

Apart from the infant, there were seven men and four women among the dead. One of the deceased was yet to be identified. The majority of them were from Pangri in Chamba district, police said.



DGP directs comprehensive security blueprint for Shravani Mela 2026

KUMAR PRABHAT : DUMKA

In a major push to ensure seamless law enforcement and hassle-free pilgrimage management, Director General of Police (DGP) Tadasha Mishra chaired a high-level security meeting at the Dumka Collectorate on Friday. The visit follows her offer of prayers at the holy shrines of Deoghar and Basukinath Dham, marking the final phase of administrative planning ahead of the famed Shravani Mela, set to commence on July 30.

The top-tier review meeting saw the presence of key law enforcement leadership, including IG (Operations) NK Singh, IG (CID) Ajay Linda, IG (Santhal Pargana) Mayur Patel Kanhaiyalal, and DIG Amber Lakra, along with Superintendents of Police from all districts under the Santhal Pargana division.



DGP Tadasha Mishra holds a meeting with senior police officers on crime control, high-tech surveillance, and crowd management across the Santhal Pargana division. PNS

Focusing on core policing challenges across the division, the DGP issued firm directions to curb organized crime, accelerate the resolution of pending cases, execute long-standing arrest warrants, and crack down heavily on

active cybercrime modules and narcotics syndicates. A primary focus of the session was fine-tuning the operational framework for the world-renowned Shravani Mela. With millions of *kanwariyas* expected to under-

take the annual pilgrimage to offer holy water at Baba Baidyanath Dham and Baba Basukinath Dham, DGP Mishra stressed the necessity of airtight security, frictionless traffic management, and proactive crowd control.

Earlier in Jarmundi, the DGP performed rituals at the Basukinath temple, where she was formally felicitated with a sacred memento by Santhal Pargana DIG Amber Lakra, Dumka SP Pitambar Singh Kherwar, and Panda Dharmarakhshini Sabha President Manoj Panda.

Speaking on the deployment plan, DGP Mishra highlighted that state forces will leverage modern technology including artificial intelligence-integrated surveillance, drone monitoring, and extensive CCTV networks to maintain continuous vigilance across the mela grounds. Seeking active collaboration from local priest bodies and shrine representatives, the state police chief reaffirmed the administration's commitment to delivering a safe, peaceful, and well-regulated experience for every visiting devotee.

Two doctors drown in Dimna Lake trying to retrieve mobile phone

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

JAMSHEDPUR : A tragic incident at Dimna Lake claimed the lives of two young doctors from Mahatma Gandhi Memorial (MGM) Medical College and Hospital in the early hours of Friday, leaving the medical fraternity and residents of Jamshedpur in deep shock. The two junior doctors reportedly drowned after one of them entered the lake to retrieve a mobile phone that had accidentally fallen into the water, while the other jumped in to rescue him.

The deceased have been identified as 26-year-old Sameer and 22-year-old Saksham Singh, both junior doctors at MGM Medical College and Hospital.

According to police, three junior doctors had completed their hospital duties around 11 p.m. on Thursday. After finishing work, Sameer, Saksham and their colleague, Yash, decided to visit Dimna Lake around midnight. What began as a casual outing soon turned into a devastating tragedy. Preliminary investigations suggest that one of the doctors accidentally dropped his mobile phone into the lake. In an attempt to recover it, he entered the water and swam towards



the spot where the phone had fallen. However, he soon began struggling in the deep water and reportedly lost control.

Witnessing his friend in distress, the second doctor immediately jumped into the lake in an effort to save him. Unfortunately, he too was unable to maintain his balance in the deep water. Within moments, both disappeared beneath the surface.

Their companion, Yash, who remained on the shore, escaped unharmed. Realising the seriousness of the situation, he immediately alerted hospital authorities and informed the police. Rescue teams, local divers and emergency personnel rushed to the spot and launched an intensive search operation that continued through the

night. The operation faced challenges due to darkness and the depth of the lake. Police personnel secured the area while divers conducted repeated underwater searches. After several hours of effort, the bodies of both doctors were recovered from the lake on Friday morning.

Rural Superintendent of Police Shubham Khandewal confirmed that both bodies had been recovered and that legal formalities had been completed. He said the exact sequence of events is being investigated and statements are being recorded from those present at the scene. The police are also examining why the three doctors had visited the lake after midnight and whether any other factors contributed to the tragedy.

Police bust major illicit liquor racket in Palamu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

DALTONGANJ : In a major crackdown on illicit liquor, Palamu Police on Thursday unearthed a clandestine bottling, packaging and distribution unit operating under the Panki police station limits, exposing what officials described as a full-fledged counterfeit liquor manufacturing and trading racket.

The operation was carried out at Jiro Tola in Baghmari village following specific intelligence received by Palamu Superintendent of Police Kapil Chaudhary. Acting on the tip-off, SDPO

(Lesligani) Prashant Kumar (II) led the police operation that culminated in the seizure of a large quantity of illicit liquor, spirit and counterfeit packaging materials. Speaking about the raid, SDPO Prashant Kumar (II) said the police team identified a locked shop that appeared abandoned from the outside, making it unlikely to attract suspicion.

"Under the directions of the Superintendent of Police, our team tracked the premises. Though it looked like an abandoned shop from outside, the room inside had been converted into a complete bottling, packaging



Items that were seized for making illicit liquor during a police raid in Daltonganj on Friday. PNS

and dispatch unit for illicit liquor," he said.

During the search, police seized 13 cartons containing 48 bottles each of illicit

liquor, five gallon containers holding around 250 litres of spirit, a large quantity of counterfeit wrappers resembling popular English liquor

brands, and more than 1,900 fake government excise stickers allegedly meant to facilitate the illegal sale of counterfeit liquor while evading government revenue. The police also recovered over 1,500 empty liquor bottles, indicating that locally manufactured liquor was allegedly being repackaged and sold as branded Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL). A substantial quantity of colouring material used in liquor manufacturing was also seized. The owner of the premises, identified as Lala Singh, is absconding, and efforts are underway to trace and arrest him.

Lord Jagannath's Bahuda Yatra held with fervour in Bokaro

PNS : BOKARO

Lord Jagannath's Bahuda Yatra (Return Car Festival) was celebrated with great devotion, enthusiasm and religious fervour in Bokaro Steel City on Friday. Following traditional rituals and prayers, the idols of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra were ceremonially brought out from the temple and placed on a beautifully decorated chariot.

Before the procession commenced, the Executive Director (Materials Management) performed the traditional Chhera Panhara ritual by ceremonially sweeping the chariot. Members of the Bokaro Mahila Samiti, dignitaries and a large number of devotees were present on the occasion.

