protection.

Delhi SIR reaches 62.27 lakh voter forms in six days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Enumeration forms for the Special Intensive Revision of Delhi's electoral rolls have been distributed to 62,27,363 voters, covering 42.92 percent of the capital's total electorate of 1.45 crore, as of 8 pm on Sunday. The sixth day of the door-to-door exercise, with 2,09,201 forms digitised across all 13 districts, according to the cumulative status report released by the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Delhi.

The figures mark a significant jump from the opening days of the drive. On July 1, just one day into the exercise, total distribution stood at 9,99,773 forms covering 6.89 percent of voters. Six days later, that figure has risen more than sixfold to 62.27 lakh, indicating that Booth Level Officers have dramatically accelerated their door-to-door visits across the city.

Among the 13 districts, New Delhi District leads in the distribution percentage at 56.43 percent of its 1,54,192 voters, with 87,013 forms distributed. North District follows at 51.54 percent, with 5,01,970 forms out of 9,73,957 total voters. Old Delhi has reached 50.94 percent coverage with 3,03,972 forms distributed.

North West District has distributed the highest absolute number of forms at 6,32,359, covering 49.51 percent of its 12,77,126 voters. North East District,



which has Delhi's largest electorate at 18,70,748, has reached 43.79 percent coverage with 8,19,265 forms distributed, the highest absolute distribution number after North West.

West District has reached 47.16 percent coverage with 6,86,646 forms, while South District stands at 42.03 percent with 5,65,252 forms. East District has covered 38.64 percent of its 16,03,359 voters with 6,19,563 forms. South East District, which also has a large electorate of 15,57,289, has reached 34.89 percent with 5,43,348 forms. Central District stands at 37.62 percent with 2,62,492 forms.

On digitisation, Outer North District leads with 3.39 percent of its total electorate already digitised, followed by South West at 2.66 percent and Central North at 1.94 percent. West District has 1.88 percent digitised, and South District has 1.42 percent. The lowest digitisation rates are in the Central District at 0.76 percent and the East District at 0.77 percent.

The SIR Phase III exercise, announced by the Election

Commission of India on May 14, 2026, covers Delhi along with 15 other States and two other Union Territories. The enumeration phase runs from June 30 to July 29. After collection is complete, the draft electoral roll will be published on August 5. Residents can submit claims and objections between August 5 and September 4, with disposal of applications continuing until October 3. The final electoral roll is scheduled for October 7. The qualifying date for the revision is October 1, 2026.

Over 13,000 Booth Level Officers have been deployed across Delhi for the exercise. BLOs visit each household to hand over pre-printed enumeration forms to registered voters. If a house is found locked, the form is left behind, and collection attempts are made at least three more times. No documents are collected during the enumeration phase itself.

Electors whose names, or those of their parents or grandparents, cannot be linked to the 2002 electoral rolls may be asked for supporting documents in the next stage of the process.



Ministry of Culture
Government of India



Government of West Bengal



Commemoration of the 125th Birth Anniversary of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee

An educationist, thinker and true nationalist who
stood for the unity & sovereignty of India

“Dr. Mookerjee’s sacrifice remains etched in our collective memory. We reaffirm our commitment to building a strong and developed India, guided by the values he cherished and served till his last breath.”

- **Narendra Modi**
Prime Minister



Chief Guest

Shri Amit Shah

Hon'ble Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation

Date: Monday, 6th July, 2026 | Time: 5:00 pm onwards
Venue: Milan Mela Prangan (Hall B), Kolkata

Program Highlights

‘Melody, Culture & Nation’:
A musical tribute by CCRT to
Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee

A visual showcase of
125 feet statue of
Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee

Special exhibition with archival
material on the life of
Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee

In August Presence

Shri Suvendu Adhikari

Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal,
Government of West Bengal

Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

Hon'ble Minister of Culture & Tourism,
Government of India



Scan to watch Live

Watch the live telecast on Ministry of Culture’s social media handles

CBC 09101/13/0015/2627

GRAPEVINE

Bihar calling! Tum yahan, main wahan...

One of the most suitably tagged 'career bureaucrat', Sanjay Kumar the 1990-batch Bihar cadre IAS, superannuated last month from a very significant assignment as School Education Secretary in Government of India. Given his stupendous service record in Bihar as well as Centre, his post-retirement role was almost certain, perhaps as CEO of NITI Aayog or back to Bihar as Chief Secretary under the changed regime led by Samrat Chaudhary. Misfortune had it that at fag end of his career Sanjay Kumar faced the blot of CBSE results evaluation controversy and the NEET paper leaks. But recent grapevine emerging from the Seva Teerth is that he may be assigned the job of Principal Secretary or Advisor to the incumbent Bihar CM. The role held currently by retired 1984 IAS officer Deepak Kumar, who had a long stint with former CM Nitish Kumar, may be tasked to join his former boss, who is now a Rajya Sabha MP and is being anticipated for a larger responsibility either in NDA Government or in the coalition.



Operation Tiger 3.0?

Just weeks after Eknath Shinde's sensational "hit a sixer" with six Shiv Sena (UBT) Lok Sabha MPs formally crossing over, tremors are now shaking the ground beneath Uddhav Thackeray's faction. Strong whispers echoing through Mumbai's political corridors claim that a dozen or more MLAs from the UBT camp are gearing up to switch sides, with over 40 corporators ready to follow suit and join Shinde-led Shiv Sena. Shiv Sena ministers have already floated bold claims of "Operation Tiger 3.0," targeting up to 14 of UBT's 20 MLAs – the magic two-thirds number needed for another formal split. Insiders quipped including every chaiwala in Mantralaya that there's a glaring lack of leadership control in the Uddhav-led Shiv Sena.



Shot in the arm for UP police digital cop

In the list of 25 officers who got promotions last week was one that went unnoticed: the induction of the digital face of Uttar Pradesh Police, Rahul Srivastav, in the elite Indian Police Service (IPS). What has come as a reward to Rahul from the Yogi Adityanath Government is his most significant contribution in building UP Police's presence across major digital platforms. He led the launch of UP Police on X, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram, introduced citizen-centric digital services and developed systems for online grievance redressal and social media sentiment analysis. He also established an integrated social and electronic media monitoring centre to support real-time analysis and coordinated responses. A third-generation uniformed person in the family, Rahul first headed the UP Police social media initiative between 2016 and 2019 before returning to the role in May 2025 and has since been serving as Public Relations Officer and Social Media Head of Uttar Pradesh Police.



Shah reviews illegal coal mining in high-level meeting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Coal and Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy held a high-level meeting in New Delhi to review illegal coal mining and theft. The Union Home Secretary, Union Coal Secretary, and senior officials from the Ministry of Coal, CISF, Coal India Limited, and BCCCL were present. During the meeting, the Home Minister expressed concern about the rise in illegal coal mining and theft in Dhanbad and nearby areas. Ministry of Coal officials reported that several measures have

been implemented since the October 2025 review. CISF and Coal India Limited officials have been authorised under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, to take legal action, conduct searches, and seize illegally mined coal and related equipment. The Union Home Secretary chaired a meeting in December 2025 where the decision was made to establish a Coal Sector Coordination Committee. However, he emphasised that further action is required to address illegal mining. The Home Minister issued several key directives, including the adoption



of the "Zero Coal Leakage Plan" to ensure a comprehensive and timely response to illegal mining and unauthorised coal transportation. He noted that while

CISF and Coal India Limited officials have been granted powers under the MMDR Act, these must be exercised rigorously and in coordination with the approved

Standard Operating Procedure. The Home Minister instructed the Ministry of Coal to review progress regularly. He requested the involvement of GST authorities to ensure only legally mined coal is used and to prevent illegal coal transport. He also directed the establishment of a system to verify e-way bills for all coal shipments. Shah directed the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to include the coal sector on the priority list for CISF deployment, enabling immediate deployment of personnel in vulnerable areas. He also instructed CISF to

form Quick Response Teams and establish multi-layered security in these areas to enable prompt action against illegal mining. The Home Minister stressed the need to enhance the use of technology. He directed that high-resolution cameras at Integrated Command and Control Centres be used to identify locations and individuals involved in illegal mining. He affirmed the Government's commitment to protecting public resources, maintaining law and order, and supporting legitimate coal mining operations.

Indonesia sees India as key source of technology, policy solutions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Indonesia is increasingly looking towards India not just as a strategic partner, but also as a trusted source of technology, policy ideas and development solutions, Government officials here said on Sunday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to Indonesia from July 6-8 comes at a time when the partnership between the two countries is moving beyond traditional cooperation, they said.

Among the areas is the proposed linkage between India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and QRIS, the QR payment code launched by the Bank of Indonesia, which will allow Indian tourists visiting Bali and other Indonesian destinations to make all kinds of payments in that country easily through their phones.

From food security and digital governance to healthcare, agriculture and defence, India's successful public policy models are becoming valuable reference points for Indonesia's own development journey.

Several delegations from Indonesia have visited India to learn from India's digital infrastructure and social welfare schemes like our Public Distribution System, rice fortification scheme, fertiliser subsidy reforms, AGRIS-TACK, etc, the officials said



Indian digital solutions that powered the success of Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker, e-KYC and ONDC are also finding relevance in Indonesia's own digital transformation, they said.

This marks a shift from technology adoption to deeper institutional collaboration, with Indian companies contributing their experience in building secure, population-scale digital public infrastructure.

"Today, Indonesia is increasingly looking towards India not just as a strategic partner, but also as a trusted source of technology, policy ideas and development solutions," an official said.

Indonesia is leveraging India's expertise in digital payments, and the proposed UPI-QRIS linkage will allow seamless cross-border payments for travellers and businesses in both countries, the officials said.

The initiative is expected to boost tourism, trade and digital commerce while making transactions faster, cheaper and more conve-

nient. A live UPI-QRIS corridor would be transformative for Indian businesses with trade or investment exposure in Indonesia and for the estimated 1.7 million Indian tourists who visit Bali and other Indonesian destinations each year.

India's digital public infrastructure has also emerged as a major area of collaboration. Indonesia's Open Network (ION) is inspired by India's ONDC model and aims to create a more open and inclusive digital marketplace for over 65 million micro, small and medium enterprises in Indonesia.

Built on the Beckn 2.0 open protocol, ION is expected to mark its first live transaction during Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto's summit meeting on July 7.

India's digital partnership with Indonesia is now moving beyond sharing successful models to helping build the country's next-generation digital backbone. Indonesia's ambitious

Digital Nusantara initiative aims to create a unified and interoperable national digital infrastructure, and Indian technology expertise is emerging as an important partner in this journey.

Indonesia also has a larger vision of becoming a producer and exporter of digital solutions across ASEAN rather than remaining only a technology consumer.

India's decade-long experience in creating open, inclusive and sovereign digital platforms offers valuable lessons as Indonesia works towards achieving this goal.

Cooperation is also expanding into financial markets. Both sides are exploring the use of Indian expertise in AI-powered market surveillance, digital investment platforms and technology-driven capital market reforms.

India's own experience in modernising its stock markets through technology is opening new avenues for collaboration with Indonesia, the officials said.

Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meals programme has drawn inspiration from India's Mid-Day Meal (PM POSHAN) scheme. Similarly, its Red and White Village Cooperatives initiative is exploring cooperation with India for affordable medicines through the Jan Aushadhi model, helping strengthen healthcare access in rural areas, they said.

INS Sudarshini participates in maritime spectacle in US for 250th anniversary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Indian Naval Sail Training Ship INS Sudarshini sailed into New York Port on 4 July to represent India at the United States International Naval Review 250 and Sail 4th 250 celebrations, the navy said here on Sunday.

During the spectacular Parade of Sail along the Hudson River, the iconic three-masted barque proudly flew the Indian Tricolour, celebrating India's rich maritime heritage and centuries-old seafaring traditions.

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



Indian Navy's Sail Training Ship, INS Sudarshini sailed into New York Harbour, during the Parade of Sail, representing India at the Sail 250 and US International Naval Review

CBI arrests absconding accused in 2002 Garhwa Fort idol theft and murder case

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi

In a significant breakthrough after more than two decades, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has arrested Ramnarayan alias Hyder, the last remaining absconding accused in the 2002 Garhwa Fort idol theft, dacoity and murder case, on Saturday, July 4, 2026, in Fatehpur district, Uttar Pradesh. With this, all four absconding accused named in the CBI chargesheet have now been traced.

The crime dates back to the intervening night of April 21-22, 2002, at the protected Garhwa Fort, an Archaeological Survey of

India (ASI) site near Shankargarh in Prayagraj. A gang of 11 persons, allegedly led by Vijay Kumar Shukla, committed dacoity at the fort. They brutally murdered watchman Vinod Kumar Srivastava by assaulting and gagging him to death, overpowered another watchman, broke open the store room, and stole a valuable ancient stone idol of Lord Buddha. The idol broke into two pieces during removal.

The stolen artefact was a headless standing Buddha statue, officially recorded by the ASI as taken from Garhwa Fort in 2002. Investigation revealed that the pieces were transported in a vehicle and sold by Vijay Kumar



Garhwa Fort, Prayagraj

Shukla to two persons for ₹2.20 lakh. They were later shifted to a godown in Mahipalpur, Delhi, and allegedly exported abroad.

Garhwa Fort preserves the ruins of a significant Gupta-period temple complex. The site is also associated with early 5th-century stone inscriptions issued by the Gupta emperors Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta I. It also housed Buddhist sculptures alongside Vaishnavite iconography, including Dashavatara panels.

The sculpture was a rare example of Gupta Buddhist stone carving from the Prayagraj region. Its substantial size and weight explain why it fractured into two pieces during the theft.

The CBI took over the case from Police Station, Shankargarh, and registered it on September 9, 2003, as Crime No. 43/2002 under Sections 396 and 201 of the Indian Penal Code.

After a thorough investigation, the CBI filed a chargesheet on December 22, 2005, against ten accused persons. Four of them, identified as Vijay Kumar Shukla, Ravi Karan, Suraj Bhan and Ramnarayan @ Hyder, remained absconding for over two decades.

To apprehend them, the CBI constituted dedicated teams that developed local intelligence, cultivated sources and carried out sustained surveillance and follow-up operations.

These efforts led to the arrest of Suraj Bhan on May 22, 2026, and Ravi Karan on June 2, 2026. Vijay Kumar Shukla was traced inside District Jail, Chitrakoot, where he is lodged in another Uttar Pradesh Police case.

Steps were initiated before the competent court in Lucknow on June 16, 2026, to secure his production in the present case.

With the arrest of Ramnarayan @ Hyder, all absconding accused have now been traced. They will face trial in accordance with the law. The successful conclusion of this long-pending case underscores the CBI's commitment to justice in crimes against India's cultural heritage.

Government committed to consultative approach to address employees' issues: Jitendra Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Sunday said the Centre remains committed to a consultative and responsive approach in addressing issues concerning Government employees and pensioners.

He said every genuine representation receives due consideration through the appropriate ministries/departments and that suggestions aimed at improving governance, simplifying procedures and enhancing administrative efficiency are always welcome.

Singh's assertion came during a meeting he had with a 19-member delegation, representing Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) and affiliated employees' organisations from across the country. The delegation called on the minister here to discuss a range of issues relating to Government employees, pensioners and administrative reforms. Singh, the Minister of State



for Personnel, said that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Government remains committed to a consultative and responsive approach in addressing issues concerning its employees and pensioners.

He said PM Modi has always prioritised making governance more transparent, efficient and citizen-centric through progressive administrative reforms.

The minister said that the continued dialogue with employee organisations plays an important role in identifying practical issues and evolving appropriate policy responses in the larger public interest. The delegation appreciated

Confederation (GENC), Public Sector Employees National Confederation, SHAR Employees Trade Union, and Space Employees Association, representing employees from defence establishments, public sector organisations, scientific institutions and other central Government services across the country, the statement said.

Singh appreciated the constructive role played by employee organisations in bringing service-related issues before the Government through institutional dialogue. He said regular interaction with stakeholders helps strengthen governance and facilitates timely resolution of issues concerning Government employees and pensioners.

The delegation thanked the minister, as a member of the Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM), for supporting the extension of deemed deputation of erstwhile Ordnance Factory employees till the date of retirement.

They described it as a landmark measure that has secured the future of thousands of employees following the restructuring of the Ordnance Factory Board, the ministry said.

The delegation comprised representatives of Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), Bharatiya Pratiraksha Mazdoor Sangh (BPMS), Government Employees National

J&K LG Sinha reviews Amarnath Yatra arrangements at Nunwan, Chandanwari

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Srinagar

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Sunday visited Nunwan base camp at Pahalgam in Anantnag district to review the arrangements the ongoing Amarnath Yatra.

The LG said there is heavy rush of pilgrims this year and the Jammu and Kashmir administration and Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board have made adequate arrangements for the pilgrims.

"Today, I visited the Nunwan Base Camp in Pahalgam to review the management of Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra with senior officials. The discussions focused on key aspects including movement of pilgrims, security measures, accommodation facilities, registration progress, and other logistical requirements essential for hassle-free holy Yatra," Sinha said in a post on X.



Pilgrims walk past a metal cutout bearing the Lord Shiva's image atop a poll as they proceed towards the holy cave shrine of Amarnath during the ongoing 'Amarnath Yatra' at Baltal area in Ganderbal district, Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday

Sinha asked officials to ensure pilgrims are made aware of the significance of valid registration.