The return procession began from the Ram Temple premises at Janvrit-1 with active participation from residents and devotees, who pulled the chariot as an act of faith and devotion. The yatra



passed through Patharkatta Chowk, Gandhi Chowk (City Centre) and the Bokaro General Hospital Road before culminating at the Jagannath Temple.

Voluntary organisations, Bokaro Mahila Samiti and several social groups arranged drinking water and refreshing beverages for devotees along the route,

ensuring a comfortable experience for participants.

The event reflected Bokaro Steel Plant's continued efforts to strengthen the city's cultural and social fabric while promoting community participation. Such religious and cultural celebrations foster harmony, unity and the spirit of selfless service among the people.

Dr. Amar Pankaj to get Namvar Centenary Memorial Award

PNS : DEOGHAR

Dr. Amar Pankaj, a Deoghar resident, poet (ghazalist), and lecturer in Ancient Indian History at Swami Shraddhanand College, University of Delhi, will be honoured with the Namvar Centenary Memorial Award by Narayani Sahitya Academy. The award ceremony will take place on 26 July 2026 at Hansraj College auditorium in New Delhi. The award recognizes his distinguished contributions to literature and the ghazal genre.

On the same day, 26 July 2026, the Likhavat Foundation, New Delhi, will hold an important event at India International Centre Annexe to release a collection preserving 504 of Dr. Pankaj's couplets. The book 'Chune hue sher', edited, and compiled by Hare Ram Samip and published by Dr. Kusumlata Singh's Little Bird Publications will be launched at that program.

Dr. Pankaj has dedicated this book to his ghazal mentor, Sharad Tailang.

He is the author of 14 books on history, culture, and literature, and has published more than 25 research papers in various national and international journals. His ghazals have appeared periodically in numerous national and international literary magazines. Many of his ghazals are also included in dozens of ghazal anthologies edited by senior poets. Dr. Pankaj's works are available on the Kavita Kosh and Rekhta websites.



SURENDRA SOREN : RANCHI

A statewide unemployment survey conducted by Gyan Vigyan Samiti (GVS), Jharkhand has painted a grim picture of the state's employment scenario, revealing that a large proportion of educated youth are struggling to secure stable jobs and are increasingly losing confidence in their future prospects. The findings were released at a press conference held at the Ranchi Press Club on Friday in the presence of the organisation's national and state leadership. Addressing the media, Dr. Kashinath Chatterjee, National Vice-President of Gyan Vigyan Samiti, said the survey formed part of the organisation's nationwide campaign, "What Should the Future India Look Like?", which advocates for an India where every citizen, particularly young people, has access to dignified, secure and sustainable employment.

Conducted between August and September 2025, the survey covered 4,678 respondents across 18 districts of Jharkhand. Of the respondents, 58.47 per cent were men and 41.53 per cent women, with an average age of around 30 years. The survey found that 71 per cent were actively seeking employment, while 15 per cent were students. Others depended on irregular wage labour, agriculture or small-scale self-employment for their livelihood.

Despite 96 per cent of respondents having received formal education-including graduates and postgraduates-employment opportunities remained limited. Nearly 49 per cent said they had very little chance of securing a good job, while 21 per cent believed opportunities were almost non-existent. Only 16 per cent expressed optimism about finding suitable employment.

The survey also highlighted growing mental distress

among young people, with 35 per cent describing themselves as highly distressed, 26 per cent worried about their future and over 15 per cent saying they had lost hope of finding employment.

Respondents attributed unemployment to a combination of Central and State government policies, systemic shortcomings, lack of resources, inadequate skill development and unequal distribution of resources. More than 95 per cent believed unemployment has worsened over the years.

Dr. Chatterjee said the findings underscored not only rising unemployment but also increasing underemployment, with many educated youth compelled to accept temporary or low-skilled jobs that do not match their qualifications. He warned that unless quality employment opportunities are created, the aspirations of millions of young Indians would remain unfulfilled.

Admin issues final eviction notice in pond encroachment case

KARTIK KUMAR : PAKUR

The Pakur district administration has issued a final eviction notice to commercial establishments allegedly encroaching on government land surrounding a pond in Mouza Pakur (Plot No. 1345), directing all occupants to vacate the premises by July 27, 2026.

According to the notice issued by the Circle Office, failure to remove the encroachments within the stipulated deadline will lead to a demolition drive on July 28, to be conducted in the presence of an Executive Magistrate and police personnel. Officials said restoration of the pond will commence immediately after the encroachments are cleared.

The notice has been served to eight commercial establishments, including Monte Carlo, Baba Loknath Enterprises, Laxmi Furniture, Royal Traders, Aastha, Ajmera, and other businesses located along the pond's boundary.

Officials said the action is being taken in compliance with judicial directions aimed at protecting and restoring water bodies. The administration had earlier asked the occupants to remove the alleged encroachments voluntarily, but with the latest notice, a final deadline for compliance has been fixed.

The proposed eviction has triggered concern among affected traders. Several shopkeepers said they have been operating their businesses at the site for many years, while some claimed they are tenants rather than owners of the properties.



SCS observes Kargil Vijay Diwas



Surendranath Centenary School observed Kargil Vijay Diwas to pay tribute to the valour and sacrifice of the Indian Armed Forces. The event was organized by the Heritage Club in collaboration with the Art & Culture Club. The program commenced with a Special Assembly featuring a speech on the significance of Kargil Vijay Diwas. In the Junior Wing, members of the Art & Culture Club presented patriotic Song & Dance Performances. In the Senior Wing, a Quiz and a Painting Competition were organized for students. Addressing the gathering, Principal Samita Sinha said, "Remembering Kargil reminds us of the courage of our soldiers. Such activities help our students develop pride in the nation and gratitude towards our armed forces."

Sacred Heart triumphs at debate competition

Loyola School, Telco hosted the Frank Anthony Memorial All-India Inter-School Debate Competition 2026 (Category II, Stage I), bringing together six leading schools from the city to promote critical thinking and public speaking. The event was judged by veteran journalist Parvinder Bhatia, Dr. Monika Uppal, and Prof. Sanjeev Varshney. Sifat Sandhu of Sacred Heart Convent School won the Best Speaker award, while Aditi Kumari of Hill Top School was named first runner-up. Sacred Heart Convent School (Team Socrates) emerged as the overall winner, with Hill Top School (Team Plato) finishing as the first runner-up.



Monsoon to intensify again in Jharkhand



PNS : RANCHI

The monsoon is set to gain momentum again in J h a r k h a n d . The Meteorological Department informed that rain will continue in most parts of the State for the next two days.

Light to moderate rain is expected in many districts of the State, with heavy rain, thunderstorms, and strong winds expected at some places. In view of this, people have been advised to exercise extra caution during inclement weather.

The monsoon is expected

to remain active on July 25th. Heavy rain is expected in many parts of the state, including Ranchi, Deoghar, Dumka, Giridih, Jamtara, Godda, Pakur, and Sahibganj. Meteorologists say strong winds and thunderstorms are likely.

The Meteorological Department has appealed to people to avoid open fields, tall trees, and electric poles during rain and lightning, and to stay in safe places. The administration is also closely monitoring the situation due to the constantly changing weather.

On July 26, most parts of the state will remain cloudy throughout the day. Intermittent rain is likely in several districts including Bokaro, Hazaribagh, Dhanbad, Ramgarh, Khunti, Gumla, Lohardaga, Koderma, East and West Singhbhum, Simdega and Saraikela-Kharsawan. During this period, strong winds with speeds of 30 to 40 kilometers per hour and thunderstorms accompanied by lightning are also expected. Heavy rain is likely at some places in Latehar and surrounding areas.

From June 1 to July 20, Jharkhand recorded 33 percent less rainfall than normal. While the State should have received 319.8 mm of rainfall during this period, only 261.4 mm has been recorded so far.

In the State Capital, too, rainfall was 19 percent below normal; 331.1 mm of rain was recorded against the normal average of 406.4 mm for this period. Continuous rainfall has also led to a drop in maximum temperatures.

Skill development program held for CCL's category-1 employees

PNS : RANCHI

A skill development program was organized by BTTI, Bhurkunda, from July 20, 2026, to Friday aimed at upgrading the skills of Category-1 employees from various areas of Central Coalfields Limited (CCL). The program is a significant part of the series of skill development initiatives being conducted by BTTI under the guidance of CCL's Human Resource Development (HRD) department during the 2026-27 financial year. The concluding ceremony of the program was held today, July 24, 2026, and was graced by the presence of Barka-Sayal Area, General Manager (Mining), Ranjay Sinha, General Manager (HRD), CCL, MF. Haque and Chief Manager (HRD), Vikas Kumar Singh along with officials from BTTI, Bhurkunda.

The dignitaries present on the occasion interacted with the participants and motivated them to continuously develop their skills and prepare themselves to meet future work requirements. During the program, participants received both classroom-based training and hands-on computer training. A total of 63 employees participated in this skill development program.





CM orders swift action on Homeopathic College recognition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

RANCHI : Chief Minister Hemant Soren has directed officials to take immediate corrective measures to safeguard the recognition of the State Homeopathic Medical College at Parsapani in Godda district and review alleged discrepancies in OBC reservation in the Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission (JSSC) Assistant Teacher recruitment process.

The directions were issued after Poreyahat MLA and Congress Legislature Party leader Pradeep Yadav met the Chief Minister on Friday and raised both issues, describing them as matters of

urgent public importance. Regarding the State Homeopathic Medical College, which offers the BHMS course, Yadav informed the Chief Minister that the National Commission for Homoeopathy (NCH), through its Medical Assessment and Rating Board for Homoeopathy (MARBH), had pointed out deficiencies in faculty strength and infrastructure and directed the institution to rectify them within 30 days to avoid jeopardising its recognition.

The Chief Minister instructed the Health Secretary to declare the results of faculty interviews conducted on June 8, 2026, and com-

plete the appointment process within the next seven days. Around 56 candidates had appeared for the interviews. He also directed that the required equipment and other resources be arranged immediately.

According to Yadav, the Godda Deputy Commissioner has already been asked to visit the college on Monday and ensure that the necessary equipment and infrastructure are provided through the District Mineral Foundation Trust (DMFT) fund. Once the deficiencies are addressed, the Health Department will inform the NCH so that the recognition process can be completed within the stip-



CLP leader Pradeep Yadav meets Chief Minister Hemant Soren in Ranchi on Friday. PNS

ulated deadline.

Yadav also raised concerns over the reservation matrix in the JSSC Trained Assistant Teacher (Para Teacher) Combined Competitive Examination-2026 (Advertisement No. 04/2026). He alleged that OBC reservation had been incorrectly calculated in the recruitment of 6,101 posts, resulting in only 209 seats being allocated to Extremely Backward Class (EBC-I) and Backward Class-II candidates, instead of the 814 posts that should have been earmarked under the 14 per cent reservation quota.

He claimed that candidates from OBC categories selected

under the general merit list may have been counted against the reserved quota, reducing the actual number of seats available for OBC applicants.

Taking note of the issue, Chief Minister Soren directed the Chief Secretary to conduct a fresh calculation of the reservation roster, examine the alleged discrepancy, and submit a report at the earliest so that any error, if found, can be rectified without delay.

Pradeep Yadav said the Chief Minister had assured him that both issues would be addressed on priority to protect students' interests and ensure fairness in the recruitment process.

'Vidhi Portal 2.0 launched to digitise Govt Litigation Management

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

RANCHI : The State government on Friday launched Vidhi Portal 2.0, a major digital initiative aimed at transforming the management of government litigation through an integrated, technology-driven platform. The portal was inaugurated by Advocate General Rohitashwa Roy at a function held in the conference hall of the Jharkhand High Court.

The launch event was attended by IT Secretary Pooja Singhal, Law Secretary Neeraj Kumar Srivastava, Senior Additional Advocate General Achyut Keshav, and senior officials from various state departments.

Developed under the leadership of Chief Minister



Advocate General Rohitashwa Roy along with others during the launch of Vidhi Portal 2.0 held at the conference hall of the Jharkhand High Court in Ranchi on Friday. PNS

Hemant Soren, Vidhi Portal 2.0 is being seen as a significant milestone in Jharkhand's digital governance initiatives. The upgraded platform is designed to enhance transparency, efficiency and

accountability in the handling of government court cases by leveraging advanced digital technologies.

The portal provides a unified platform connecting government departments,

the Law Department, the Office of the Advocate General and government counsel.

It features real-time case monitoring, automated alerts, intelligent workflow management and advanced analytics to facilitate timely decision-making and strengthen the state's legal representation before courts.

More than 20 new features have been incorporated into the upgraded version, including integration with the e-Courts system, smart cause lists, daily and weekly case digests, an executive dashboard, centralised notice management and a dedicated mobile application. The government also plans to introduce artificial intelligence-based legal ana-

lytics in future versions to further improve case management.

Speaking on the occasion, Advocate General Rohitashwa Roy said the portal would play a crucial role in ensuring better management of government litigation and more effective representation before courts. IT Secretary Pooja Singhal described the initiative as a significant step towards building a transparent and technology-enabled governance framework in the state. To ensure smooth implementation, the government will conduct phased training programmes for departmental officials and other users, enabling them to effectively utilise the portal's full range of features.