"I directed officials to prioritise the safety, security, and convenience of all pilgrims, while ensuring that every devotee of Baba Barfani is made aware of the importance of valid registra-

tion with designated dates to minimise waiting times," he said.

The LG urged the unregistered pilgrims to be patient and wait for their turn to undertake the pilgrimage.

"During the visit, I interacted with pilgrims and assured them that Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board and all yatra

management departments are working tirelessly to ensure a safe, smooth, and hassle-free spiritual journey," he added.

Sinha also visited Chandanwari and reviewed the ground situation and pilgrim facilities at the camp. He interacted with the officials, pilgrims, volunteers, langar sevadars and other service providers.

He instructed the yatra management teams to examine pilgrim feedback and remain available for round-the-clock support.

"Through seamless whole of Government approach, we are leaving no stone unturned to provide excellent food and lodging to the devotees of Lord Shiva. I want every Yatri to have a blissful darshan and a profoundly enriching spiritual experience," the LG said.

During his visit, Sinha inspected the Base Hospital at Chandanwari to assess healthcare arrangements for the Yatri.

Don't treat education as commodity: Bengal CM to private institutions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari has sent out a strong message on maintaining quality in higher education, saying private institutions should not treat learning exclusively as a commercial commodity while pursuing returns on their investments.

Replying to a query on attracting foreign universities to the State during an interaction with the civil society members on

Saturday evening, he said his Government is ready to consider any good proposal a reputed foreign university comes up with.

"We can think of an Education City where we can have many higher educational institutions and industries. There can be both public and private universities. We can even invite foreign universities. If reputed foreign universities come with a good proposal, we are ready to consider it."

He, however, said that attracting reputed institu-

tions alone would not be enough and sharply criticised commercialisation of higher education and the alleged deterioration in standards of learning in several private institutions.

"Private educational institutions have made huge investments and naturally expect returns. But education cannot be treated like a commodity," he said.

Adhikari alleged that several private universities and medical colleges established over the past five to six years had resorted to



irregularities, including showing the same faculty members at multiple branches and arranging patients during inspections to obtain regulatory approvals.

He also alleged that several private engineering colleges lacked quality laboratories, libraries, equipment and qualified faculty, while many private ITIs had become centres where students got enrolled only to obtain certificates.

Drawing a contrast with the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Adhikari

said their credibility rested on uncompromising academic standards, quality faculty and strong placement records.

"People still rate IITs the highest because students secure campus placements and become the cream of society," he said.

Citing the recent warehouse collapse in Kolkata, the chief minister said his Government had entrusted the structural assessment to experts from IIT Kharagpur and RITES instead of depending solely on State agencies.

"Why did we call IIT

Kharagpur? Because credibility matters. Educational institutions cannot compromise on quality," he said.

Adhikari also alleged that nearly 500 admissions in private medical colleges were secured using fake NRI certificates, claiming such irregularities had been encouraged by managements and protected by the previous Government.

"I do not want students to suffer because they are already studying. But there can be no compromise on quality, evaluation systems, faculty or infrastructure," he added.

Hindi to be introduced as official language in Assam Assembly from Budget session: Speaker

TONY DASS
■ Guwahati

Hindi will be introduced as an official language in the Assam Legislative Assembly, alongside Assamese, English and Bodo from the Budget Session starting Monday, Speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass said.

Addressing a press conference here on Sunday, Dass said the decision was taken at the general purpose committee meeting held a day ago.

"The meeting was held on Saturday. It was decided that along with Assamese, English and Bodo, Hindi will be introduced as an official language in the Assembly," he said.

"Since Hindi is a '*Rashtra Bhasa*', as a sign of respect for it we have decided to introduce it in the



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma met Rajasthan Speaker Vasudev Devnani during a courtesy call at Lok Sewa Bhawan in Dispur on Sunday

House," the Speaker added.

Dass also said the committee had decided to rename ALA TV, which streams the proceedings of the Assembly, as 'Assam Bidhan Sabha TV'.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma dismissed speculation that

Bodo would be withdrawn as an official language in the Assembly.

In a post on X, Sarma said he had been informed by the Speaker that there was no proposal to discontinue the use of Bodo in the Assembly.

He said the Bodo language

is an inseparable part of Assam's rich cultural heritage and identity, adding, "It carries the history, traditions, and aspirations of the Bodo community and enriches the vibrant diversity that defines our State."

"The Government of Assam is fully committed to preserving and promoting the Bodo language. We will continue to make every possible effort to support its growth and ensure that it continues to flourish for generations to come," the chief minister added.

Bodo is among the official languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. It was notified as an Associate Official Language of the Assembly through the Assam Official Language (Amendment) Act, 2020.

Andhra's Rayalaseema emerges as investment hub with 275 projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Amaravati

Andhra Pradesh has attracted proposed investments worth over ₹4.5 lakh crore across 172 SIPB-approved projects in Rayalaseema, while another 103 proposals signed during the CII Partnership Summit have taken the region's investment pipeline to more than 275 projects capable of generating over 3.5 lakh employment opportunities, sources said on Sunday.

The investment push comes as the Andhra Pradesh Government seeks to transform the drought-prone region into a major industrial and manufacturing hub through large-scale investments, infrastructure development and cluster-based industrialisation.

"Rayalaseema is emerging as a major industrial growth engine with investment commitments exceeding ₹4.58 lakh crore across more than 275 projects, reflecting the Government's focus on region-balanced development," sources said.

The Government is creating specialised manufacturing ecosystems across Rayalaseema instead of concentrating industrial development in a few locations, while strengthening infrastructure and skilling to generate long-term employment.

The launch of the ₹16,350-crore JSW Rayalaseema Integrated Steel Plant in Kadapa on Friday marked the latest milestone in the region's



industrial transformation.

Rayalaseema, once associated with drought, water scarcity and migration despite its abundant mineral resources, land availability and strategic location between Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad, is now at the centre of the State's investment-led development strategy, sources said.

The 172 State Investment Promotion Board (SIPB)-approved projects alone are expected to attract investments worth ₹4.58 lakh crore and generate nearly 2.76 lakh jobs.

Along with the 103 investment proposals signed during the CII Partnership Summit, the projects are expected to create more than 3.57 lakh employment opportunities across the region.

Tirupati is emerging as an electronics and advanced manufacturing hub, led by Sri City, which has attracted investments from companies, including LG Electronics, Daikin, Carrier Global and RRP Electronics.

Carrier Global's proposed ₹1,000-crore facility is expect-

ed to generate around 3,000 jobs, while Royal Enfield's ₹2,500-crore manufacturing complex is expected to strengthen the automotive ecosystem.

According to sources, the State Government also envisions Tirupati emerging as a Space City with future investments in the aerospace sector.

Similarly, Sri Sathya Sai district is attracting major renewable energy investments led by Reliance Industries' ₹51,300-crore energy project alongside Greenko, Chinta Green Energy, Adani Hydro Energy and HFCL.

Kadapa district is strengthening its position as a steel and mineral-based manufacturing hub with the JSW steel plant, proposed IT cluster and electronics manufacturing ecosystem at Kopparthi.

Kurnool district is emerging as a semiconductor and Drone City with the proposed ₹22,976-crore Indichip Semiconductors project, logistics infrastructure and an expanding drone manufacturing ecosystem.

Maharashtra TET paper leak: Three more held in UP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thane

The Maharashtra police have arrested three more persons from Uttar Pradesh in connection with the alleged Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) paper leak case, bringing the total number of individuals in custody to 10, officials said on Sunday.

A State-appointed Special Investigation Team on Friday arrested Nareshkumar Mahore, Sanjaykumar Sharma, and Babulal Kushwaha, all employees of an Agra-based private printing firm, a police official said.

The trio allegedly smuggled question papers out of a secure facility during the



printing process. Police also recovered three live cartridges from Sharma.

They were brought to Bhiwandi in Thane district, where the alleged paper leak first came to light, on Saturday. A magistrate remanded them to police custody until July 9.

With the latest arrests,

ten individuals have been taken into custody so far, said police.

The SIT is currently tracking financial and digital trails to apprehend the suspected kingpins, Bijendra Kumar Gupta and Sonukumar Kishanlal, the official said.

The TET 2026 was post-

Rains disrupt Mumbai airport operations for an hour

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Four IndiGo flights were cancelled, and 13 arriving aircraft of various operators were diverted to nearby airports as heavy rains and gusty winds forced Mumbai International Airport authorities to suspend all runway operations for an hour on Sunday, sources said.

The 13 flights that were diverted due to bad weather, however, landed back in Mumbai later, they added.

At the same time, 90 per cent of outbound flights were departing with a delay of an average of 65 minutes, and 45 per cent of the

incoming flights were arriving late at Mumbai International Airport, according to the latest data from live flight tracking website flightrader24.com, which was impacting passengers severely.

Earlier, Mumbai International Airport, which is jointly owned by Adani Group and Airports Authority of India (AAI), in a statement said, "At approximately 10.17 am, adverse weather conditions, including strong gusty winds of up to 42 knots and reduced visibility due to heavy rain, impacted runway operations." As per procedure, runway operations were "temporarily suspended" to ensure the safety of



passengers, aircraft and ground personnel, the private airport operator said in the statement. Following improvement in weather conditions, normal runway operations resumed after an hour, it added.

The four IndiGo flights that were cancelled are 6E 395 (Delhi-Mumbai), 6E 5273 (Mumbai-Indore), 6E 552 (Indore-

Mumbai and 6E 6613 (Mumbai-Delhi), as per sources.

"Bad weather over Delhi and Mumbai has impacted the flight schedule. We are closely monitoring the weather... we request that you stay updated on your flight status," IndiGo said in a post on X.

IndiGo, however, did not mention the four flights which were cancelled at Mumbai international airport.

According to Air Traffic Control (ATC) sources, the airport handles 980 to 1,000 flights a day, with an average of 48 air traffic movements, 24 arrivals and 24 departures per hour.

Prashant Kishor to contest Bankipur Assembly bypoll



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Patna

Jan Suraaaj Party on Sunday declared Prashant Kishor its candidate for the July 30 Bankipur Assembly by-poll in Bihar.

The party's decision was announced by its state president Manoj Bharti, following a core committee meeting.

The Bankipur assembly by-election will be held on July 30, and votes polled will be counted on August 3. The last date for filing of nominations is July 13.

Janata Janshakti Dal (JJD) chief Tej Pratap Yadav had earlier nominated social activist Veena Manvi as its candidate for the bypoll in the seat.

The seat was vacated by BJP president Nitin Nabin after he got elected to the Rajya Sabha.

The BJP, of which the seat is a stronghold, is yet to formally announce a candidate but is reportedly mulling over leaders such as Ajay Alok, Neel Ratan Ghosh and Ajeet Kumar Lali.

Kishor's party could not secure a single seat in the 2025 Assembly elections.

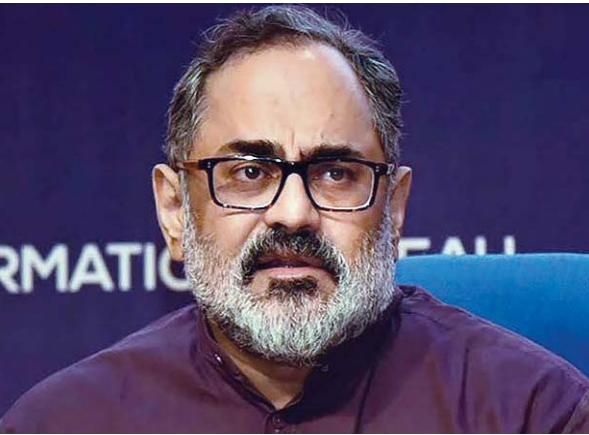
Rajeev Chandrasekhar blames Congress, CPI(M) for appeasement politics in Kerala

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

BJP Kerala president Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Sunday accused the Congress and the CPI(M) of indulging in "vote-bank and appeasement politics," alleging that they had led to the "radicalisation" of a section of the youth in the state.

In a post on X, Chandrasekhar referred to the recent arrest of a Kerala youth for allegedly posting anti-national remarks celebrating the killing of a Malayali victim in the Palagalam terror attack.

"How does a young Malayali get brainwashed into



celebrating the brutal, cold-blooded murder of a fellow Malayali in the Palagalam terror attack?" he asked.

Describing the arrest as a "wake-up call," the BJP leader alleged that it was not an isolated incident but the result

of "of appeasement, radicalisation and Congress-CPM's political hypocrisy."

He alleged that the two parties had prioritised vote-bank politics over national interest, mainstreamed radical forces, and questioned expressions of patriotism, thereby creating "an ecosystem where patriotism is questioned, and radicalisation is normalised."

Claiming that such politics was dangerous for both Kerala and the country, Chandrasekhar said the State's youth deserved "a future built on skills, opportunity, innovation and patriotism; not hatred, radicalisation and division."

DMK always remains protective fortress for minorities, Muslims: Udhayanidhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chennai

DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin on Sunday said the party would always stand as a protective shield for minorities, despite malicious political campaigns.

Speaking at the wedding of DMK Headquarter's Secretary 'Thurai mugam' Kaja's granddaughter in Chennai's Thiruverkadu, Udhayanidhi took a veiled dig at political opportunists, remarking that "some people left us as soon as a sofa arrived".

He contrasted this with the steadfast loyalty of the cadre and minority communities who continue to stand with DMK.

"No matter who tries to separate us or what slanders are spread, the DMK will always remain a protective fortress for minorities and Islamic people," he stated.



Addressing the current political climate, he said, "In these times of political disaster, DMK chief MK Stalin will stand by you, protect Tamil Nadu, and redeem the nation."

Udhayanidhi said he attended the wedding on behalf of Chief Minister MK Stalin, who was originally scheduled to preside over the function.

Recalling Kaja's 37-year association

with the party, Udhayanidhi shared an anecdote from the 1989 Assembly elections when Kaja was an AIADMK candidate pitted against the late DMK patriarch M Karunanidhi in the Harbour (Thurai mugam) constituency.

"Even before the vote counting concluded, Kaja, as an opposition candidate, went and garlanded Kalaigannar to congratulate him," Udhayanidhi recalled. "Later, he joined the DMK and has worked tirelessly as a true cadre."

He noted that Chief Minister MK Stalin often refers to Kaja and another senior functionary, Poochi S Murugan, as the "two pillars of Anna Arivalayam", the DMK headquarters.

The event saw significant participation from the Islamic community, providing a platform for the DMK leader to reiterate the ruling party's commitment to minority welfare in the State.



Editor's
TAKE

United in celebration, divided in spirit

As America celebrates its 250th anniversary the larger question is: can a nation so divided at home continue to project leadership abroad

America turned 250 this weekend, and the birthday came wrapped in fireworks, heat warnings, and a president who could not resist turning it into his own campaign. That combination – genuine national milestone, genuine logistical chaos, and unmistakable self-promotion – tells you almost everything about where the country stands as it enters its next quarter-millennium. The official festivities were real enough.

Crowds gathered on the National Mall after it reopened despite a punishing heatwave. But the anniversary's defining image came a day earlier at Mount Rushmore, where Donald Trump delivered a speech billed as a tribute to American exceptionalism that veered, as several outlets noted, into warnings that communism poses a “mortal threat” to American liberty – an odd note of menace for a birthday toast.

It fit a pattern: at an earlier Freedom 250 kickoff in Iowa, Trump told supporters of his political opponents, “I hate them. I cannot stand them because I really believe they hate our country.”

Trump has been building a parallel apparatus – Freedom 250, a White House-created entity he personally chairs – that sits awkwardly alongside the congressionally chartered America250 commission. The Interior Department funneled at least \$68.3 million in taxpayer money to the effort, while Freedom 250 solicited corporate sponsorships up to \$10 million from companies like Palantir, Boeing, and United Airlines – firms that also hold hefty federal contracts.

House Democrats have called it a “hotbed of corruption”; Freedom 250 calls the charge false. Either way, a shared national anniversary has been split into two competing brands, one of them built around a single man.

Which raises the harder question the fireworks can't hide: is any of this evidence of a country still capable of running the world, or of one too distracted by its own internal fights to notice it's slipping?

The honest answer is that both camps have real evidence. Beijing's leadership calls America a “fading giant,” and there's no shortage of American commentators cataloguing debt, dysfunction, and eroding alliances to match. But the counterargument is equally solid: no rival, China included, has matched America's combination of military reach, financial centrality, and technological depth, and polling shows Americans themselves remain divided rather than resigned about their country's trajectory.

What's genuinely new isn't decline – it's the spectacle of a leader treating a shared civic milestone as personal marketing.

Empires have survived worse than a gaudy sponsor list. Whether they survive a citizenry that no longer agrees on what the anniversary is for is a different, and much older, American question.