Finance Minister's security restored with additional escort vehicle

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

RANCHI : The State government has enhanced the security cover of Finance Minister Radhakrishna Kishore by adding an extra escort vehicle to his convoy, bringing the total number of escort vehicles to three.

The decision comes following the intervention of Chief Minister Hemant Soren after a controversy erupted over the reported reduction in the minister's security cover. Acting on the directions of Director General of Police (DGP) Tadasha Mishra, the IG (Provision) has issued an official order deploying three Bolero escort vehicles with the finance minister's convoy.

Reacting to the development, Finance Minister Radhakrishna Kishore thanked Chief Minister Hemant Soren for personally intervening in the matter. "The issue has been



resolved amicably due to the Chief Minister's timely intervention. He understood the seriousness of the matter and acted promptly," Kishore said.

Clarifying his earlier objection, the minister said his concerns were based solely on security considerations and not on any personal grievance.

"Palamu has long been affected by extremism and criminal activities. I have

consistently fought against such elements throughout my political career. My concerns were raised strictly in accordance with the prescribed security norms," he said.

The controversy began after the Home Department's Joint Secretary reportedly issued an order withdrawing one escort vehicle from the minister's convoy. Expressing dissatisfaction over the decision, Kishore returned his official security personnel and escort vehicle, signalling his protest against the reduction in security.

Despite the withdrawal, security personnel continued to monitor the minister's movements from a distance as a precautionary measure.

Following the Chief Minister's intervention and the fresh order issued by the DGP, the minister's full security arrangement has now been restored, bringing the episode to an end.

MARANDI DEMANDS REMOVAL OF JPSC MEMBER JAMAL AHMAD



State BJP President Aditya Sahu, Opposition leader Babul Marandi, State BJP General Secretary Organization Karamveer Singh and others during a meeting at the party office in Ranchi on Friday. Pix by Vinay Murmu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

RANCHI : Leader of the Opposition Babul Marandi has written to Chief Minister Hemant Soren, demanding the removal of Jamal Ahmed from his position as a member of the Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC) and seeking an investigation by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) into his alleged disproportionate assets. In his letter, Marandi urged the Chief Minister to order an immediate and comprehensive ACB probe into all movable and immovable assets, bank accounts,

investments, and known as well as alleged undisclosed sources of income of the JPSC member.

He also called for Ahmed's immediate removal from office, stating that it would help prevent any possible interference with the investigation and uphold the credibility of the constitutional body. In the letter, Marandi claimed that he had received information from "highly reliable sources" alleging that Jamal Ahmed had amassed substantial movable and immovable assets by allegedly misusing his official position. He alleged that Ahmed

owns a luxury flat measuring around 3,000-4,000 square feet in Ranchi and is reportedly looking to purchase another large apartment in the city. Marandi also alleged that Ahmed has acquired significant benami and immovable properties in Hazaribagh district.

He alleged that the recruitment process in which Ahmed was appointed as a lecturer is under investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and argued that a person whose own appointment is under scrutiny should not have been appointed to a constitutional body responsible for conducting recruitment examinations.

The BJP leader further alleged that Ahmed's appointment to the JPSC was made under pressure from former state minister Alamgir Alam, an allegation for which he did not provide evidence in the letter. Expressing concern over the credibility of the commission, Marandi said that appointing a person facing allegations of corruption to the JPSC could undermine public confidence among lakhs of job aspirants.

Power supply to remain suspended in parts of city today

PNS : RANCHI

The Ranchi East Electricity Division has announced a scheduled power shutdown in parts of the Tatisilwai subdivision on Saturday, July 25, to facilitate infrastructure improvement works under the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS).

According to the electricity department, power supply from the Plandu Feeder will remain suspended from 10:00 am to 12:00 noon for the installation of covered LT cables and erection of electricity poles.

The affected areas include Plandu, including the area near Gammon India, areas near Reliance Petrol Pump and Rampur Chowk, Sidrol Power House service area and localities and villages beyond Rampur Chowk falling under the Plandu Feeder.

Officials said the entire Plandu Feeder will remain shut during the maintenance period. Consumers residing in the affected areas have been advised to plan their activities accordingly and cooperate with the department during the scheduled shutdown.

The department stated that the work is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the power distribution network and improve the reliability and safety of electricity supply in the region.



PNS : RANCHI

The Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee (JPCC) has announced a statewide candlelight march and satyagraha to be held on July 25 across all district headquarters in protest against alleged irregularities in national examinations and the treatment of students protesting against them.

The programme has been scheduled following directions issued by All India Congress Committee (AICC) President Mallikarjun Kharge and the party's General Secretary (Organisation), K.C. Venugopal. The state-level programme will be organised under the guidance of JPCC President Keshav Mahato Kamlesh.

Addressing the media, JPCC Media In-charge Rakesh Sinha alleged that the future of millions of students has been jeopardised due to the

Centre's handling of the examination system. He claimed that the alleged irregularities in the NEET and CBSE examinations had eroded the confidence of students and parents, while students raising their concerns democratically were being subjected to repression.

"The Congress Party stands firmly with students in their fight for justice. Candlelight marches will be taken out under the leadership of district Congress committees to the statues of Mahatma Gandhi or Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, where participants will observe a satyagraha in solidarity with students," Sinha said.

Demanding accountability, he said Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan should resign, alleging that the repeated controversies surrounding the examination system reflect-

ed a failure to safeguard the future of the country's youth.

Sinha said the campaign would witness the participation of Pradesh Congress leaders, district and block Congress committees, frontal organisations, party workers, students, youth, parents and members of civil society.

Describing the programme as more than a political protest, he said it was a collective resolve to protect the future of India's youth. He also asserted that the Congress would continue to oppose, through democratic means, any attempt to suppress students' voices or misuse government machinery against peaceful protesters.

The party has appealed to its workers and supporters across Jharkhand to participate in large numbers and make the statewide candlelight march and satyagraha a success.

State to procure 720 new ambulances; Tender process to complete soon

SURENDRA SOREN : RANCHI

In a major push to strengthen emergency healthcare services across the state, the Jharkhand Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare Department has decided to procure 720 new ambulances. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Additional Chief Secretary Ajay Kumar Singh on Friday.

The Additional Chief Secretary directed officials to complete the tender process within one month to ensure the timely rollout of the new fleet.

According to the decisions taken at the meeting, the procurement process for the 30 Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances approved earlier will continue. In addition, the department will purchase 20 more ALS ambulances, 270 Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances, and 400 Patient Transport Vehicles (PTVs), taking the total number of new ambulances to 720.