A life devoted to India's unity & progress

If there was one ideal that defined Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee's public life above all else, it was the indivisibility of India. He stood firm during the upheaval of Partition to ensure that West Bengal remained an integral part of India



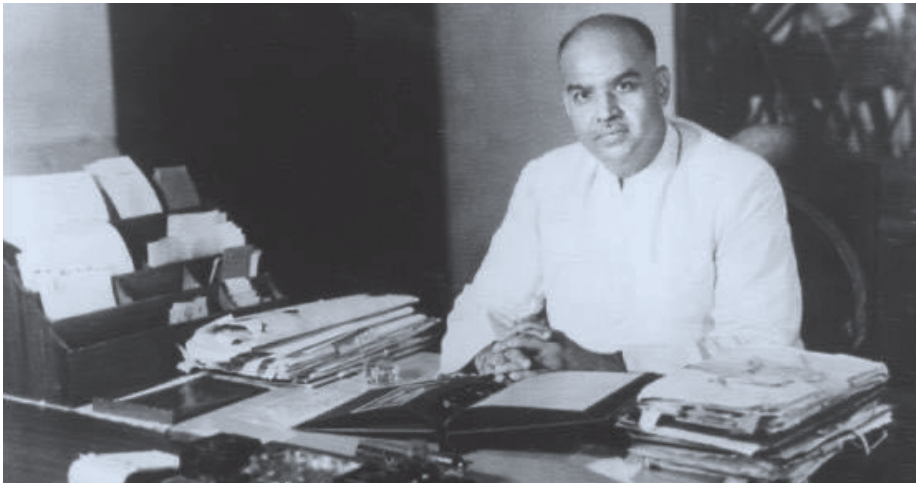
NARENDRA MODI

Today, 6th July, is a special day for countless people who cherish the ideals of nationalism and selfless service. We commemorate the 125th birth anniversary of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, whose life remains a timeless example of courage and unwavering commitment to Maa Bharti. Few leaders in modern India embodied the seamless confluence of intellect, public service and moral conviction as profoundly as Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee.

The young Syama Prasad was born into circumstances that could easily have assured him a protected and comfortable life. His father, Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee, was among the foremost educationists and intellectuals of his age. Yet, while destiny placed before him a path of privilege, his conscience led him towards one of sacrifice and national service. He was convinced that he could not remain a mute spectator to the turbulence of his times, be it fighting colonialism, communalism, humanitarian challenges and more. Along this journey, he endured profound personal tragedies, including the loss of an infant child and, later, his wife. Yet, these tragedies only deepened his resolve and strengthened his unwavering commitment to serve.

If there was one ideal that defined Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee's public life above all else, it was the indivisibility of India. He stood firm during the upheaval of Partition to ensure that West Bengal remained an integral part of India. A few years later, that very conviction drew him to Jammu and Kashmir. Imprisonment did not deter him and isolation did not diminish him. His life came to an abrupt end in detention, far from the countless people whose cause he had made his own. There are moments in history when an individual's final sacrifice transcends politics and enters the realm of national memory. Dr. Mookerjee's last journey remains one such moment. Acharya Vinoba Bhave said that Dr. Mookerjee sacrificed himself for a cause in which he had faith. Years later, the revocation of Articles 370 and 35(A) in 2019 was the most fitting tribute to his martyrdom.

Dr. Mookerjee put India First and Indian values first. And he did it by building institutions and nurturing systems that defied conventional mindsets of those times. He became the youngest Vice Chancellor of the University of Calcutta. In his unique style, he brought positive changes that were patriotic and futuristic. Addressing a conference of educators, Dr. Mookerjee put it wonderfully when he said, “It is incorrect to look upon educational institutions as factories to produce potential clerks and low-paid staff. We have to



cottage industries, artisans and textile workers found in him an equally committed champion.

Here, I would like to share a personal experience. The Sindri plant, which Dr. Mookerjee worked to establish with a clear vision of self-reliance, was ignored by those who ran the nation for several decades. I feel honoured that our Government had the opportunity to contribute to its revival. It was indeed among the most special moments to have been there for that programme.

India's civilisational tradition has long celebrated dialogue and discussions. Dr. Mookerjee embodied this

democratic spirit. He joined Pandit Nehru's Cabinet, believing that the task of nation-building in the early years transcended political differences. He served with sincerity and a constructive spirit. But when he felt that questions of national importance demanded a different course, he relinquished office with dignity and devoted himself wholeheartedly to the political work he believed the nation required.

75 years ago, Pandit Nehru brought the First Amendment, which was a direct assault on free speech. Dr. Mookerjee was among its staunchest critics. He understood fully what the Congress was capable of doing. And he was proven right. Those who brought the First Amendment 75 years ago imposed the Emergency in 1975 and 50 years ago, brought in the 42nd Amendment Act, which again struck at the core of liberal democratic values.

Dr. Mookerjee also stood out for his humanitarian efforts. When the most tragic famine struck Bengal in 1943, Dr. Mookerjee immersed himself in serving those affected. He ensured that several canteens and relief centres were opened to feed people. On one hand, he was deeply shaken by the plight of his people while on the other, he was repulsed by the insensitivity of the colonial rulers. He even wrote a book, Panchasher Manwantar, in which he expressed his angst. When a super cyclone hit Medinipur in 1942, his efforts to restore normalcy were widely lauded.

Speaking at a college in Kolkata, Dr. Mookerjee urged the youth, “Whatever work you undertake, do it seriously, thoroughly and well; never leave it half-done or undone, never feel yourself satisfied unless and until you have given it your very best.” As India advances towards the goal of a Viksit

Bharat, the finest tribute we can pay him is to strive every day to build the strong, united, self-confident and compassionate India that he so deeply believed in. And knowing today's youth, I am certain they will rise to the occasion and do exactly that.

DR MOOKERJEE ALSO STOOD OUT FOR HIS HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS. WHEN THE MOST TRAGIC FAMINE STRUCK BENGAL IN 1943, DR. MOOKERJEE IMMERSSED HIMSELF IN SERVING THOSE AFFECTED. HE ENSURED THAT SEVERAL CANTEENS AND RELIEF CENTRES WERE OPENED TO FEED PEOPLE

The writer is the Prime Minister of India

Mindset that shapes our lives



SHARMILA VAIDYA

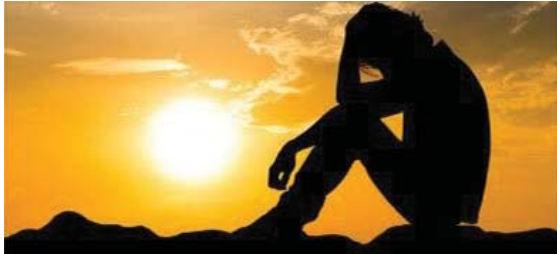
2ND OPINION

“Mindset” is a powerful word. It influences the choices we make, the way we face life's challenges, and how we interact with others each day.

These choices, challenges, and interactions reflect either a positive or negative mindset. It is this way of thinking that we call “mindset”. Ultimately, it is the kind of perspective we bring which shapes our attitudes, influences our actions, and determines who we are.

I have two friends, who when faced with the similar circumstances, made different choices, and ended up with completely different outcomes. It started, when they were laid off from work, and were devastated. Both had families to support and children in college.

Finally, a couple of months later, they found jobs. However, it was out of town. Relocating to a different city



was a difficult decision. One friend decided to move with his family. The other friend was reluctant. He was hopeful that given more time, he would find a job in the same city.

For the family that moved, life gradually got back to normal. On the other hand, the friend who stayed back was unemployed for quite a few months. This resulted in him taking a loan, selling a car and not to mention the mental anguish and turmoil that he and his family went through.

This is a good example of how both friends state of mind influenced their choices and affected their lives in completely different ways. While one saw it as an opportunity for a better life, the other saw it as the end of the road. Their mindset was not the same, which prompted them to make choices that led to different outcomes.

There are many such situations that we encounter in our daily lives or even go through them ourselves. In the end, it all comes down to the choices we make, which, in turn can make or break a situation.

However, what about people with greater financial resources. Since they have more money at their disposal, we can assume, that they have a different mindset, so it will automatically be easier for them to make desirable choices. Research shows that while money might contribute to happiness, it does not guarantee a positive attitude or optimism. Other factors like relationships, health, purpose in life, are also important and can determine our mindset.

Another important aspect that depends on our state of mind is the kind of company we keep. People who are upbeat and cheerful are more fun to be around as opposed to people who are pessimistic and constantly complaining about their lives.

Who would you like to be with and why? The lens through which we see the world and respond to it is crucial. Our mindset influences the choices we make, and if left unchecked, can create a “ripple effect” which can grow exponentially unless there is a conscious effort to stop it. After all this discussion about choice, positive and negative attitude, optimistic and pessimistic people, it all comes down to our state of mind. While, we cannot always control the circumstances we face in our lives, we can choose how we respond to them. The encouraging fact is that life is not fixed, it can be changed. This is very well captured in the following proverb, “we cannot change the wind, but we can adjust the sails.”

The writer is educator and author of children books based in the USA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Prevention is the best cure

World Zoonoses Day, observed on July 6, commemorates Louis Pasteur's historic administration of the first rabies vaccine in 1885 and serves as a reminder of the continuing threat posed by diseases transmitted between animals and humans. The Covid-19 pandemic underscored how devastating zoonotic diseases can become. Rabies, anthrax, brucellosis and bird flu continue to threaten public health, while poor sanitation, unsafe food practices and increasing human encroachment into wildlife habitats have heightened the risk of new outbreaks.

According to the World Health Organization, nearly 60 per cent of known infectious diseases originate in animals, highlighting the need for coordinated preventive action. Farmers, livestock handlers, veterinarians and others working closely with animals require greater awareness of zoonotic risks and access to vaccination and preventive healthcare. Governments should strengthen disease surveillance, improve veterinary infrastructure and promote the One Health approach that integrates human, animal and environmental health. Investing in prevention, public awareness and international cooperation is far more effective and economical than responding to pandemics.

GANAPATHI BHAT | AKOLA

India-Japan ties enters a more strategic phase

Apropos “Delhi and Tokyo rewrite their strategic compact” (July 4), the latest India-Japan summit marks a significant evolution in one of Asia's most trusted partnerships. Beyond ceremonial warmth and diplomatic symbolism, both countries have recognised the need to strengthen cooperation in response to an increasingly uncertain geopolitical environment. The emphasis has shifted from development assistance to economic security, resilient supply chains, clean energy, advanced technology and defence collaboration. The signing of twelve agreements, alongside the first joint defence initiative, reflects growing strategic trust.

India and Japan are seeking to reduce excessive dependence on China for critical technologies, semiconductors, rare earths and pharmaceutical inputs. Japan contributes capital, technological excellence and manufacturing expertise, while India offers scale, skilled talent and a rapidly expanding market.

The large number of business agreements concluded during the Economic Forum further demonstrates investor confidence in this partnership. By aligning their economic and strategic priorities, Delhi and Tokyo are building a durable framework for regional stability, prosperity and long-term resilience.

K CHIDANAND KUMAR | BENGALURU

Iran's funeral diplomacy

The funeral of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is expected to carry significance well beyond religious observance. By linking the ceremony with Muharram and the symbolism of sacrifice associated with Imam Husayn, Tehran seeks to reinforce themes of resistance, national unity and continuity with the ideals of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. At a time of economic hardship and geopolitical uncertainty, such symbolism is intended to strengthen domestic resolve while projecting stability to the outside world.

The presence of international delegations, including India's representation by Minister of State for External Affairs Pabitra Margherita and Bihar Governor Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Syed Ata Hasnain, reflects the importance many countries attach to maintaining diplomatic engagement with Iran despite continuing regional tensions. The absence of an official US delegation highlights the persistence of strained relations between Washington and Tehran. For India, participation is a prudent diplomatic gesture that preserves channels of communication with a key regional partner while reaffirming its independent foreign policy. Such balanced engagement serves India's long-term strategic and energy interests.

R.S. NARULA | PATIALA

PIC TALK



Gajan Sanyasis take part in rituals for the Dharamraj festival procession, in Birbhum, West Bengal PHOTO: PTI

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE



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PAKISTAN AS CHINA'S DEFENCE PROXY RAISES STRATEGIC CONCERNS

The report highlighting Pakistan's growing role in promoting Chinese defence equipment deserves serious attention. Islamabad is no longer merely a buyer of Chinese military hardware but is increasingly emerging as Beijing's preferred intermediary for expanding its strategic footprint across West Asia and Africa.

The proposed sale of JF-17 fighter aircraft and associated military systems to Libya illustrates how China can strengthen its defence-industrial presence while maintaining a degree of diplomatic distance. Such transfers could complicate regional conflicts, undermine international arms embargoes and intensify geopolitical rivalries.

With more than 80 per cent of Pakistan's recent arms imports

originating from China, the two countries have developed an exceptionally close defence partnership.

Pakistan is now actively marketing Chinese-origin aircraft, drones, air-defence systems and related equipment to countries across the Middle East and Africa. As shifting regional security dynamics create new opportunities, Beijing appears determined to leverage Pakistan as its gateway into emerging defence markets.

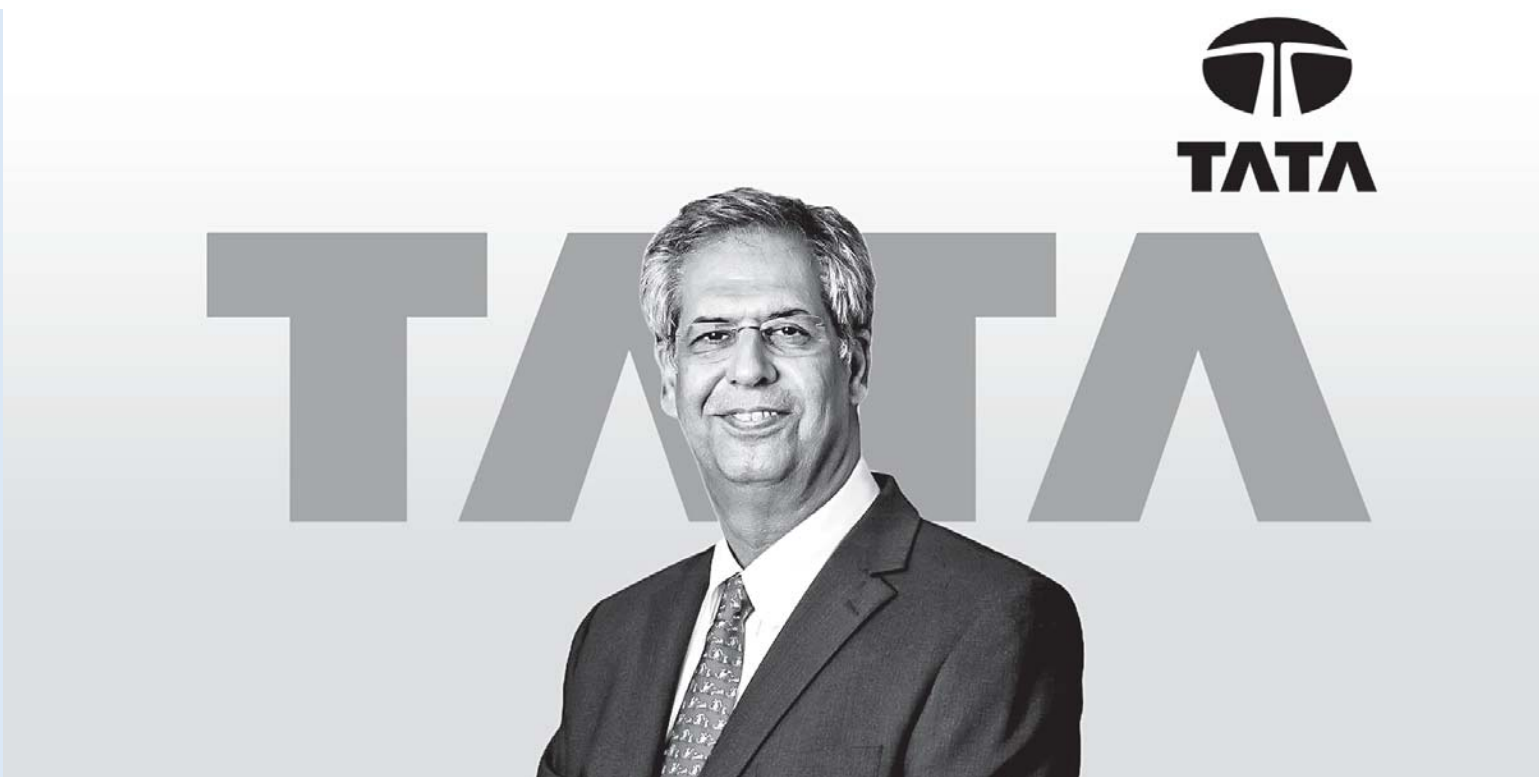
This strategy extends China's influence beyond conventional diplomacy and could reshape the regional balance of power. India and other stakeholders must closely monitor these developments and recalibrate their strategic responses accordingly.

BHAGWAN THADANI, MUMBAI

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

The Tata legacy is India’s pride

The House of Tata is the grand vision of India's ethical Parsi business community: a legacy of trusteeship, integrity, and nation-building that must remain rooted in its founding values to continue serving India's long-term national interest.



PRASHANT TEWARI

The turbulence within the Tata Group and its holding structure, Tata Sons, is no ordinary corporate dispute. It concerns the future of one of India's greatest industrial institutions, a conglomerate built over more than 150 years through vision, philanthropy, discipline, and national commitment. Founded by legendary Jamsetji Tata and elevated to global stature under J. R. D. Tata, the Tata name became synonymous with ethical capitalism and nation-building. The institution survived colonial rule, socialist India, liberalisation, and global competition because it possessed something beyond commercial strength: moral legitimacy and civilisational trust.

That moral capital, however, has faced repeated strain in the last decade. Many observers believe the abrupt and unceremonious removal of Cyrus Mistry in 2016 marked a defining rupture in the Tata ethos. Mistry, despite representing the Shapoorji Pallonji family that held nearly 18.4% of Tata Sons, was widely regarded as one of the most capable and understated corporate leaders of his generation. His removal triggered a bitter legal and emotional battle that eventually reached the Supreme Court. While the courts ruled in favour of Tata Sons, the larger damage was reputational. For the first time, India's most respected business house appeared vulnerable to opaque boardroom politics and personality-driven governance.

The return of Ratan Tata after Mistry's exit restored temporary stability, but the controversy permanently altered public perception. Ratan Tata remained an immensely admired public figure, yet critics increasingly questioned whether emotional decision-making and excessive centralisation weakened institutional processes within the group. The tragedy deepened further after Cyrus Mistry's untimely death in 2022, which transformed a corporate dispute into a lingering moral question within Indian industry. Today, after Ratan Tata's passing, the Tata establishment faces another difficult phase. Internal tensions have emerged within Tata Trusts, the philanthropic entities that control roughly 66 per cent of Tata Sons. Disagreements over governance, succession, board appointments, and strategic direction have increasingly spilled into the public domain. Reports suggest divisions among trustees, including Noel Tata, N. Chandrasekaran, Mehli Mistry, Venu Srinivasan, Darius Khambata and others over board representation and the future structure of governance. The conflict has intensified over questions such as whether Tata Sons should eventually be listed, how the Trusts should exercise authority, and who should shape the future of the conglomerate. Noel Tata reportedly raised concerns regarding losses in businesses such as Air India and Tata Digital, while debates over trustee appointments and succession planning have further widened internal fault lines. The exit and sidelining of Mehli Mistry, a long-time confidant of Ratan Tata and cousin of Cyrus Mistry,

THE TATA GROUP IS BIGGER THAN INDIVIDUALS, LARGER THAN BOARDROOM CAMPS, AND FAR MORE IMPORTANT THAN TRANSIENT EGOS. PRESERVING ITS LEGACY REQUIRES RECONCILIATION, INSTITUTIONAL DISCIPLINE, AND LEADERSHIP ROOTED IN CONTINUITY AND TRUST

The writer is Chairman & Editorial Board Member of *The Pioneer*. Views presented are personal

has also sharpened perceptions of factionalism inside the Trusts.

These developments are troubling not merely because they involve boardroom rivalries, but because the Tata Group is systemically important to India itself. The conglomerate contributes roughly 4 per cent of India's GDP through its vast ecosystem of over 100 companies. Its listed firms collectively command a market capitalisation exceeding \$365 billion: larger than the GDP of nations such as Finland, Greece, Qatar, and Pakistan. The group employs hundreds of thousands directly and supports millions indirectly. Giants like Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Titan Company, Trent and Air India are not merely corporations; they are strategic national assets. This is precisely why the current turbulence cannot be treated as an internal family quarrel alone. The Tata Group represents India's corporate credibility before global investors. Prolonged instability at the top can affect market confidence, employment sentiment, foreign investment perception, and long-term strategic projects including semiconductors, aviation, digital infrastructure, and manufacturing expansion.

In this context, Noel Tata emerges as perhaps the most natural and institutionally acceptable successor to anchor the future of the Tata empire. Unlike external technocrats or transient executives, Noel Tata carries both family continuity and deep operational experience. Over decades, he quietly built successful businesses within the group, especially through Trent and Tata International. He lacks the flamboyance associated with some corporate leaders, but that may actually be his strength. The Tata Group historically flourished under understated stewardship rather than personality cults.

Equally important is the symbolic dimension. The Tata institution was built upon a distinct Parsi legacy of philanthropy, moderation, trusteeship, and long-term thinking. Many within the community and the wider business ecosystem believe the continuity of that ethos matters deeply to preserving the soul of the institution. Noel Tata possesses both lineage legitimacy and managerial maturity, making him uniquely placed to restore equilibrium between the Trusts, Tata Sons, minority shareholders, and the broader public.

The government of the day and India's business establishment, therefore, have a larger responsibility. This does not mean interference in private enterprise, but rather encouraging stability, transparency, and institutional continuity in a conglomerate whose health is intertwined with India's economic confidence. Reports already suggest senior government figures have informally encouraged reconciliation among competing factions.

The roadmap forward must involve three critical reforms. First, governance structures within Tata Trusts and Tata Sons must become more transparent and rules-based, reducing the scope for personality-driven conflicts. Second, a stable succession architecture should be institutionalised to avoid recurring uncertainty. Third, strategic focus must return to operational excellence rather than internal factional battles.

India cannot afford to see its most respected corporate jewel descend into prolonged instability. The Tata Group is bigger than individuals, larger than boardroom camps, and far more important than transient egos. Preserving its legacy requires reconciliation, institutional discipline, and leadership rooted in continuity and trust. At this crucial moment, Noel Tata appears best positioned to provide precisely that stabilising anchor for the future of corporate India.

How new criminal laws are transforming policing



AJAY SINGHAL

not just as an administrator but as a practitioner-standing alongside my team on the front lines. Haryana now leads in rolling out new criminal laws (NCL), and I saw every step of this transition up close. We retrained investigators, redesigned workflows, and embraced emerging technology. The learning curve was steep, but reform was essential. Think about this: when IPC 420 became BNS 318, and IPC 302 became BNS 101, investigators-many with limited education and formal training-had to unlearn decades-old procedures and master entirely new sections almost overnight. To understand the magnitude of this transformation, it is important to consider India's longstanding challenges:

Replacing endless delay with accountability: India's biggest criminal justice problem is delay. More than 5.58 crore cases are pending; only 21,285 judges have to handle them. Justice can move at a crawl. Public trust erodes. A famous Hindi movie dialogue-'Tarikh pe Tarikh'-is not merely cinematic exaggeration. It's more like a documentary description. BNSS directly reduces delays by setting enforceable timelines. Investigators must finish probes into sexual offences against women within two months, and judges must deliver verdicts within set periods after arguments. The law restricts adjournments, and if investigations lag, statutory bail gives the accused automatic rights after set deadlines. Technology strengthens these new timelines. Digital evidence platforms like e-Sakshya, an electronic management system, create time-stamped, geo-tagged crime scene records. Evidence integrity is secured. Justice becomes accountable to the clock.

Addressing the undertrial crisis: Picture waiting in jail for years without conviction. That's reality for nearly 76 per cent of India's prisoners: undertrials hoping for justice, yet stuck in limbo. The new framework brings time-bound investigations. Default bail comes into play if deadlines are missed. Video conferencing for remand proceedings has become common. Release must be considered after an undertrial serves a set portion of the maximum sentence. These measures uphold the essence of liberty.

From witness testimony to scientific evidence: Imagine testifying in court, knowing your memory or safety could sway the outcome. In the past, heavy reliance on oral testimony left cases vulnerable-witnesses sometimes turned hostile or were intimidated. The new laws lift forensic and electronic evidence to a higher standard. Forensic investigations are now mandatory for serious offences. Digital records are more broadly admissible. Scientific investigation methods receive more reliance. Memory matters less. The evidentiary foundation grows stronger. In Haryana, mobile forensic teams get to crime scenes directly. SOC experts lift evidence independently. Fingerprints, DNA, digital footprints, and other traces are preserved before they deteriorate. The evidentiary chain is stronger. The truth has a better chance in court.

Recognising the crimes of the twenty-first century: Colonial codes never anticipated cybercrime, organised syndicates, or digital financial networks. Nor did they foresee mob lynching. The BNS explicitly addresses these threats. Protections for women and children are also bolstered. Key safeguards from Supreme Court judgments-such as mandatory FIR registration and arrest protections-are now statutory, not just judicial interpretations. Citizens get statutory rights. They are not left to wait for court clarification. Fifth, making justice accessible from the FIR: Have you or someone you know hesitated to report a crime because of unclear rules about where to file a complaint?

For generations, such jurisdictional disputes kept many silent, steering them away from seeking justice. Zero FIR allows a complaint to be filed at any station, regardless of where the crime happened. Electronic FIR (e-FIR) lets people file complaints digitally-no need to visit the police station. Witness protection, video-link testimony, and measures to conceal identity all help. Decriminalisation moves these goals forward. Community service for low-harm offences helps. Crowded prisons become less so; the stigma of a criminal conviction is reduced for minor offences. These steps point toward a more humane, modern legal framework.

How Haryana has made it to the top

Legal reform matters only when put into practice. Haryana recently became the top-ranked state implementing the new criminal laws, with a score of 94.42 as of June 21. This result is not mere symbolism. It is the product of sustained investment in capacity building. This ranking rests on four pillars: administrative reforms, operational efficiency, integration of ICT (information and communication technology), and interoperability with the Criminal Justice System (CJS). Every investigating officer now operates under the new framework and is guided by the I.O.

Mobile Application, Mobile forensic units, stronger witness protection, and digital tools now directly support field investigators. These advances stretch beyond policing. Electronic summons, digital case management, and video conferencing save money, workforce, and time. These tools boost efficiency and transparency. Haryana's e-Challan system cut CO2 emissions by 8,165 kg in four months. E-Summons and video-conference hearings saved Rs 26 crore within six to seven months. Person-hours saved now go to investigation and patrol-no more escorting undertrials or filing physical papers. Scientific thinking and evidence-focused work have grown. For police, our role in this shift is more than administrative. It is moral too. Using mobile forensic units tells victims: their truth matters. Issuing e-summons demonstrates respect for witnesses' time. Closing a case with a digital chargesheet backed by DNA, voice samples, CCTV footage, and forensic reports shows the court that the police value truth over convenience. The new criminal laws have provided us with tools. Still, it is essential that every stakeholder-police, prosecution, FSL, judiciary, government, and the public-uses them with rigour, integrity, and urgency. Isn't the real goal a justice system you can trust-where speed meets fairness? Ultimately, we want trials that are not just faster but worthy of a sovereign people. Citizens should approach justice with confidence, not fear.

The writer is Director General of Police, Haryana

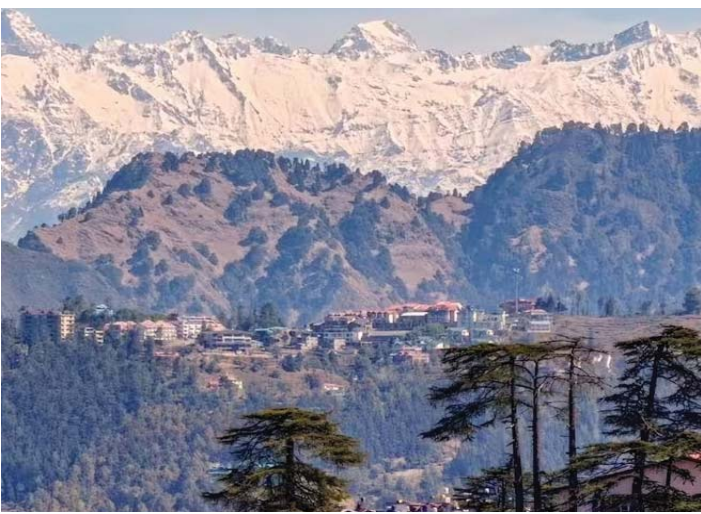


RISHABH MISHRA

neither in the past nor in the present. Certainly, scientific advancement has enabled us to anticipate potential dangers and make preparations in advance to reduce their risks. However, this is much like creating the causes of destruction ourselves, nurturing them knowingly or unknowingly, repeatedly inviting disaster, and then searching for ways to protect ourselves from it. We are talking about earthquakes, a natural disaster that has recently caused devastation in Venezuela, where more than 1,500 people have reportedly lost their lives, hundreds have been seriously injured, and thousands are still missing. The scale of destruction can be understood from the fact that after a series of powerful tremors, one city in Venezuela was almost completely destroyed. Earthquakes measuring magnitudes of 7.2 and 7.5 caused widespread devastation. According to research, around 500,000 earthquakes occur worldwide every year. Of these,

only about 100,000 are felt by people, and approximately 100 cause significant damage. Between 2000 and 2025, an average of 134 earthquakes of magnitude 6.0 to 6.9 occurred annually. In comparison, earthquakes with magnitudes between 7.0 and 7.9, like the two that struck Venezuela, occurred less than 14 times per year on average. Earthquakes of magnitude 8.0 or higher are even rarer, with only about one such event occurring worldwide each year on average. In some years over recent decades, no earthquake above magnitude 8.0 occurred at all. The most powerful earthquake in recorded history struck the Biobio region of Chile in 1960. Measuring 9.5 on the Richter scale, it killed 1,655 people and left nearly two million homeless. Uttarakhand is also highly vulnerable to earthquakes and is categorised into seismic Zones IV, V, and VI. The geological condition of this mountainous state is far from stable and remains highly active. The Indian Plate continues to move beneath the Eurasian Plate, causing geological stress to increase continuously. Geologists believe that a catastrophic earthquake could strike Uttarakhand at any time. From a geological perspective, the Himalayan region has long been considered extremely sensitive. Due to ongoing tectonic activity, the Himalayas continue to rise, and their elevation increases gradually year after year.

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In this context, the new seismic zoning map prepared by the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology and the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has raised concerns. According to the scientific classification in the revised map, several areas of Uttarakhand have now been included in Zone VI, indicating that the geological conditions of this Himalayan state have become extremely sensitive. Scientists have expressed concern and warned that ignoring the expected seismic risks and geological realities would be a serious mistake. Therefore, earthquake-resistant construction can play a major role in minimising

damage. A positive development in this direction is the construction of 1,872 earthquake-resistant houses under the Prime Minister's Urban Housing Scheme in Bagwala, Rudrapur, the district headquarters of Udham Singh Nagar. This initiative is being viewed as an important step toward preparing for future seismic threats. According to geologists, the collision between the Indian and Eurasian Plates has been continuing for millions of years. At present, this interaction is generating immense geological stress. Whenever this accumulated stress is released, earthquakes occur and the ground shakes violently. Since the Indian Plate continues to move beneath the Eurasian Plate, the stress between the two plates keeps increasing, making the possibility of a major earthquake ever present. However, it is impossible to predict exactly when such an earthquake may occur. According to geologists, under the new zoning classification, Chamoli, Pithoragarh, Bageshwar, and Rudraprayag have been placed in the highly sensitive seismic Zone VI. Uttarkashi, Tehri Garhwal, Pauri Garhwal, Almora, and Champawat fall under Zone V. Dehradun, Nainital, Haridwar, and Udham Singh Nagar are classified under Zone IV. However, the revised classification

issued in 2025 also suggests that the entire state of Uttarakhand should be considered as falling under Zone VI due to its overall seismic vulnerability. Experts believe that protection from earthquakes largely depends on earthquake-resistant construction techniques. Buildings should be constructed on solid ground, and in mountainous areas, structures should ideally be built on stable rock formations. Maintaining a safe distance from riverbanks is equally important. Construction on loose debris or unstable soil should be strictly avoided. Traditional building techniques used in the Himalayan region were often naturally earthquake-resistant, and many of these methods can still be adopted today to reduce earthquake-related risks. Ultimately, protection from earthquakes lies largely in our own hands-through stronger buildings and better preparedness. The formation of the Himalayas will not stop, nor will the movement and collision of tectonic plates cease. Japan experiences earthquakes almost every day, yet large-scale casualties are rare because building regulations are strict and people are well prepared. Therefore, whether it is your home or your business establishment, it is important to ensure that the structure has been built according to earthquake-resistant standards.

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PM's degree record: Gujarat court rejects Kejriwal's plea



A sessions court on Saturday rejected AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal's plea challenging a magistrate's order dismissing his application seeking the records related to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's educational degrees.

Sessions judge PB Patel rejected the revision application challenging the March 10, 2026 order passed by a metropolitan magistrate.

The former Delhi chief minister had filed the plea as part of the ongoing trial against him and fellow Aam Aadmi Party leader Sanjay Singh in a criminal defamation case filed by Gujarat University for allegedly claiming that the varsity possibly issued fake degrees to Modi and the PM's degress could be fake.

Appearing for Gujarat University, advocate Amit Nair argued that Kejriwal and Singh are already facing a defamation trial, and the revision application amounted to an attempt to retrospectively justify their alleged statements through a "fishing inquiry."

This was not permitted under the law, the lawyer said.

University registrar Piyush Patel in 2023 filed the criminal defamation case against the two leaders over their "sarcastic" and "derogatory" statement against the university regarding Modi's degree.

Earlier, the Gujarat High Court had set aside the Chief Information Commissioner's order to the university to disclose the details of the PM's degrees.

(PNS)

Delhi Court seeks NIA reply on US inmate's American diet plea



A Delhi court on Saturday sought a response from the NIA over a plea by Matthew Aaron Van Dyke – accused in a terror conspiracy case involving alleged links to ethnic armed groups in India and Myanmar – who sought an American diet during his stay in prison.

Van Dyke, an US citizen, was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on March 13, along with six Ukrainian nationals, after they allegedly infiltrated into India from Myanmar via the Mizoram border before being intercepted at various domestic airports across the country.

The group, suspected to have been operating as mercenaries, is being probed for a wide-ranging terror conspiracy, including assistance to ethnic armed groups in India and Myanmar, and imparting drone training to them.

Advocates Rohit Dandriyal and Rohit Gour, counsel for Van Dyke who is presently in judicial custody, said they moved an application before Special Judge Prashant Sharma seeking permission to provide him with an American-style diet on humanitarian grounds.

They said their client had apparently been on "hunger strike" for around 50 days, during which he has consumed mostly liquids such as soy milk and juice.

According to the advocates, Van Dyke has been unable to consume regular prison meals on account of his dietary habits and inability to tolerate the spicy, oily and deep-fried food ordinarily served in prison.