Officials said the move was necessitated by the deteriorating condition of many ambulances purchased in previous years. Several vehicles have become unserviceable, affecting emergency medical transportation, particularly in rural areas where Community Health Centres (CHCs) and Primary Health Centres (PHCs) often struggle to refer patients to higher medical facilities.

To address this gap, the government has decided to deploy 400 Patient Transport Vehicles at CHCs and PHCs across the state to ensure timely transportation of patients to referral hospitals. The meeting also decided that PTVs will be operated through an out-sourced mechanism under the supervision of



Medical Officers-in-Charge of the respective CHCs and PHCs. The National Health Mission (NHM) will provide ₹750,000 per vehicle per month for their operation.

The ALS ambulances will be stationed at all district hospitals and medical college hospitals and will be managed by the respective hospital administrations. The BLS ambulances will be operated through a selected service provider. The department further fixed the operational lifespan of the ambulances. ALS and BLS ambulances will remain in service for 6.5 years or 150,000 kilometres, whichever is earlier, while Patient Transport Vehicles will have a service life of five years or 100,000 kilometres.

Directing officials to maintain high quality standards, Additional Chief Secretary Ajay Kumar Singh instructed that all ALS ambulances should be equipped with the prescribed life-saving equipment and conform to national emergency medical service standards.

The meeting was attended by Special Secretary Dr. Neha Arora, NHM Mission Director Shashi Prakash Jha, Joint Secretary Lalit Mohan Shukla, Deputy Secretary Dhruv Prasad, and other senior departmental officials.

RJD extends support to CJP's protest

PNS : RANCHI

The RJD has extended its support to the movement led by the 'Cockroach Janata Party' (CJP). Speaking at a press conference held at the party office, senior RJD Leader Gautam Sagar Rana stated that a movement even larger than the 1974 JP movement is about to unfold.

Rana noted that the 1974 movement had originated in a hostel in Gujarat. "Its impact spread to Bihar and subsequently across the entire country. The situation today is similar-in fact, the state of the nation is even worse. The future of the youth is being toyed with. Corruption plagues every competitive examination. Students are agitated. A movement bigger than the JP movement is imminent. The agitation that began in Delhi is spreading nationwide. This government must go," he said.

The senior party Leader remarked that while the Prime Minister has termed the paper leak a "heinous sin," democracy functions on public accountability and propriety, not merely on statements; therefore, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan must



Former MLA and RJD senior leader Gautam Sagar Rana and others during a press conference at the party office in Ranchi on Friday. PNS

resign immediately.

Rana emphasized the need for educational reform in the country. He warned the Centre to curb corruption and punish the guilty rather than attempting to weaken the movement. Speaking on the occasion,

During the press conference, RJD Spokesperson Kailash Yadav stated that the students' mass movement would intensify. He remarked that the Prime Minister has become indifferent toward students-who represent the nation's future-and has only

woken up to the issue after 27 days.

Yadav clarified that the students' mass movement is not driven by political demands but seeks the reform and overhaul of the country's education system, alleging that the collapse of the education system is the result of a well-planned agenda by the BJP and the Sangh. Question papers were leaked approximately 152 times in 10 years! Despite this, the Modi Government never took the matter seriously, he added.

Row over Information Commissioners disregarding protocols during meetings

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

RANCHI : Controversy has erupted after Dr. Tanuj Khatri, the newly appointed State Information Commissioner ignoring protocols during their recent meetings. Khatri sat on the Vice-Chancellor's official chair, during his visit to Ranchi University on Thursday. He visited Ranchi University headquarters for a pre-scheduled review meeting on the implementation of the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

Khatri, sat on the Vice-Chancellor's official chair. The Registrar sat beside him, while the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Saroj Sharma, relinquished her chair to sit at the edge of the table alongside other officials. She departed the meeting shortly thereafter. The incident sparked widespread discussion, with staff noting that the university administration should have briefed the Information Commissioner on appropriate protocol. On the other hand, Information Commissioner Shivpujan Pathak was also criticised in social media for recently chairing a meeting in Ramgarh and directing officials.

A city based RTI activist requesting anonymity said, "Section 18 of RTI Act, does not authorize commissioners to conduct administrative review meetings in person at institutions. It only grants the Commission powers akin to a civil court to issue summonses, demand responses, or inspect documents." The RTI expert also stated that under section 25 of RTI Act, inspecting universities or overriding administrative norms falls outside this purview, it only mandates preparing an annual report on the implementation of the Act for the state government. Despite repeated calls Khatri did not respond to calls made by the Pioneer correspondent. Last month, Anuj Kumar Sinha, Tanuj Khatri, Amulya Neeraj Khalkho and Shivpujan Pathak were appointed as new Information Commissioners in the Jharkhand State Information Commission. While Anuj Kumar Sinha is retired journalist and former editor, Tanuj Khatri was spokesperson of JMM, Pathak was state media in-charge of BJP and Khalkows from the Congress party. A Civil Court lawyer said that appointing individuals with political backgrounds to independent constitutional posts leads to such overreach, calling the occupation of the Vice-Chancellor's chair an unnecessary display of authority and a breach of protocol.

Metro curbs leave thousands of commuters walking to work

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Amit Kumar switched to walking shoes on Tuesday. Not because he wanted to. Because the Metro was shut, the bylanes of central Delhi were the only route left between him and his office near Connaught Place.

He has worn those shoes every morning since. "I build in an extra 45 minutes now," he said. "There is no other option." Amit Kumar did not come to Jantar Mantar to protest. He was simply trying to get to work. For three days now, thousands of people like him have been absorbing the cost of a standoff they have no stake in.

Repeated closures of metro stations and transport disruptions imposed by author-

ities in response to the Jantar Mantar protest have triggered backlash from commuters, who took to social media to question why thousands of daily travellers were being inconvenienced. For thousands of office-goers who once relied on the Delhi Metro and cab services to reach work in the Lutyens' zone, walking has become the only option, as barricading around Jantar Mantar in response to the ongoing protest continues.

This comes amid the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) announcing on Friday the closure of the New Delhi metro station till further orders, adding to the disruption caused by the shutdown of 17 metro stations in central Delhi for the third consecutive day. The DMRC said in a post on X that the New Delhi metro

station had been closed till further instructions and that no interchange facility would be available at the station.

The latest closure comes even as 17 metro stations in central Delhi remained shut from 7.30 am on Friday due to security reasons. The closure of the New Delhi metro station, a key interchange connecting the Yellow Line and the Airport Express Line and providing direct access to the New Delhi Railway Station, is expected to inconvenience thousands of daily commuters and rail passengers.

Soon after the announcement, several users took to X to question the decision, with many expressing concern over the impact on office-goers, students and travellers, while others apprehended a spike in app-based cab fares. Reacting



to the DMRC's late Thursday night announcement that 16 stations would remain closed on Friday, one user wrote, "The easiest way to handle a protest is to make ordinary citizens suffer." Several users questioned why daily com-

muters travelling to offices, schools and hospitals were being inconvenienced, arguing that the restrictions would not deter protesters from reaching Jantar Mantar. Later in the evening, entry gates at Mandi House and

Central Secretariat metro stations were reopened.

With the metro shut and cab drivers reluctant to enter the cordoned-off stretch, commuters said they are trudging kilometres through bylanes every morning and

evening just to get to work or back home.

"Since the metro is shut and police personnel are present in the area, even ride-hailing services are reluctant to accept rides here," a working professional said.

Thousands of protesters have gathered at Jantar Mantar over the past few days, prompting police to seal off Parliament Street, Tolstoy Road and Jai Singh Marg. A Google Maps check of the stretch on Friday showed a 'heavy traffic' alert across all three major roads.

Officials posted in the area said the closures are for security reasons, given the scale of the demonstration and its proximity to Parliament.

The disruption is not limited to civilians. Commuters said even police personnel posted

for duty are having to walk long stretches through bylanes to reach their postings, as the area remains under what many described as a complete traffic lockdown.

Adding to the difficulty, internet services in the area have remained suspended since clashes broke out between protesters and police on July 20, commuters said, leaving many unable to check real-time traffic updates or book cabs while already on foot. Workers in the area said they are inculcating extra walking time into their daily routine and switching to shoes better suited for walking kilometres on the pavement than a desk job — an unplanned consequence of a protest still playing out barely metres from their offices.

Facial recognition units deployed at CJP protest site

KHUSHI MEHROTRA
■ New Delhi

Delhi Police has deployed four Facial Recognition System (FRS) units around the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest site at Jantar Mantar as part of heightened security arrangements. Officials maintain that the technology is being used only to identify wanted criminals, absconders and history-sheeters, not ordinary protesters.

Police sources said on Friday that the FRS units have been installed at key entry and exit points around the protest venue and are directly linked to the Delhi Police database. Police personnel monitor the system in real time, enabling them to verify the identities of individuals whose details are already in police records.

"The objective is to ensure that people with criminal backgrounds do not exploit the protest to create law and



Demonstrators at the site amid rainfall during the ongoing protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi

PTI

order issues. The system is connected with the Delhi Police database and can identify wanted criminals, absconders, history-sheeters and Bad Characters (BCs)," a police source said.

Officials said the high-resolution cameras capture facial images in real time, including from a distance, and immediately match them against the police database. If a wanted or absconding accused is detected, the concerned police unit is alerted

for further legal action.

According to police, the deployment is intended as both a preventive and investigative measure to prevent anti-social elements from infiltrating large gatherings and creating disturbances.

Sources also clarified that the system does not access Aadhaar records or retrieve personal details from identity databases. They said the cameras scan faces in real time and compare them only with records already main-

tained by the Delhi Police. Officials added that similar facial recognition units have been deployed during previous large public gatherings and are not unique to the ongoing CJP protest.

The deployment comes amid heightened security at Jantar Mantar following recent clashes between protesters and police, which led to multiple FIRs and the installation of additional surveillance measures around the protest site. The use of facial recognition technology has, however, drawn criticism from protesters, civil liberties advocates and freelance journalists, who have raised concerns over privacy and mass surveillance. Several protesters argued that those participating in demonstrations should not be treated as "data bodies" and questioned the legality of live facial scanning at a public protest.

The issue has also reached the Delhi High Court through a public interest litigation

alleging unlawful surveillance of protesters. During the proceedings, Delhi Police denied carrying out any illegal snooping and submitted that any recording or monitoring was undertaken solely to maintain law and order and ensure public safety.

The CJP also criticised the deployment, alleging that police were "live-scanning peaceful protesters" and harvesting biometric data. In a statement, the organisation questioned the legal basis for the use of facial recognition technology, sought clarity on the source of the data the system matches, and demanded answers on how any collected facial data would be stored, used, and safeguarded.

Police, however, reiterated that the system is not designed to monitor ordinary protesters and is intended only to identify individuals with criminal antecedents who may attempt to exploit large public gatherings.

Songs, seva and self-discipline: Inside the CJP protest at Jantar Mantar after dark

KHUSHI MEHROTRA
■ New Delhi

As one walks towards the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest site at Jantar Mantar, the atmosphere is marked not only by slogans demanding Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation but also by the sound of guitars, patriotic songs and performances of resistance.

On a humid Thursday night, groups of students waiting to enter the main protest venue gathered in circles, singing together. One student pulled out a guitar and began playing "Aarambh Hai Prachand Hai", while another group nearby broke into "Sabse Aage Honge Hindustani", with many joining in.

The musical gatherings have become a regular feature of the month-long protest. Beyond speeches from the stage and sloganeering, protesters have increasingly turned to music and art as a way of expressing their opposition to the alleged paper leak controversy.

"This may not look like a conventional protest to many, but this is our way of showing that we are peaceful and only demand accountability," said a protester who has been visiting the site for the past few days.

The emphasis on discipline extends beyond performances. Volunteers have organised the continuous dis-



tribution of drinking water and snacks while ensuring the protest site remains clean.

Dustbins have been placed at regular intervals across the venue, and around 9 pm on Thursday, groups of protesters formed human chains around areas that needed cleaning. Wearing gloves, masks and carrying brooms, volunteers swept the site and collected waste before allowing people to move through the area again.

Despite the heavy security deployment across Jantar Mantar and adjoining stretches, the atmosphere remained peaceful on Thursday night.

Protesters largely cooperated with police personnel and volunteers managing the crowds, with no visible signs of tension as people queued patiently to enter the main protest site, attended cultural performances and participated in the movement's activities.

Crowd management, too, has largely been handled by volunteers. Members of the Nirankari Sikh community,

who have joined the CJP movement, were seen assisting CJP volunteers along Tolstoy Marg, where the protest has expanded. Forming human chains and using loudspeakers, they guided people entering and leaving the venue while also distributing food and water to both protesters and security personnel as part of seva.

Although a video circulating on social media had claimed there was a scuffle between some protesters and the Nirankari volunteers, the situation appeared calm on Thursday night, with volunteers continuing to coordinate movement and relief efforts. As crowds continued to swell at Jantar Mantar, the protesters' principal demand remained unchanged: the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. The demonstrations continued even as activist Sonam Wangchuk ended his 26-day hunger strike late Thursday night in the presence of BJP Union Ministers JP Nadda and Jitendra Singh.