"The application states that the prolonged hunger strike has resulted in significant deterioration of his physical condition, leaving him extremely weak and with substantially reduced immunity," the advocates said.

The application further states that the accused's deteriorating health was evident during his appearance before the court, where he was unable to stand, visibly frail and experienced considerable difficulty in addressing the court, they said.

On Friday, Van Dyke was brought to court in a wheelchair, following which his judicial custody, and that of five other Ukrainian nationals, was extended till August 1.

(PNS)

Kerala court directs FIR against actress Lakshmi Priya, husband, woman cop in Ansiba Hassan harassment case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kochi

A court in Kochi has directed the police to register an FIR against Malayalam actress Lakshmi Priya, her husband Jayesh, and a woman police officer over allegations of illegally detaining actress Ansiba Hassan and subjecting her to emotional harassment at the Tripunithura Women's Cell.

Tripunithura Judicial First Class Magistrate PM Aminakutty on Saturday

ordered the police to investigate the complaint filed by Hassan. Hassan appeared before the magistrate when her petition against Lakshmi Priya, Jayesh and Reshma, a sub-inspector attached to the Women's Cell, came up for hearing on Saturday.

"Since a detailed investigation into the offences alleged against the accused has to be conducted by the police to elicit the truth, the complaint is forwarded to the SHO, Hill Palace Police Station, for reg-

When AI enters courtroom, justice must remain human



ROHIT KUMAR SINGH

The Supreme Court's decision yesterday to set aside orders passed by NCLT and NCLAT on the basis of fake AI-generated citations is a timely warning. It is not a rejection of artificial intelligence. It is a reminder that in matters of law, AI can assist the mind, but it cannot replace judgment. A court system may use machines to become faster, but it cannot allow machines to make it careless.

The problem is not that lawyers used AI. The problem is that they used it without verification. Fake judgments, hallucinated precedents and non-existent citations are not minor technical errors. In law, a false citation can distort reasoning, mislead a judge, burden the opposite party and damage public confidence. A hallucinated case is not merely wrong information; it is a counterfeit legal authority.

India's judiciary is overburdened. Millions of pending cases, repeated adjournments, bulky records and uneven access to legal assistance make a strong case for technology. AI can help in transcription, translation, cause-list management, case clustering, legal research, summarising pleadings, detecting contradictions, scheduling hearings, flagging limitation issues and making court records

searchable. These are not futuristic ideas. They are practical tools for a system that needs speed without sacrificing fairness.

But the courtroom is not a call centre, and justice is not a productivity metric. The judicial function rests on facts, law, reason and conscience. AI may retrieve, organise and summarise. It must not silently invent, embellish or substitute. The human element must remain in the driving seat, as the Supreme Court rightly emphasised.

The first principle should be mandatory human verification. No lawyer, litigant or court officer should be permitted to rely on an AI-generated case, quotation, statute, circular or order unless it has been checked against an authentic legal database or official source. Every citation produced with AI assistance should carry a verification trail: case number, court, date, neutral citation where available, and source. "AI gave it to me" cannot be a defence. It should be treated as professional negligence.

Second, courts should insist on disclosure. If AI has been used materially in drafting pleadings, written submissions, case compilations or summaries, the filing should say so. This does not mean stigmatising AI use. On the contrary, disclosure normalises responsible use. It tells the court that the lawyer understands the tool and has taken responsibility for the output. Secret use of AI creates risk; disclosed and verified use creates trust.

Third, plagiarism must be



addressed seriously. AI makes copying easier, but it also makes unattributed borrowing harder to detect. Legal drafting often draws on precedents, model clauses and earlier pleadings, but there is a difference between legitimate reliance and intellectual dishonesty. Where AI is used to generate arguments, the lawyer must still ensure originality, attribution and accuracy. Courts and bar councils should develop norms for AI-assisted drafting: quote only with source, paraphrase only after understanding, and never pass off another author's reasoning as one's own.

Fourth, official legal AI platforms should be developed for the judiciary and the Bar. Lawyers are currently using open, general-purpose tools that may not be trained on complete Indian law, may hallucinate citations, and may not protect confidentiality. India needs secure, court-approved AI systems linked to authenticated databases such as

Supreme Court, High Court and tribunal records. Such platforms should not "imagine" law; they should retrieve law. Where the database does not contain an authority, the system must say so clearly.

Fifth, AI tools must be designed with guardrails. Any judicial AI system should have source-linking, audit logs, confidence indicators, version history and strict limits on generative output. A legal research tool should not produce a fabricated judgment because a user has framed a persuasive prompt. It should refuse unsupported answers. In law, silence is better than fiction.

Sixth, responsibility must be fixed. If an advocate files fake AI-generated material, the advocate remains accountable. If a junior drafts it, the senior remains accountable. If a law firm uses AI, the firm must have internal protocols. If a court registry uses AI to summarise records, the authorised officer must verify it. Accountability cannot be

outsourced to an algorithm.

Seventh, judges need training, not just software. AI literacy should become part of judicial academies and bar training. Judges must know what AI can do, what it cannot do, and where its risks lie. A judge need not become a computer scientist, but must understand hallucination, bias, data limitations, deep-fakes, prompt manipulation and confidentiality risks. The best defence against bad technology is not fear; it is informed supervision.

Finally, AI should be used to expand access to justice. Translation into Indian languages, simplified summaries for litigants, automated status updates, assistance for persons with disabilities, and easier access to legal aid can transform the citizen's experience of courts. This is where AI's greatest promise lies: not in replacing judges or lawyers, but in reducing the distance between law and the ordinary citizen.

The Supreme Court's warning should therefore not lead to a retreat from AI. It should lead to a mature framework for its use. India's judiciary should adopt AI with ambition, but also with constitutional caution. Efficiency is desirable; integrity is non-negotiable.

AI can help courts move faster. But justice must still move with reason, responsibility and truth. The machine may assist the law. It must never be allowed to counterfeit it.

The writer is a former Secretary to Government of India

SC upholds Delhi HC order rejecting adulterous man's claim to right to privacy in divorce case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi



The Supreme Court has upheld the Delhi High Court ruling that a wife can seek assistance of the court to collect evidence such as call detail records (CDRs) and hotel booking details of her husband to substantiate her charge of adultery levelled against him.

A bench of Justices Manmohan and K Vinod Chandran dismissed the appeal filed by the estranged husband against the high court order of May 10, 2023.

"Having heard learned counsel for the parties, this court is of the view that no interference is called for with the impugned judgment," it said while dismissing the appeal on Thursday.

On May 10, 2023, the high court said law recognises

adultery as a ground for divorce and it will not be in public interest for the court to come to the aid of a married man, who indulged in alleged sexual relationships outside the wedlock, on the premise of right to privacy.

The high court referred to the Supreme Court's decision holding that though the right to privacy is a constitutionally protected right, it is not an absolute right and it

has to be necessarily subject to reasonable restrictions, especially when the restrictions are in public interest.

The high court made the observations while dismissing a man's plea challenging a family court's December 14, 2022, order to preserve the documents related to reservation, payment details and ID proofs of a particular room in a hotel for the period between April 29 and May 1

last year and send it to the court in a sealed cover.

It further said that when a wife seeks court's help for procuring evidence which would go a long way to prove adultery on the part of her husband, court must step in.

"This would be in consonance with Section 14 of the Family Courts Act which gives a leeway to the court to consider evidence which may be not admissible or relevant under the Indian Evidence Act," the high court had said.

Section 14 of the Family Courts Act states that the family court may receive as evidence any report, statement, documents, information or any other matter which it thinks may assist the court to deal with a dispute, whether or not the same would be otherwise relevant or admissible under the Indian Evidence Act.

Court not a forum for conjecture: Delhi court clears deported man of Passports Act charge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi



A Delhi court has set aside the order of a magistrate framing charges against a man under the Passports Act for allegedly possessing a fake Malaysian visa, saying there were no allegations that he travelled to Malaysia or forged the visa in the country.

The court said that a criminal court is not a "forum for conjecture, it is a forum where guilt, even at the stage of framing of charge, must rest on a foundation of evidence disclosing a prima facie triable offence".

Additional Sessions Judge Saurabh Partap Singh Laler was hearing the revision petition filed by Palwinder Singh against the January 29, 2026, order of a magisterial court framing charges against him under the Passports Act.

Palwinder Singh departed for Baku in Azerbaijan, via Turkey, on November 12, 2017,

and on reaching Istanbul, he produced a Turkish paper e-visa along with an additional US visa affixed at page 16 of his passport.

He was deported from Turkey on the grounds that his Turkish visa was rendered invalid since the accompanying US visa was found to be fake.

A Malaysian visa sticker affixed to a page of the passport was also found "not genuine". But his Turkish and Azerbaijani e-visas were found to be "genuine".

Singh was then deported

from Istanbul, Turkey, to IGI Airport, New Delhi, following which a case was registered against him under IPC Sections 420 (cheating), 468 (forgery for purpose of cheating) and 471 (using as genuine a forged document), besides provisions of the Passports Act.

While a magisterial court had then discharged Singh for the fake US visa due to lack of territorial jurisdiction and legal sanction, it had framed charges against him under Section 12 (offences and penalties) of the Passport Act regarding the Malaysian visa.

The magistrate said that since the fake Malaysian visa was dated October 16, 2017, before Singh departed from India on November 12, 2017, it must have been procured in India.

In an order dated July 2, the Judge Laler said, "The trial (magisterial) court, having rightly discharged the accused or revisionist for offences under Sections 420, 468 and 471 of the IPC, erred in framing charge under Section 12 of the Passport Act as the essential evidentiary link connecting the Malaysian visa to any act of departure from or entry into India, or to its procurement within India, is conspicuously absent from the record."

The court said a visa sticker bearing an earlier date does not by itself establish either that it was affixed to the passport in India or that it was present on a page of the passport when he crossed Indian immigration on November 12.

Gymkhana Club moves HC against show-cause notice



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Gymkhana Club members and staff have moved the Delhi High Court against the Centre's show-cause notice for eviction from its 27.3-acre premises on Safdarjung Road.

The applications, which seek a stay on the operation of the show-cause notice, have been listed for hearing before Justice Avneesh Jhingan on July 6.

The pleas by Vijay Khurana and Delhi Gymkhana Club Ltd Staff Welfare Association form part of their pending lawsuit following the Land and Development Office's (L&DO) May 22 order terminating the perpetual lease deed and asking the colonial-era club to return its land by June 5 on grounds of "strengthening and securing defence infrastructure".

On June 29, the L&DO under the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry issued a show-cause notice to the club, asking it to explain why an eviction order should not be passed against it under the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971.

The notice, issued by Estate Officer Bipin Kumar Singh on, directed the club and all persons concerned occupying the premises to submit their response by July 7 and appear for a personal hearing on the same day at 2.30 pm.

The move came more than a month after the Centre told the Delhi High

Court on May 26 that it would not take forceful possession of the 27.3-acre premises by June 5, which is required for "strengthening and securing defence infrastructure".

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta then said that the Centre would take over the club's land in accordance with the procedure established by law.

Vijay Khurana, a Gymkhana Club member, has said in his lawsuit that the "vague and generalised reasons" of defence infrastructure and security given by the Centre were just a "sham". The move, he claimed, was an "attempt to effect forced eviction" instead of following the due process of law.

Khurana's lawsuit is stated to be supported by more than 500 members of the club.

On May 26, the court observed that at that stage, there was nothing on record to suggest that authorities had initiated legal action for eviction and therefore no interim order was required on the lawsuits by the Gymkhana members and staff.

In his latest application, Khurana said the June 29 notice proceeds on "entirely erroneous and premature assumptions", which strike at the substratum of their pending lawsuit.

The application said the show-cause notice was "pre-mature" as it wrongly presumed that the Gymkhana Club's perpetual lease was validly terminated.

UP: Six sentenced to life term in murder, abduction cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Meerut/Etah/Pilibhit



Local courts in three Uttar Pradesh districts have pronounced life terms for six convicts in three murder and kidnapping cases, with police attributing the convictions to effective prosecution under the state's "Operation Conviction" campaign.

In Meerut, an additional district and sessions court sentenced four members of a family, including a woman's husband, to rigorous life imprisonment for

setting her on fire with petrol in 2020. The prosecution said the incident took place on October 1, 2020, in Machhra village.

The victim, Sanjeet Kaur, succumbed to burn injuries. Her husband Rajveer Singh, brother-in-law Jayveer, sister-in-law Poonam and mother-in-law

Kanakto were convicted in the case and sentenced to life imprisonment. The court also imposed a fine of ₹8,000 on each convict.

Police said the sentencing followed effective monitoring and prosecution under "Operation Conviction".

In Etah, a special court sentenced Gudda alias Bintu alias Satendra Kumar to life imprisonment in connection with a 22-year-old kidnapping-for-ransom case.

According to police, the case was registered at Kotwali Dehat police station on July 29,

2004, after a complaint alleged that a person had been abducted and held captive. Following investigation, a chargesheet under Section 364A (abduction) of the erstwhile IPC was filed against the accused in September that year.

Police said the case was taken up on priority under the "Operation Conviction" campaign, and the special dacoity court in Etah convicted the accused on Friday, sentencing him to life imprisonment besides imposing a ₹50,000 fine on Saturday.

FROM THE WORLD

US

Eight injured in shooting

At least eight people, including four children, were shot at amid July 4 celebrations in Brooklyn's Coney Island, the New York Police Department has said. The injured included people aged between six and 37, the NYPD said. They have not been identified yet. Officers responded to reports of a shooting around 10.37 pm on Saturday in the Coney Island neighbourhood, according to an ABC News report. "All victims were transported by EMS (emergency medical services) to local area hospitals, where seven people were listed in stable condition," the NYPD said, according to the ABC report. A 21-year-old woman is listed in critical condition, police said. A firearm was recovered at the scene, but the police have not yet made any arrests. (PTI)

NIGERIA

Claims 2 killed in SA violence

Nigeria said on Sunday that two of its nationals were killed last month in South Africa following violent anti-immigrant protests targeting African workers in the country. The Nigerians were killed June 28, two days before an unofficial deadline by protesters for foreigners to leave, the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. One was allegedly killed by police officers and the other by unidentified attackers, it said. South African police did not immediately respond to a request for comment from *The Associated Press*. Anti-immigrant protesters in April and May blamed foreigners for high levels of unemployment, crime and pressure on public services. The violence at the protests and attacks on Africans prompted Nigeria, Ghana and Malawi to repatriate their citizens and summon South African diplomats. "These killings raises questions about deliberate attempt by some elements to wrongfully generalise and tag well-meaning, hard-working, and respectable Nigerians as criminals," Nigerian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Kimiebi Imomotimi Ebienfa said. (AP)

S Jaishankar meets Qatar PM, reviews bilateral ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Doha

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Qatar's Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani on Sunday and reviewed several areas of bilateral cooperation, including energy, trade, investments, connectivity and security. Jaishankar is on a visit covering Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman from July 5 to 10. The Gulf visit comes against the backdrop of fast-evolving political dynamics in West Asia following the signing of an agreement aimed at ending the US-Iran conflict. Jaishankar thanked the Qatar PM for ensuring the safety and well-being of the Indian community in the



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meets Qatar Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani and others in Doha

country. "Reviewed various facets of our bilateral cooperation especially energy, trade, investments, connectivity, security and people to people

assessments on the West Asia conflict and its impact with PM Al-Thani, who is also Qatar's foreign minister. During the ongoing visit, Jaishankar will meet his counterparts and top leaders of the four Gulf countries to enhance bilateral relations and exchange views on regional developments and issues of mutual interest. Qatar and Oman have emerged as mediators, along with Pakistan, in bringing about the Iran ceasefire following weeks of escalating tensions. After visiting the four Gulf countries, Jaishankar will travel to New York on July 13 to launch India's official campaign for the UN Security Council tenure 2028-29.

Next round of US-Iran talks likely to be held at Islamabad: Report

SAJJAD HUSSAIN ■ Islamabad

Pakistan capital Islamabad is emerging as the leading venue for the next round of technical negotiations between the US and Iran, a media report said Sunday. The US and Iran signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) on June 18, aimed at restoring peace in West Asia. It was followed by technical-level talks in Switzerland on June 21, with Pakistan and Qatar as mediators. The resumption of the talks is part of ongoing efforts to keep the diplomatic process on track and resolve long standing disputes between Washington and Tehran, Dawn reported quoting diplomatic sources. "There are two possible venues for the technical



talks — Islamabad and the Burgenstock resort in Switzerland," one diplomatic source said. "Islamabad, however, is the more likely option." The technical talks are expected to take place on July 11, although a final decision on the venue has yet to be announced.

The talks were temporarily delayed because of the multi-day state funeral ceremonies for Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iranian officials have indicated that the composition of Tehran's delegation will be announced after the funeral ceremonies conclude. (PTI)

Iran's top officials attend prayer for late supreme leader Khamenei in Tehran

NASSER KARIMI/JON GAMBRELL ■ Tehran

Iran's top officials and brothers of the country's new supreme leader emerged into public view Sunday to attend the funeral prayers for the late Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, signalling a new confidence in their safety as calls grew for the killing of US President Donald Trump. Their presence before hundreds of thousands of people in the capital Tehran would have been unthinkable during the Iran war, which saw airstrikes in its opening moments on Feb. 28 kill the 86-year-old Khamenei, his family members and other officials. Israel also targeted others who appeared publicly during the war, in at least

one case likely using their public appearance to fix their position for a strike. But still unseen was Iran's new supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei. He is believed to be in hiding after reportedly being wounded in the airstrike that killed his father. Israel has threatened to kill him as well as he leads a theocracy now negotiating with the United States over a permanent end to the war and over Iran strangling traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, disrupting global energy supplies. Ziba Naderi, a 42-year-old nurse attending the funeral Sunday, said Iran needed to follow whatever Mojtaba Khamenei commands in regards to the nation. "I heard the call for

revenge, but our leader should say what we need to do," she said. "And we must listen to him." Ayatollah Jafar Sobhani, a 97-year-old Shiite cleric, led the prayers at Tehran's Grand Mosalla for Khamenei and his late family members. On hand were Khamenei's sons Masoud, Meysam and Mostafa, who haven't been seen since the war. Revolutionary Guard head Gen. Ahmad Vahidi, who only had been photographed for the first time since the war on Thursday, could be seen in the crowd by Associated Press journalists, flanked by plainclothes security forces as he wore a black baseball cap. Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, Parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher



Ghalibaf and Esmail Qaani, who leads the Guard's expeditionary Quds Force, also attended. Their appearances came as posters and graffiti at the Grand Mosalla called for the killing of

Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Mohammad Rasouli, a poet who emceed the event prior to the prayers, drew calls of "Death to America!" and "Death to Israel!" Speaking to

the crowd over loudspeakers at the funeral, Rasouli asked, referring to Trump, "Why is the most bastard man in the world still alive?" The question drew cheers from the crowd, and again

when Rasouli said "the world is no longer a good place for" Trump. It marked the first, direct threat to Trump's life by an official during the funeral. The American president was giving a speech at the same time across the world in Washington, DC, for the 250th anniversary of America's founding. "We've had tremendous success," Trump said about the US military. "You look at Venezuela, you look at Iran. We wiped it out, wiped out their military." A far-larger crowd for the funeral than the day before attended Sunday. Mourners, dressed in black walked to the site, carrying banners and flags honouring Khamenei and also calling for Trump's killing. (AP)

Cargo ship reports being under attack in Red Sea off coast of Yemen, says British military

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Cairo

A cargo ship came under attack Sunday off the coast of Yemen in the Red Sea, the British military said, the latest maritime attack off the conflict-torn Arab country. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre reported the attack off the coastal city of Hodeida, which is under control of the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels. The UKMTO said the ship reported being "under attack by unknown armed assailants" 30 nautical miles (55 kilometres) southwest of Hodeida, and that authorities were investigating. No group immediately claimed the attack. The Houthis have threat-



ened to begin attacking ships again, though they have not been carrying out attacks. A Houthi spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The rebels previously fired drones and missiles at ships that pass by territory they control near the narrow Bab al-Mandab Strait at the south-

ern end of the Red Sea. Their attacks over the course of the Gaza war forced shipping companies to reroute vessels around the southern tip of Africa instead of through the Suez Canal at the northern end of the Red Sea. Somali pirates also have been active further away in the Gulf of Aden recently.

Kim oversees weapons tests on new destroyer

KIM TONG-HYUNG ■ Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised tests of a nuclear-capable cruise missile and other weapons aboard a new 5,000-ton destroyer, the Kang Kon, repaired after being damaged in a failed launch ceremony last year, state media said Sunday, in the latest military display marking Kim's push to build a nuclear-armed navy. The official Korean Central News Agency said Friday's event included test-firings of a strategic cruise missile and of the Kang Kon's main gun and automatic cannons, as well as trials of its electronic warfare systems and assessments of its target-detection and information-processing capabilities.



After observing the tests from shore, Kim ordered officials to complete the destroyer's trials and place the vessel in active duty within two months, the state news agency said. The tests came after North Korea in late June commissioned its first 5,000-ton destroyer, the Choe Hyon, a milestone Kim marked with

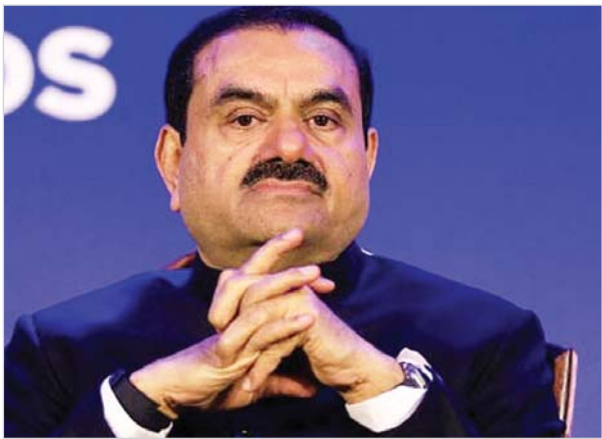
a lavish ceremony where he declared that the nuclear armament of his navy was proceeding as planned. After years of prioritizing ballistic missile development, Kim has increasingly turned his focus to naval capabilities, including the construction of a nuclear-powered submarine. While outlining his five-year military goals at

February's Workers' Party congress, Kim also called for intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of underwater launches. North Korea first unveiled the Choe Hyon in April 2025, which Kim portrayed as a major step toward expanding his military's operational reach and preemptive strike capabilities. KCNA has said the warship is equipped with a range of systems, including anti-aircraft and anti-ship weapons as well as nuclear-capable ballistic and cruise missiles. South Korean officials and experts say the vessel was likely built with Russian assistance amid deepening military ties between the countries, but some analysts have questioned how effective the vessel would be in active service. (AP)

Adani charges decision not tied to investment plans: US DOJ

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

The US Department of Justice has denied that its decision to drop criminal charges against Indian billionaire Gautam Adani and seven others was linked to the Adani Group's plans to invest about \$10 billion in the United States, saying the prosecution was legally unsustainable and should never have been brought. In a filing, responding to a federal judge's demand for a fuller explanation, Principal Associate Deputy Attorney General R Trent McCotter rejected media reports suggesting the dismissal was influenced by the conglomer-



ate's investment plans. "The current or former Department attorneys... have suggested that I sought dis-

missal of the securities charges at least in part because of some promise by those defendants to invest

money in the United States. That is false," McCotter wrote. "I would have sought dismissal of the securities charges regardless of any mentions of investments," he added, saying he had already concluded that the case should be dropped before the issue was ever raised. "The mention of potential investments could not have played any role." Reports in US media had linked the DOJ decision to drop charges altogether to Adani hiring a new legal team led by Robert J Giuffra Jr, one of President Trump's personal lawyers and the co-chairman of the prominent firm Sullivan & Cromwell.

Hundreds of firefighters battle wildfire in Portugal

ELENA BECATOROS ■ Athens (Greece)

Hundreds of firefighters battled wildfires in Portugal and Greece on Sunday, with Spain and Italy sending reinforcements to Portugal to help battle a massive blaze burning for more than three days. In Greece, authorities on Sunday urged residents of parts of Thessaloniki, the second largest Greek city, to remain indoors and shut their windows and doors due to toxic smoke from a burning recycling plant that was engulfed by a wildfire on the outskirts of the city. In central Portugal's



Thick smoke rises above Filothei settlement during a wildfire on the outskirts of the northern city of Thessaloniki, Greece on Sunday

Vouzela area, more than 1,200 firefighters backed up by nearly 400 vehicles and 15 aircraft tried to put out a blaze that broke out on Thursday, according to

the country's Civil Protection authority. The wildfire had burned across an area of 12,000 hectares (120 square kilometres) from Sunday, information from

the European Union's Copernicus satellite mapping agency showed. The European Union's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid said Spain sent 120 firefighters and 45 vehicles as reinforcements to Portugal on Friday, while three firefighting aircraft from Italy and Spain were also dispatched to help. On the other side of southern Europe in Greece, a fast-moving blaze at a recycling plant broke out Saturday evening near the Orailokastro suburb of Thessaloniki, triggering evacuation alerts for three suburbs and a facility housing 157 people with special needs. (AP)

Trump mixes patriotism with partisanship as he celebrates America's 250th anniversary

STEVEN SLOAN/MICHELLE L PRICE ■ Washington

President Donald Trump mixed partisan politics with patriotic appeals as he commemorated the 250th anniversary of American independence, a moment he declared "one of the most joyous and glorious milestones of all time." Speaking in Washington after storms prompted a roughly two-hour evacuation of the National Mall, Trump honoured veterans,

including several from World War II and one of the first Black officers to lead a Special Forces team in combat in Vietnam. They appeared before flags that symbolised some of the most significant and challenging moments in American history, from the one that was draped over Abraham Lincoln's casket to the one that flew on the plane piloted by the Wright Brothers. Yet Trump also leaned into partisan territory unusual for an Independence Day

address, which presidents typically use as a moment to unify the country. Instead, he stumped again for the SAVE America Act, an elections bill that's encountering challenges even from Trump's fellow Republicans in Congress. He highlighted his support for the Second Amendment and revived denunciations of communism, which are becoming an increasingly central part of Trump's message ahead of the November midterms. The speech capped a



holiday that Trump has gone to great lengths to shape to his own tastes. He was introduced by two musical performers who often appear at his trademark rallies, including Lee Greenwood, who performed "God Bless America." The event organisers were largely aligned with the White House, supplanting a bipartisan organization that was launched by Congress a decade ago. "We will always be on top," Trump said. "We will never let our country fall. We will always be the best."

Anticipation for the milestone holiday has been building for much of the year, serving as an opportunity for Americans to reflect on their complicated history as onetime colonists of an empire who became a superpower of their own. Organisers of celebrations months in the making had to adjust or cancel activities entirely as much of the East Coast sweltered under heat that approached and in many cases surpassed triple digits. Heat is defining the big

weekend in many places. Severe weather prompted the cancellation of celebrations in Hartford, Connecticut, along with Harrisburg and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Spectators at Boston's fireworks and concert were told to briefly seek shelter before events later resumed. An evacuation was also ordered in Philadelphia. New York and Pittsburgh moved forward with fireworks but shifted the time to accommodate the shifting weather. (AP)

Wipro IT Services is expected to be at the lower end of the range, while Tech Mahindra is likely to lead the large-cap pack. Among mid-sized companies, Persistent Systems, Mphasis and eClerx are expected to post relatively stronger organic growth, it said.

PROSPECT



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma visiting the under-construction Integrated Directorate Complex at Belkuchi, Guwahati

Protean eGov Technologies and NECTAR partner



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Protean eGov Technologies Limited, a pioneer in building Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and citizen-centric digital solutions, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR), an autonomous institution under the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India, to collaborate on advancing technology-led governance, digital innovation, and inclusive development initiatives across India, with a special focus on North East.

The strategic partnership brings together Protean's nearly three decades of experience in designing and operating population-scale digital platforms with NECTAR's expertise in technology applications, geospatial solutions, and regional development.

The MoU establishes a framework for identifying and implementing high-impact projects across areas such as digital governance, information and communication technologies (ICT), geospatial technologies, capacity building, and technology-enabled socio-economic

development. The collaboration will also explore opportunities to design innovative digital solutions that can be scaled for wider public benefit.

By combining their complementary capabilities, Protean and NECTAR aim to accelerate the adoption of emerging technologies that improve citizen outcomes, strengthen institutional capacity, and contribute to sustainable and inclusive development. The partnership reflects a shared commitment to leveraging technology for public good while supporting the digital transformation agenda of the country, particularly in the North Eastern Region.

Rakesh Dosi, Chief Business & Product Officer, Protean eGov Technologies Limited, said: "For nearly three decades, Protean has been building population-scale digital infrastructure that enables governments to deliver trusted and inclusive citizen services at scale. We are delighted to partner with NECTAR to support the Northeastern Region's digital transformation journey."

Dr. Arun Kumar Sarma, Director General, NECTAR, said: "The Northeastern Region presents immense opportunities for technology-led growth and innovation."

Sahkar se Samriddhi: The rural economy's new chapter on the road to Viksit Bharat



MURLIDHAR MOHOL

Five years ago, on the 6th of July, the country gained something it had waited three-quarters of a century for. A sector woven into the daily lives of crores of farmers, dairy producers and rural families, and yet without a home of its own since Independence, finally received a dedicated Ministry of Cooperation. That was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's answer to a long-standing gap, and he placed the new Ministry in the hands of Amitabh Shah, our resolute Home Minister, whose four decades in the movement run the full length of it, from the village PACS to the apex bank. Under the mantra of Sahkar se Samriddhi, prosperity through cooperation, the journey that began that day has today reached a defining moment of renewed purpose.

India is home to the largest cooperative ecosystem in the world, some 8.5 lakh institutions binding together more than thirty crore members, and that scale is a source of genuine pride. Yet the true measure of these five years is not the tally of societies. It is the modernity, transparency and credibility the sector has gained, qualities that numbers alone cannot capture. **A Foundation of Transparency and Technology**

More than a hundred and forty concrete initiatives have taken shape in these five years, and the most far-reaching of them begins at the village. The strengthening of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies, the PACS, is the foundation of every endeavour that follows. Model by-laws, drawn up with every State on board, have brought a common standard and openness to their working, and the PACS has grown

beyond a mere lender into a multi-service hub delivering more than twenty-five activities.

Computerisation is driving that transformation, with over eighty thousand PACS now being brought online. Jan Aushadhi Kendras, subsidised grain, petrol pumps, gas distribution and piped-water schemes increasingly flow through these very village institutions.

The ambition is larger still: two lakh new multi-purpose cooperatives across the country, of which more than thirty-five thousand have already been formed and are in operation.

Trust follows accountability, and the governance architecture has been rebuilt to match. Timely amendments to the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act have deepened transparency, a Cooperative Election Authority now ensures elections that are free, fair and on time, and a Cooperative Ombudsman gives members a swift route to redress. For the first time, the country also has a National Cooperative Database, a tool that identifies where the scope for new cooperatives is greatest, so that their growth can be guided evenly into every region. **Cooperation Takes Flight into New Sectors**

The approach of our government can be summed up in a single phrase, beej se bazaar tak, from seed to market. The idea is to bring the entire value chain, from the moment a farmer sows to the day the harvest is sold, under one cooperative umbrella. Three national multi-state societies now carry that idea forward. The Bharatiya Beej Sahkari Samiti Limited (BBSSL) is working to preserve and revive indigenous seed varieties; the National Cooperative Organics Limited (NCOL) certifies and markets produce under the Bharat Organics brand; and the National Cooperative Exports Limited (NCEL) opens a direct line to world markets, even for the small-



est grower. The design has a deliberate elegance: any cooperative, from a village PACS to an apex institution, can join all three.

The financial base of this chain has been reinforced too. Urban cooperative banks now stand behind an apex body of their own, the National Urban Cooperative Finance and Development Corporation (NUCFDC), which pools liquidity, technology and professional guidance for smaller banks, while NABARD's Sahkar Sarthi initiative brings the same technological strength to rural cooperative banks. Sahkar Taxi hands drivers a direct share of the profits, and the way has opened for cooperatives to grow at the multi-state level in insurance and livestock as well.

Parity with commercial banks, higher home-loan limits and equal tax treatment have together left these institutions with far more to invest.

The scale of intent shows plainly in the fund allocations. Across the five decades from 1963 to 2014, the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) extended roughly ₹55,000 crore in assistance; in the eleven years from 2014 to 2025, that figure has crossed ₹4.5 lakh crore. Few numbers capture the pace and reach of the Modi government's commitment to the sector quite so clearly.

White Revolution 2.0 and a Cooperative University

For the first time since the 1970s, a fresh push of this magnitude has been mounted. White Revolution 2.0 sets out to lift milk procurement by half over the next five years, and it does so with women at its centre, a firm and practical route to the economic empowerment of rural households. Alongside it, April 2025 saw the nation's first-ever National Cooperative University, the Tribhuvan Sahkari University, open its doors, an institution that will supply the sector with trained professionals and the leaders of tomorrow.

Tying these threads together is the National Cooperative Policy 2025, the first such national policy the country has seen since 2002, and the defining marker of this phase. It is a comprehensive charter of resolve, one that carries cooperation into fresh territory, insurance, tourism and green energy among it, and binds the sector to the larger national goals.

Antyodaya: A Parallel Path of Development

At the heart of this government's thinking sits Antyodaya, the rise of the last person in the queue. Guided by the Integral Humanism of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, our guide and inspiration, we are building a model in which the rural economy

is given a stage as strong and as parallel as the urban industrial one. Industry and investment drive the cities; cooperation draws villages, farmers and the landless poor into the economic mainstream. The two are not rivals; they are partners, and that conviction runs through everything we do.

Drawing its strength from the principle of one member, one vote rather than from capital, cooperation is democracy in its economic form. Through model bye-laws, seats on cooperative boards are now assured for women and for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and weaker sections, reinforcing equality and equal opportunity where it counts most. Cooperation, in the end, is more than a business; it is a road to social justice and inclusive growth.

Towards the Future with Confidence

Five years are only the opening chapter in the life of any institution. Yet the pace and the breadth of what the Ministry of Cooperation has achieved in that short span are without precedent. The sector will grow faster still, reach further, and multiply its share of the national economy many times over, of that there can be no doubt.

Built on transparency, a readiness to embrace technology and a member-first way of working, the cooperative sector is set to become the engine of a rural India advancing towards a developed nation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Sahkar se Samriddhi and his resolve of Viksit Bharat 2047, carried by the resolute leadership of Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amitabh Shah, is steadily taking shape.