After DU, JNU advises students to stay away from protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

After Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) on Friday advised students, faculty and staff to refrain from participating in or visiting gatherings at or around Jantar Mantar, urging them to prioritise their personal safety and exercise responsibility on social media amid the ongoing protests.

In an advisory posted on the university's official X

handle, the university said all stakeholders of JNU's "epistemic community" should act responsibly and avoid visiting demonstration sites around Jantar Mantar in accordance with the Supreme Court's directions on public demonstrations.

"All stakeholders of JNU's epistemic community are advised to act responsibly and prioritise their personal safety. In accordance with the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India's directions on public demonstrations, you are



requested to refrain from participating in or visiting gatherings at or around Jantar Mantar, New Delhi," the post read.

The university also cau-

tioned students and staff to exercise responsibility while using social media, warning that violations could invite legal consequences under applicable laws as well as disciplinary action under the university's code of conduct. "You are also encouraged to uphold the values of academic responsibility and responsible citizenship," it added.

The development also comes amid a series of messages issued by Delhi University colleges on the

controversy surrounding the protests.

DU's Aditi Mahavidyalaya appealed to students to stay away from violence and participate only through peaceful and democratic means, while Shyam Lal College posted a message expressing support for Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. Earlier, Rajdhani College had withdrawn a similar post and issued a public apology after criticism from sections of students and teachers.

18-year-old spends savings to join protest from Jaipur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The money was supposed to buy an iPad before college. She had been collecting it since her 16th birthday, asking parents, grandparents, and relatives to contribute each year, setting it aside carefully, imagining the day she would unbox it as a proper beginning to her student years. When the protests started at Jantar Mantar, the 18-year-old from Jaipur thought about it for one day. Then she took the ₹15,000 and came to Delhi. "I thought I could always save for an iPad again," she said. "But I may not get another chance to stand up for something that will affect my future."

She is using the birthday money for food, travel, and

daily expenses while staying with a friend in the city so she can attend the demonstrations. "I don't feel like I've lost anything. If anything, I feel like I'm spending my birthday money on something that actually gives me hope," she said.

She is not the only one. As thousands continue gathering at Jantar Mantar each day, a growing number of teenagers and first-time protesters say they are funding their stay with personal savings accumulated over years and borrowed money from friends and family. Many are too young to vote. Most have never attended a protest before.

Shaurya, 18, had been saving nearly Rs 30,000 to buy a scooter before starting college. He arrived with a group of friends. "I kept



thinking I would need it to travel to colleges and go around with friends. But over the past few months, all we've spoken about is unemployment and what kind of future we're walking into," he said. "What is the point of buying a scooter if we're constantly worried about whether there will be opportunities after graduation? This spending felt more

important here."

Yashika, 17, said her parents were initially hesitant. "They told me to be careful. I told them this isn't just about today. Whatever happens now will affect people my age for years," she said. Her parents eventually agreed.

Between speeches and marches, the hours at the protest site pass differently

than outsiders imagine. Groups of students sit on plastic sheets or in patches of shade, pulling out Uno cards, Snakes and Ladders boards, and water bottles. One game has become an unexpected favourite. In circles scattered across the site, young protesters play the childhood game in which players raise a finger only if the object named can fly: sparrow, pigeon, crow. Then someone calls out "Dharmendra Pradhan." The circle erupts in laughter before the next round.

A 17-year-old protester explained the logic. "You can't shout slogans for 10 hours continuously. People think we spend the whole day protesting. Actually, there are long gaps between programmes. These games keep us awake, together and in good spirits."

Delhi Police cancels leaves of all personnel amid Jantar Mantar protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Police has cancelled all routine leave for its personnel with immediate effect due to the current law and order situation in the Capital, according to police sources on Friday.

Police headquarters issued the order on Thursday and sent it to all district DCPs, the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO), Indira Gandhi International Airport, and

other senior officers, they said.

The communication states that no routine leave, such as casual or earned leave, will be granted until further notice. Only genuine emergency leave will be considered after proper verification by the competent authority.

The order also imposed restrictions on police personnel attending training programmes or courses without prior approval from the Commissioner of Police.



"In view of the prevailing law and order situation, no routine leaves, i.e., casual, earned leaves, etc., would be granted to the police personnel, including GOs, with immediate effect and until further orders.

Leaves shall be sanctioned only in genuine emergency cases after being duly verified and approved by the sanctioning authority. All DCPs are requested to ensure meticulous compliance," the order said.

It added, "No police personnel, including GOs, will attend/participate in any course without the approval of the commissioner of police until further orders."

The order was issued during ongoing protests in the capital led by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP). Protesters are demanding reforms to the examination system and the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET paper leak, among other issues.

On July 20, thousands of protesters led by the CJP gathered at Jantar Mantar for a 'Sansad Chalo' march to press their demands, despite a heavy security presence.

As the crowds grew, police used lathis and tear gas on protesters when they tried to march towards Parliament on the first day of the Monsoon Session. The clashes left several police personnel and protesters injured.

MEA has no specific details on foreign funding claims linked to CJP protests

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Friday stated that it does not have any specific information or details to share regarding allegations of foreign funding connected to the ongoing local protests.

Replying to a question, whether the allegations of foreign funding in the ongoing protest is true, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: “I have no information to share on this issue with you”.

The remarks come amid intense political and legal scrutiny of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)-led demonstrations, which began as a youth-driven response to alleged irregularities and paper leaks in competitive exams such as NEET.

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



Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal addresses a bi-weekly media briefing in New Delhi on Friday

accountability measures.

The agitation saw a major march toward Parliament on July 20 that resulted in clashes, injuries to security personnel and demonstrators, and subsequent calls for nationwide protests.

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

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

is scheduled for hearing, with the petition claiming the events form part of a broader conspiracy involving external financial influence.

CJP organisers have rejected such claims, maintaining that the movement is organic, driven by student and youth contributions, and focused on domestic grievances over unemployment, exam integrity, and governance. The group has continued protests and held talks with government representatives even as the Centre announced measures including fast-track courts for paper-leak cases and a proposed bill for stricter penalties.

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

Privilege motion against TMC MLA Kunal Ghosh

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

There was more problem for senior pro-Mamata Trinamool Congress MLA Kunal Ghosh with Bengal Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shankar Ghosh on Friday moving a breach of privilege motion against him for disrespecting the Speaker and decorum of the House.

The development comes close on the heels of the TMC leader being marshaled out the House for two successive days after he got embroiled in serious altercation with Speaker Rathindranath Bose and Akrujjaman and the ‘official’ Chief Whip of the (break-away section of) TMC.