Carrying prosperity to the very last person is a journey we must all make together, with the same faith and the same energy. On this occasion, that is our resolve.

The writer is Union Minister of State for Cooperation and Civil Aviation

National Literary Conference concludes, Keshav Kavya Kalrav showcases poetic echoes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The National Literary Conference, titled "Keshav Kavya Kalrav 2026," successfully concluded on Sunday at Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi, under the aegis of the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute.

The symposium invited original poems, muktaks (qua-



trains), and ghazals in Hindi, Sanskrit, and English from writers across various corners

of the country. The central themes of the conference were rooted in profound spiritual concepts such as 'Guru' (Spiritual Master), 'Bhagwan' (God), 'Atmavichar' (Self-reflection), 'Sankhya Vichar' (Philosophical discernment), and 'Akshay Anand' (Eternal Bliss).

The event witnessed a warm welcome of dignitaries, including Justice Abhilasha Kuman - Former Judicial Member of the

Lokpal Committee of India and the first female Chief Justice of the Manipur High Court. Prof. Shiv Shankar Mishra - Vice-Chancellor, Maharishi Panini Sanskrit Evam Vedic Vishwavidyalaya, Ujjain. Prof. Pramod Kumar Sharma - Vice-Chancellor, Swami Vivekanand Subharti University, Meerut. Uday Kumar - Editor, Amar Ujala. Ashish Pandey - Editor, Navbharat Times. Dr Narayan

Dutt Mishra - Doordarshan anchor, Chief Editor of Sanskrit Vartavali, and recipient of the 'Creative Young Mind of India' award. Prashant Tiwari - Chairman, The Daily Pioneer. Prof. Prem Shankar Sharma - Retired Additional District Magistrate (Prayagraj) and National Sanskrit Poet Award winner. Shubham Singh - Public Services Officer selected for the Indian Administrative

Service (IAS) and an engineering graduate from IIT Kanpur. Sanjay Upadhyay - Chief Editor, Motherland Voice. Hemant Keshav Sharma - Leadership team member, The Pioneer.

The inaugural session commenced with address by Dr Gyanananddas Swami (Assistant Director, BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute, Akshardham, New Delhi).

Assam Forest Minister pays tribute to Kaziranga's legendary elephant Joymala

TONY DAS
■ Guwahati

Assam Forest Minister Jayanta Mallabaruah on Saturday paid an emotional tribute to Joymala, one of Kaziranga National Park's most celebrated patrol elephants, following her demise after more than three decades of dedicated service to wildlife conservation. Describing Joymala as one of Kaziranga's "finest jungle warriors," the Minister said her life symbolised the silent sacrifices made by patrol elephants that work alongside frontline forest staff in protecting the park's globally renowned biodiversity. Born in 1960, Joymala was engaged by Kaziranga National Park in 1992 and served the protected area for 34 years. Throughout her life, she participated in anti poaching patrols, wildlife monitoring, rescue operations and routine forest protection duties, becoming a



part of Kaziranga's conservation efforts.

Paying tribute, the Minister recalled the incident in 2004 when a stray tiger dramatically leapt over Joymala while she was on patrol. The rare moment, captured on camera, drew international attention and became one of the most iconic photographs associated with Kaziranga, highlighting the courage and composure of park's patrol elephants and their mahouts.

"Joymala was far more than a patrol elephant. She was a trusted companion of generations of forest guards and mahouts who dedicated

their lives to protecting Kaziranga. Her service and sacrifice will always remain a source of inspiration for everyone associated with wildlife conservation," the Minister said. Joymala was cared for by veteran mahout Satyaban Pegu for several years before her responsibility was later entrusted to mahout Nilakhanta Koch, who continued to look after her with great affection.

Despite receiving treatment for nearly a year due to illness, Joymala passed away on Saturday night at Naloni area under Agoratali Range of Kaziranga National Park.

Indian Army introduces tennis training for students at Aalo

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Aalo

Spearhead Division under the aegis of Spear Corps conducted an introductory tennis orientation programme for 50 students and two teachers from Aalo town at Aalo Military Station on 04 July 2026, with the aim of nurturing sporting talent and encouraging healthy lifestyles among the youth.

The programme introduced students to the history, rules and fundamen-



ance, focus and sportsmanship promoted by the game.

The initiative marks an important step towards expanding sporting opportunities for young people in a remote frontier region where exposure to specialised sports such as tennis remains limited. By opening the tennis infrastructure at Aalo Military Station to local students, the Indian Army has created a platform for them to explore a new sport and develop their skills under guided supervision.

Army's Spearhead Division organises project NAVBHARAT



TONY DAS
■ Guwahati

In a significant step towards strengthening civil-military relations, the Indian Army's Spearhead Division, under the aegis of the Spear Corps, successfully organized Project NAVBHARAT at Likabali on 04 July 2026. The youth empowerment programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from 167 students and 14 teachers of Jogesh Gohain High School, Dhemaji, with a total attendance of 181 participants.

With the objective of fostering patriotism, national integration and youth empowerment, the initiative offered participants an enriching educational experience. Through motivational lectures and informative documentaries, the Indian Army highlighted the courage, rigorous training and selfless sacrifices of its soldiers. The programme encouraged students to actively contribute towards community development and nation-building.

A major highlight of the event was an exclusive visit to the Likabali Military Station, where students gained firsthand insight into the operational preparedness and disciplined lifestyle of the Indian Army. They were briefed on the Army's role in safeguarding the nation's borders and were shown a static display of modern weapons, military equipment and tactical systems.

DAILY SUDOKU

		7	5		8		6	
8	9		7			1		
	4							
				8		5		7
			6		2			
1	9		5					
							8	
		2			5		7	3
	6		9		7	4		

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 (4.7.26)

3	6	8	5	9	4	2	7	1
7	5	9	1	2	3	4	6	8
4	2	1	6	7	8	3	9	5
9	4	2	3	5	7	8	1	6
1	8	5	9	6	2	7	4	3
6	3	7	8	4	1	9	5	2
5	9	3	7	8	6	1	2	4
2	1	6	4	3	9	5	8	7
8	7	4	2	1	5	6	3	9

DOUBLE CROSSWORD
MONDAY | JULY 6, 2026

1				2			3			4		5			6
							7								
10			8			9									
17	18														
26		27													
29															
32															

ACROSS

1 A change of orbits can be refreshing (6)
7 Beckham's favourite part of Australia (8)
8 It's pretty open material (4)
10 One who works like a horse? (6)
11 Anybody composing prose for a bit of fun (6)
14 It's legal to have relationships in it (3)
16 Showing ruddy obvious lack of practice (5)
17 The horse trotted round the ring (4)
19 Where the Swiss brew ales at Wembley Central? (5)
21 Little Victor Murphy finished

DOWN

1 Beer brewed in Tibet for the Russian capital (6)
2 Roman emperor or former ruler in outer Turkistan (6)
3 Slovenian cooker? (4)
4 Extremely, but not unspeakably? (7)
5 What you can credit a mug with being (5)
6 Brown points a river out (5)
8 Dolores, all wrong about Oscar (4)
9 Cry of a bird, having seen a scary figure? (4)
12 Regret a somewhat rude utterance (3)
13 To be a real cad, the beast needs the right start! (5)
15 Manly Scot with no use for a house (5)
18 The perimeter route, possibly (5)

SOLUTION (4.7.26)

ACROSS

1. Bobby
6. Rents
9. Laughed
10. CL-AI-M
11. Veins
12. Se-V-en
13. Cash-EWS
15. D-I-e
17. Unit
18. Aghast

DOWN

15. Davit
20. Socket
22. S-I'd-E
24. Ere
25. Jan-itor
26. Sins-es
27. Stein
28. Melba
29. Rangoon
30. Order
31. O-the-r

DOWN

16. Ether
18. Alias (AKA)
19. Seminar
21. Orator(-y)
22. Silent
23. Double
25. Judge
26. Sire
28. Moo

BRIEFLY

Napoli hires former Milan coach Massimiliano Allegri



Serie A runner-up Napoli officially hired Massimiliano Allegri as coach on Friday. The news had been expected for weeks, since Antonio Conte confirmed he was leaving Napoli at the end of May and AC Milan fired Allegri following “an unequivocal failure” of a season. Allegri has signed a three-year contract at Napoli.

He steered Milan to the Serie A title in 2011 in his first stint in charge of the Rossoneri, and also led Juventus to five league titles and as many Italian Cup trophies.

The 58-year-old Allegri returned to Milan last year tasked with taking the Rossoneri back to the Champions League after the team finished eighth in Serie A the previous season. However, despite spending much of the campaign in the top two positions and fighting for the title, a run of only two wins in Milan's last eight matches dropped it to fifth on the last day of the season.

Napoli, which was plagued by injury problems all season, finished second. Conte had steered the team to the Serie A title the previous campaign, in his first year in charge.

Conte is one of the leading candidates to take over the Italian national team, for what would be his second stint as Azzurri coach. (AP)

Klopp signals willingness to take over as Germany coach



Julian Nagelsmann has resigned as Germany coach after his team failed to make the World Cup round of 16 for the third tournament running, and former Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp is in line to take over. Nagelsmann's departure, announced on Friday by the national soccer federation, comes four days after Paraguay stunned Germany on penalties in the round of 32 and follows talks with his bosses. The federation said it planned to speak to Klopp and “he has already signaled his willingness in general to take on the role.” It would be Klopp's first coaching job since leaving Liverpool in 2024. Nagelsmann initially said he'd stay on with Germany on a contract which had another two years to run and reportedly made him among the highest-paid coaches at the World Cup. He faced mounting criticism over his tactics and team selection at the tournament. (AP)

Sinner’s skiing background helps his movement: Vonn

ANDREW DAMPF ■ London

Clay, grass, hard court — or even snow. The surface underfoot doesn't seem to make any difference for Jannik Sinner.

The top-ranked player — who is currently attempting to defend his title at Wimbledon — was one of Italy's top junior skiers before he turned his attention full time to tennis. Now Sinner excels on every type of court and his background as a skier might have helped his tennis game. Just like an elite slalom skier perfectly shifting their weight back and forth from one gate to the next, Sinner hardly ever seems off balance as he rushes back and forth across the baseline — despite



his tall and lanky 6-foot-3 (1.91-metre) frame.

Fellow tennis player Casper Ruud agreed that the most impressive thing about Sinner is his movement.

“He's strong also in balance and flexible to get to certain

DAN GELSTON
■ Philadelphia

Kylian Mbappe laughed and smiled — and scored, of course — when Paraguay tried to bait him and his French teammates into fouls and provoke fights, as hot heads became a recurring theme during one of the steamiest World Cup games on record.

After the final whistle, Mbappe kept on walking and left Paraguayan goalkeeper Orlando Gill hanging as Gill extended his right hand in a show of sportsmanship.

In response, Gill threw the ball right at the No. 10 on Mbappe's jersey. Mbappe got the last laugh as he scored his 19th career World Cup goal, and France survived stifling heat to beat Paraguay 1-0 on Saturday, sending Les Bleus into the quarterfinals for the fourth straight time.

Morocco beats co-host Canada 3-0 to advance to quarterfinals

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Houston

Morocco is heading back to the World Cup quarterfinals and coach Mohamed Ouahbi believes his team has established itself among soccer's elite. Azzedine Ounahi scored twice to lead Morocco to a 3-0 win over Canada in the Round of 16 Saturday to make the country the first African nation to reach the quarterfinals more than once.

“We are no longer a surprise,” Ouahbi said through an interpreter. “Now when people talk about Morocco we're a major contender and it's a great source of pride. I think it's only the beginning and I hope we continue to have runs like this.” And despite already making history in this World Cup, Morocco has much higher goals.

“We want to keep going,” Ouahbi said. “We don't want to stop.” It's Morocco's second straight appearance in the final eight after becoming the first African team to reach the semifinals in 2022. “We are so proud to represent Africa because it's a continent with a lot of talent and Africa deserves to be in the best level in football,” goalkeeper Yassine Bounou said. Neither team was able to break through

“We knew what kind of match it was going to be,” Mbappe said in French. “We can also get our hands dirty, we know how to do it. We know how to play ugly football. Guess they were thinking we were going to show up in tuxedos, but we were ready.” France advanced to play Morocco on Thursday in Foxborough, Massachusetts. France beat Morocco 2-0 in the semifinals of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

With an extreme heat warning in effect throughout the match as temperatures hovered around 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 Celsius), Mbappe finally broke through against a physical, defensive-minded Paraguay side when he converted a penalty kick in the 70th minute. That was enough for Les Bleus, whose red, white and blue-clad fans looked plenty patriotic on



until Ounahi took a free kick from Achraf Hakimi and made a right-footed shot through traffic from outside the box to the bottom right corner to put Morocco on top 1-0 in the 50th minute.

Ounahi made it 2-0 on a right-footed shot from the middle of the box off a pass from Braham Diaz in the 82nd minute. Soufiane Rahimi added a goal in the final minute of stoppage time. Morocco will meet France, which beat Paraguay later Saturday, on Thursday in Foxborough, Massachusetts.

The loss ends a historic run for World Cup co-host Canada, which won its first-ever knockout round game, beating South Africa 1-0 to reach Saturday's match. The country was playing in the World Cup for just the third time and the run enchanted



July Fourth in the city where the United States was founded exactly 250 years earlier. Mbappe was awarded the penalty when Diego Gomez was called for tripping after a video review. Then he stutter-stepped on his way to his 19th goal in 19 World Cup appearances, one behind career record holder Lionel Messi of Argentina. Mbappe and Messi each have seven goals in this tourna-

ment to top the Golden Boot race. Mbappe won that award four years ago, but Messi and Argentina beat France in the final.

Mbappe — who frequently trash-talked the Paraguayans in Spanish — is now the only player to score at least three goals in the knockout stage of three World Cups. Mbappe botched a breakaway attempt in the second half, and Manu Kone had his top-

Paraguay gets physical in loss

AARON BRACY
■ Philadelphia

In the last 2026 World Cup match in Philadelphia, Paraguay played a style that has been seen many times before at the city's football stadium.

La Albiroja's physical approach in their 1-0 loss to France in the Round of 16 looked more like what might be seen on a Sunday in the fall from the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles, who play their home games at Lincoln Financial Field.

Eagles coach Nick Sirianni might have liked what he saw. Les Bleus sure didn't.

“I had never played a match like this, with so many hits,” France midfielder Manu Kone said. “I mean, cheap shots, shoves in the back. So, yes, it was complicated.” Paraguay seemed to target star forward Kylian Mbappe, who converted a penalty kick in the 70th minute. In fact, France



received the only three yellow cards issued during the match. Paraguay got one after the final whistle for dissent toward the referee.

Paraguay's tactics came as no surprise to its opponent. “We knew what kind of match it was going to be,” Mbappe said. “We can also get our hands dirty. We know how to do it. We know how to play ugly football. Guess they were thinking we were going to show up in tuxedos, but we were ready. Even at that kind of game, we

were better than them.” Things remained heated — both figuratively and literally, with the game played in scorching temperatures — after the match. Players from both sides converged near the center circle, and Paraguay goalkeeper Orlando Gill threw a ball at Mbappe's back. “I tried to shake his hand, but since he didn't pay me any attention, I lost my temper,” Gill said.

Tempers weren't exactly under control during the match, either. (AP)

For Cape Verde, a World Cup run means many things will change

TIM REYNOLDS ■ Miami Gardens

Cape Verde's World Cup team walked into its Miami hotel after getting eliminated from the tournament, almost in disbelief at the scene in the lobby.

Dozens of people were there, cheering for them. After a loss, no less. Let that be the first sign of how things are going to be very different in many respects for the team, at least for the foreseeable future. Such is the case when a club goes from unheralded - and practically unheard of - to taking Lionel Messi and Argentina to the brink of elimination on soccer's biggest stage, before falling 3-2 in a match that went to extra time.

“It's time to rest and think about the future,” Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha said. “But I am very, very proud of the team's work, and I hope that in the future we can achieve great things.”

In other words, he hopes seeds were planted. Cape Verde went 0-1-3 in its four matches at its inaugural World Cup, which won't look great on paper. More than two-thirds of the 48 teams in this tournament won at least one game; Cape Verde wasn't one of them. But the record simply doesn't tell the whole story.

It played Spain to a scoreless draw to open the group stage, making the chance of advancing to the knockout stage very real. There were two more ties in group play - a 2-2 tie against Uruguay that put Cape Verde on the brink of advancing, then a 0-0 tie against Saudi Arabia that was good enough to get the round of 32 trip secured.

Argentina's players and coaches, to their



credit, insisted they did not expect a cake-walk past Cape Verde. And when the match was over, Messi - generally considered to be the greatest player of all time - had nothing but compliments for the underdog opponent. “Some people thought the match was going to be straightforward, but that couldn't have been further from reality,” Messi said after Friday's match. “They pressed us really well. There are no handouts in knockout football. They'd already performed well against Spain and Uruguay, so we knew it was going to be difficult.”

For Argentina, getting the win was indeed difficult. For Cape Verde, coming to grips that the ride ends here was also difficult.

That said, when they walked through that hotel lobby, it was like the return of conquering heroes. Bubista, the team's coach, shook his fist in celebration. Many players couldn't stop smiling. Vozinha shook some hands and posed for a few photos.

They were celebrities. Rock stars, almost. The score didn't matter. (AP)

Nerves, closed roof were factors in Wimbledon loss: Serena’s coach

ANDREW DAMPF ■ London

Looking back, it seems perfectly understandable that it took Serena Williams some time to settle her nerves in her first singles match in nearly four years.

Rennae Stubbs, one of Williams' coaches, pinpointed a moment about an hour into the 44-year-old's defeat to an opponent less than half her age earlier this week at Wimbledon.

“I noticed in the middle of the second set her take a big sort of deep breath and I actually turned around to Venus and said, Oh I think she just relaxed.” Stubbs said, referring to Serena's older sister. In an interview with The

Associated Press on Saturday, Stubbs also revealed that she first started coaching Williams again in March and immediately noticed that the 23-time Grand Slam champion could still play.

Williams was beaten 6-3, 6-7 (6), 6-3 by 20-year-old Maya Joint of Australia on Tuesday.

While the result on the court was a loss, the reaction in the locker room from other players and coaches was a resounding victory, according to Stubbs.

“They know what it would be like to be in that position of not playing a match for close to four years, going on Centre Court at Wimbledon, knowing there's how many millions of people around

the world watching this match,” Stubbs said. “There's 15,000 people in Centre Court. They expect good tennis. They expect you to not embarrass yourself. So all the players know, to a small degree, what it must be like.”

The match set ratings records on ESPN and Coco Gauff, Naomi Osaka and Novak Djokovic are among the players who have publicly complimented Williams for her performance.

Williams injured her right knee toward the end of the first set against Joint and withdrew from her doubles match with Venus on Saturday. An Instagram update from Serena included images of four syringes that



she said “shows the fluid they drained from my knee after my singles match.” An accompanying video showed her walking with strapping

up and down her right leg and what appeared to be one of her daughters holding a cane for her.

“The good news is my knee

shouldn't swell or collect that much fluid again,” Serena said. “The bad news is that, as hard as I tried, I just wasn't able to get it ready for doubles.” However, with the US Open approaching, Serena indicated she could play again somewhere else soon.

“All I can say,” Serena said, “is stay tuned to a city near you.” Serena became known for her emotional outbursts and run-ins with chair umpires and lines judges toward the end of her career. So Stubbs was concerned about her on-court behavior during her comeback.

But Williams maintained her composure from start to finish. “That was sort of like the one sort of thing that I

asked, is that she try and - as hard as it was going to be — to control her emotions and her nerves and all that sort of stuff,” Stubbs said. “I don't think people even remotely can quantify the amount of pressure that was on her to walk out there and do what she did.”

Stubbs was disappointed, though, to see negative reactions to Williams' return on social media. She was also criticized for skipping her post-match duties—since the injury was not announced until a day later.

Stubbs herself was also criticized on social media.

“I just don't understand why people feel the need to tear somebody down,”

Stubbs said. “What she's doing out there is trying to play a sport she loves. That's what it's about. Show the kids, be out there, enjoy it and give the people another look at playing. What is wrong on with a seven-time Wimbledon champion - a 23-time Grand Slam champion - wanting to play another time at Wimbledon? God let her.”

Williams planned to play more While Williams played two doubles matches before Wimbledon, she hadn't played singles since the 2022 U.S. Open. “Ideally would we have loved to have had warm-up matches? Yes,” Stubbs said. “And for anyone to insinuate that she didn't want to do that is crazy.” (AP)

Women’s T20 WC: Australia beat England to win 7th title

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ London

Australian team proved its absolute supremacy in the women's game, winning an unprecedented seventh T20 World Cup title after making short work of hosts England by seven wickets in the final here on Sunday.

Among the greatest sporting outfits across all sports, the Southern Stars made a mockery of a record chase of 151 runs, completing the formalities in only 17.1 overs with Sophie Molineux winning her first ICC title as skipper.

Young Phoebe Litchfield (48 off 35 balls), possibly the best batter among the

younger crop in women's cricket, stitched a 100-run stand with veteran Beth Mooney (64 off 49 balls) that basically decimated an English attack which had to defend a total that was at least 25 runs sub-par on a decent batting track.

Their century stand came off just 69 balls — a marker why Australian women are a few country miles ahead of other teams in terms of skill and quality.

Litchfield, with superb hand-eye co-ordination, muscled her way to six fours and two sixes while Mooney's precision and penchant for rotating the strike left the Charlotte Edwards-coached side absolutely clueless.

At the halfway stage, Australia had raced to 100 and it was a mere formality with the asking rate dropping down to less than run a ball.

The best shot came out of Litchfield's closet when the victory seemed like a formality. Left-arm spinner Linsey Smith bowled one outside the left-hander's off-stump trying to keep it out of her hitting arc. Litchfield quickly got into a position where she played the reverse slog sweep with the ball sailing over backward point for a six.

Mooney wasn't one to be left behind as she lofted Sophie Ecclestone inside out over extra cover and then completed her fifty off just 38 balls, keeping her superb



record in ICC finals intact. She averages 90 whenever Mooney batted in an ICC final (T20I and ODI) for the Southern Stars. Also this was the first time she was dismissed in a T20 World Cup final.

Earlier, skipper Nat Sciver-Brunt scored a gritty half-century but Australian bowling unit displayed a lot of discipline to restrict hosts England to a sub-par 150 for 4 in the stipulated 20 overs.

Southern Stars skipper Sophie Molineux's decision to bowl first was completely vindicated by her bowling unit which kept the England batters under tight leash. And that too without the world's greatest woman all-rounder Elyse Perry rolling her arms

due to an injury.

Had Sciver-Brunt (58 not out off 53 balls) and Freya Kemp (44 not out off 28 balls) not added 80 runs for the fifth wicket, England wouldn't have reached the respectable figure of 150-plus. The England bowlers did have at least some chance to fight.

Sciver-Brunt struck five fours while Kemp hit four boundaries and a maximum.

The domination of the Australian bowlers could be understood from the simple statistic — only two sixes were hit by English women during the course of 20 overs. Alice Capsey hit one and Kemp, who gave the innings some push towards the end, struck the other off Molineux.

Nothing sweeter than walking off not out with a win: Bethell

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Manchester

England batter Jacob Bethell rated his unbeaten 76 against India in the second T20I among the finest innings of his career, saying it was especially satisfying because it came in a winning cause.

The 22-year-old has scored a century in each of the three formats. His only T20I hundred was in the semifinal of this year's T20 World Cup against India, a match England lost by seven runs.

On Saturday, Bethell produced a composed yet explosive unbeaten 76 to guide England to a four-wicket victory while chasing 191, helping the hosts take a 1-0 lead in the five-match series.

"I'd actually put it up close to the top. There's nothing



sweeter as a batter than walking off with a win, not out, walking in, shaking the boys' hands," Bethell said when asked where the innings ranked among his favourites for England.

"I've scored a few hun-

dreds, but only one of them was in a winning cause. We lost in Australia, we lost in India, so after those games you always think, 'What more could I have done?'"

"Whereas today, I'm all smiles. We've gone one-nil up

in the series. There's a few scars against India, so it's nice to get one up on them. It's also given me a lot of confidence going into the last three games."

Bethell was on 42 off 36 balls after 16 overs when he turned the game decisively in England's favour.

He hammered three sixes and a four in Ravi Bishnoi's 17th over, which also included two no-balls, collecting 29 runs before hitting an audacious reverse-ramp six off Harshit Rana. He smashed 34 runs off the final 10 balls he faced.

"In these kinds of chases, you're not going hard the whole time. It's about finding a couple of big overs and then the game swings," Bethell said. "If I'm honest, I probably would have targeted the other end more

because my leg side was towards the shorter boundary with the wind. But when you get a couple of free-hits and the bowler is under pressure, you have to make the most of it." Bethell walked in at No. 4 with England reeling at 1 for 2 after just five deliveries following ducks for both openers.

"I was pretty calm. When Brooky (Harry Brook) went out there, I said, 'Go well, Harry,' and then I was out there a couple of balls later. 'Jos (Buttler) was unlucky, but it's a strange feeling walking in at two down for not many. Brooky handled that situation unbelievably." England captain Harry Brook's counter-attacking 39 off just 15 balls, featuring four fours and three sixes, helped revive the innings after the early collapse.

Praggnanandhaa trails in Blitz

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Zagreb (Croatia)

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa could not replicate his rapid form, managing just 3.5 points from the opening nine rounds of the blitz section, while France's Alireza Firouzja produced a brilliant display to emerge as the sole leader after the penultimate day of the Croatian leg of the Grand Chess Tour.

Alireza was simply brilliant in the faster version as he knocked down as many as eight points out of a possible nine and took a massive three points lead on 20 points over nearest rivals Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France.

Praggnanandhaa slipped behind to a distanced fourth on 15.5 points, while world champion D Gukesh had another average day to reach on 14 points for his fifth spot.

In what can be termed one of the most dominant performances in Grand Chess Tour history, Firouzja has left half the field at least seven points adrift. Vincent Keymer of Germany is sixth on 13 points, Dutchman Anish Giri is another half a point behind, while Deac Bogdan-Daniel of Romania is on 11.5. Another two points



behinds is Jorden van Foreest of Holland and Croatian Ivan Saric is at the bottom on just 5 points.

After a dramatic bounce back that saw him sharing the lead after the rapid section with Alireza, Praggnanandhaa apparently missed the thread in the blitz section. Starting of the day with a win over Keymer, Praggnanandhaa took a draw in the next game with Giri but then four straight losses were enough to dent his confidence. The Indian ended with a net score of 3.5 points out of a possible eight on the fourth day of the tournament.

Things were not so much different for Gukesh even though he got a half point more than Praggnanandhaa.

Four losses in patches for the youngest ever world champion did not help his cause much. With 9 rounds in the blitz section still to be played, the top place is probably already decided. Praggnanandhaa still has a chance for a podium finish if he regains his touch on the final day of this \$2,00,000 prize money tournament.

Standings after round 9 rapid and 9 rounds of blitz:

1. Firouzja Alireza (Fr) 20;
- 2-3. Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra) Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb) 17 each;
4. R Praggnanandhaa (Ind) 15.5;
5. D Gukesh (Ind) 13.5;
- Vincent Keymer (Ger) 13;
7. Anish Giri (Ned) 12.5;
8. Deac Bogdan-Daniel (Rou) 11.5;
- Jorden van Foreest (Ned) 9.5;
10. Ivan Saric (Cro) 5.

Babar Azam replaces Shan Masood as Pakistan Test captain

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Islamabad

Babar Azam has returned to lead Pakistan's Test cricket team after Shan Masood was axed from the role on Sunday.

Masood's firing seemed inevitable after the team fell to 12 defeats in 16 matches during his tenure, which began when he initially replaced Babar in late 2023. "We wanted to look for a captain who could lead the team in a much better way," selector Aaqib Javed told reporters in Lahore. "Shan's individual performance was good but as captain we weren't getting the desired results."

Javed said the selection committee was unanimous in recommending Babar as captain and no other player came up in the discussion.

Pakistan's results in Test matches took a sharp decline since Masood lost 3-0 to



Australia in his first series. Pakistan also lost 2-0 to Bangladesh at home for the first time and the only series win under Masood's captaincy came against England at home when Pakistan won 2-1 as eventually Pakistan finished at bottom of the last World Test Championship points table.

Javed pointed out several shortcomings of the Pakistan team in test matches under Masood's leadership that included losses against

South Africa and the West Indies. "The captain has a responsibility of finishing the games," Javed said. "Some things are the responsibility of the team, some are the responsibility of the selectors, and some are the responsibility of the captain. The captain's responsibility also includes maintaining the team's over rate, taking DRS decisions and making the right call at the toss."

Masood had a fair time with the bat during his captaincy as he scored two centuries and seven half centuries, including back-to-back fifties at Melbourne against Australia.

Babar had led Pakistan to 10 wins in 20 tests before Masood was handed the captaincy. Babar's tenure as skipper started with a 2-0 home win over South Africa and Pakistan also went on to clean sweep Bangladesh and Sri Lanka away from home.

India A outplay Sri Lanka A by 10 wkts as Brar excels



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Galle

Pacer Gurnoor Brar made a strong case for a Test debut in Sri Lanka next month with a match haul of 10 wickets in India A's resounding win in the second and final unofficial Test here on Sunday.

Courtesy Sai Sudharsan's 168, India A put up a daunting first innings total of 543, giving them a 177-run lead over Sri Lanka A. The game moved fast on the fourth and concluding day with Brar

running through the Sri Lanka A batting unit with a six-wicket haul in the second innings, following his four wickets in the first innings.

The other contender for a spot in the Test team for the two-match series against Sri Lanka from August, Aquib Nabi, paled in Brar's comparison. The Punjab pacer had impressed on his India debut in the ODI series against Afghanistan last month. Brar was part of the Test squad too but did not make his debut in the traditional format.

Eala stuns Wimbledon champion Swiatek in historic win

KENT MAGUIRE ■ London

Alexandra Eala didn't have the option of playing on grass courts growing up in the Philippines. Instead, she used one that also doubled as a basketball court. "There would be the basketball hoops, so I couldn't really step back a lot because then I would hit the basketball hoop," Eala said.

The 21-year-old Eala found Centre Court at Wimbledon a bit more accommodating Saturday when she beat defending champion Iga Swiatek 7-6 (9), 6-2 in the third round at the grass-court major



and made some history in the process.

Eala is the first Filipino player, male or female, to

reach the fourth round of a Grand Slam singles tournament.

The left-handed Eala

dropped to her knees and rolled onto her back after hitting a forehand winner on her third match point.

"It's incredible to have my countrymen cheering me on and knowing that we're all in this together," she said in an on-court interview as she looked around at the Philippines flags.

"This goes out to them, this goes out to my family, this goes out to all the little girls with ruffled socks and chubby cheeks. It means the world," said the 29th-seeded Eala, who saved two set points in the first-set tiebreaker. The

third-seeded Swiatek earned her first Wimbledon women's title a year ago when she beat Amanda Anisimova 6-0, 6-0 in the final.

"I felt like Alexandra was more brave in important moments," Swiatek said Saturday. "In the tiebreak we both had many chances to close the set earlier, and it didn't go my way."

Eala, who has trained in Mallorca at the Rafael Nadal Tennis Academy, gained worldwide support last year on her breakthrough run to the Miami Open semifinals, which included an upset of Swiatek. (AP)

Diksha, Aditi stay in title hunt at Hulencourt Women’s Open

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Hulencourt (Belgium)

India's experienced Olympians Diksha Dagar and Aditi Ashok remained firmly in contention for a strong finish at the Hulencourt Women's Open after moving into a shared third place here.

Keeping India's hopes alive in the Ladies European Tour event, Diksha (71) and Aditi (70) closed the third round at five-under-par 211, five shots behind Australia's Kelsey Bennett.

Bennett seized control of the tournament with a composed three-under 69 to reach 10-under and open a two-shot advantage over Spain's Carolina Chacarra.

Hero-backed Diksha produced another steady display, carding a one-under 71 to stay in touch with the leaders despite difficult scoring conditions.

Starting confidently, she picked up birdies on the second and ninth holes before dropping her lone shot of the day at the 10th.



A string of eight successive pars thereafter ensured the two-time LET winner remained within striking distance entering Sunday's decisive round.

Aditi, meanwhile, overcame a mixed day to post a two-under 70. The five-time LET winner appeared to be slipping out of contention after three bogeys during the round, but she responded impressively by birdieing three of her final four holes to join Diksha in tied third.

The finish underlined Aditi's ability to recover under pressure and kept alive her hopes of adding another LET title to her impressive resume. Her maiden victory

on the Tour had come at the Hero Women's Indian Open exactly a decade ago.

Among the other Indians, Pranavi Urs slipped to tied 42nd after returning a one-over 73. Her round featured three birdies but was offset by four bogeys as she dropped down the leaderboard. Youngster Avani Prashanth endured a disappointing day on a day of strong winds.

She mixed an eagle and a birdie with three bogeys on the front nine but unravelled on the inward half with four consecutive bogeys from the 11th, another dropped shot on the 16th and a double bogey on the closing hole.

Ecosystem in country needs to back squash players to win at world stage: Tanvi Khanna

DEVARCHIT VARMA ■ Mumbai

Squash ace Tanvi Khanna believes that establishing the complete ecosystem of the sport within the country is essential for the skill expansion and global success of next generation players.

The world No. 74 Tanvi, who is in the Indian squad

for the Asian Games to be held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, in September-October, says India must imbibe lessons from top nations that have consistently produced champions. "I do believe we can learn from other nations that have a history of producing champions, but the idea is to learn and bring back the same skills to fellow

Indians, so, it's more sustainable and long term," Tanvi, who won the Squash PSA Challenger Tour here, told PTI in an exclusive interview.

"I strongly believe if we want the future generation to win medals for India, the entire ecosystem of coaches and players has to be in India. "This is the only way to



inspire the future generations (and) this is what countries like Egypt have, and India is currently lacking," she said. Tanvi does not adhere to the belief that full-time foreign coaches can improve Indian players' performance, but underlined the need to put in place world-class infrastructure.

"Another struggle is infra-

structure. My academy has 6-7 kids who are India No.1 this year itself, a world junior medallist and multiple Asian junior medallists," she said.

"We desperately need a full glass court in Delhi. All the international events take place on glass courts, and they play very differently to traditional courts. When we go abroad for tournaments,

we all find it hard to adjust to the glass court as we haven't practiced on it," she said.

The 29-year-old, who is not a part of the TOPS programme, said she would like to see more initiative from the Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI) and the Squash Association of Delhi. (PTI)