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



House through the backdoor... after they failed to defeat me in the elections... I don’t care being robbed off my membership... but as an honest soldier of Mamata Banerjee I will continue to raise my voice as and when required,” Ghosh said though inside the House he apolo-

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

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

due course,” he said.

The altercation started when Ghosh protested against Akrujjaman’s decision to remove his name from the list of speakers. Akrujjaman is presently the official Chief Whip nominated by the larger faction of a 62-member strong break-away faction of the TMC.

Sobhandeb Chatterjee the leader of Mamata Banerjee section which has about 18 MLAs with them had nominated Kunal Ghosh deliver his speech for the TMC.

Kunal told the Speaker while putting across his plea, “since the other side has been designated as the ‘Opposition,’ we are being denied the opportunity to speak... this is injustice and should be addressed.”

Thousands attend students’ protest in Mumbai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

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



Mumbai Police faced a fresh onslaught of criticism after a video showing an official allegedly handling a

woman activist inappropriately went viral. While police claimed that his action was being “misin-

terpreted”, the Opposition demanded his immediate suspension.

Holding tricolours and placards in their hands, thousands of students and activists gathered at the iconic Shivaji Park ground in Dadar area as part of a ‘Tiranga Morcha’ (procession) organised by the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena (UBT).

The protest culminated with the playing of the national anthem.

Devotee dies due to suffocation during Puri Rath Yatra, toll mounts to three

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Puri (Odisha)

A devotee died allegedly due to suffocation while pulling the ‘Darpadalan’ chariot of Goddess Subhadra during the Bahuda Yatra, the return car festival, on Friday, police said.

The deceased was identified as Abhiram Das (57) from Cuttack. He suddenly fell down while pulling the chariot near Bagala Dharmasala and was immediately rushed to Puri District Hospital, where he died during treatment, a police officer said.

“The deceased had hypertension and was under medication. He suddenly collapsed and died during treatment,” Director of Health Service (DHS), Mahesh Mohan Panda said. The medical officer said that about 100 people were brought to the district hospital in Puri. They complained of uneasiness and most of them were released after primary treatment and rest for some time.

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

Govt directs GitHub to remove Bitchat amid security concerns

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi

The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C), under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), has directed Microsoft-owned GitHub to remove repositories hosting Bitchat, a Bluetooth-based messaging application developed by former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey. The notice, issued on 23 July 2026, required GitHub to restrict access to the source code, Android version and related software releases within three hours.

Bitchat is an open-source tool that lets people communicate offline when regular networks are not available. The government used the Information Technology Act, 2000, and related rules to issue its directive to GitHub.

The I4C stated that Bitchat’s technical architecture enables decentralised peer-to-peer messaging over Bluetooth mesh networks without relying on mobile networks, the internet or centralised servers. This design, the notice said, significantly impedes lawful interception, attribution and investigation by law enforcement agencies.

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



groups” seeking to evade lawful surveillance. Bitchat is precisely what its critics fear. It is a peer-to-peer tool that works without internet, cellular networks, phone numbers or central servers. Messages hop between nearby devices over Bluetooth Low Energy mesh networks: no registration, no logs, no single point of interception. Jack Dorsey designed it as a simple offline side-channel for classrooms, flights, or town squares.

Sources say there is a genuine security concern here. Law enforcement has legitimate needs to investigate real threats. An app that leaves no digital trail complicates attribution and is hard to trace.

This application allows anonymous communication without user registration, phone number verification or centralised message logging. Messages are transmitted directly between nearby devices, which the

government argued could facilitate the circumvention of lawful restrictions imposed during situations involving public disorder, riots, terrorism, organised crime or internet shutdowns.

Intelligence reports suggested that these platforms might be used to organise illegal gatherings, spread false information, encourage radicalisation, and support criminal activities that threaten India’s sovereignty, integrity, defence, security, and public order. The directive came after officials noticed that some participants in the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar used Bluetooth-based messaging apps when internet access was temporarily restricted near the protest site.

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

Memorial to be built in Budgam for cop martyred on Amarnath Yatra duty



MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

A befitting memorial will be constructed in Lalpora village of Budgam district, in honour of Head Constable Ashiq Hussain Qureshi, who was martyred on Wednesday in a terrorist attack at Lal Chowk, Anantnag, while deployed on Amarnath Yatra security duty.

Leader of Opposition in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Sunil Sharma, on Friday visited the family and paid heartfelt tributes. Sharma said the country would remain indebted to the family that has lost two generations in the service of the nation.

The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, also paid heartfelt tributes to the brave policeman and conveyed his deepest condolences to the bereaved family. He said the entire nation is proud of braveheart Ashiq Hussain Qureshi, whose courage, sacrifice, and devotion to duty will remain etched in our collective memory.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah also conveyed his condolences directly to the family.

“The Home Minister had asked me that when I visit here, I should connect him with the family. He also said that when he comes to Kashmir, he will definitely visit them,” Sharma said.

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

ago, in February 1995, Ashiq Hussain’s father was martyred. Today, the son has also sacrificed his life while protecting the nation. Not just we, but the entire country is indebted to this family, and I do not think we can ever repay that debt.”

Responding to a demand from villagers that Lalpora be developed as a model village in recognition of its sacrifices, Sharma said efforts would be made to create a lasting memorial.

“This is a family of two martyrs. To keep their name alive and to give Lalpora its identity, we will make every effort to ensure there is some memorial — a statue, a ground, a school or some other mark of remembrance in this village,” he said.

Assuring the family of continued support, he added: “On behalf of my party and the Government of India, I have assured them that a family which has given two martyrs to the nation will never be left alone. This will not remain only in words; they will practically feel that the nation and the Government of India stand with them.”

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

Nation Focus



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

Puri Bahuda Yatra begins, lakhs join deities’ procession

Lord Jagannath and his sibling deities began their Bahuda Yatra on Friday amid tight security, with lakhs of devotees thronging Puri to take part in the festivities.

The Bahuda Yatra marks the return journey of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra to the 12th-century Jagannath Temple after their week-long stay at the Gundicha Temple, about 2.6 km away.

The rituals commenced with servitors carrying the deities in the traditional ‘Goti Pahandi’ (procession in a queue) to the chariots stationed outside the temple.

Though the ‘Pahandi’ was scheduled to begin at noon, it commenced at 10.50 am. Amid chants of “Jai Jagannath” and “Haribol”, the deities were taken one after another to their respective chariots.



Students’ protest rocks Bihar Assembly on final day

A heated exchange between the ruling side and the opposition over students’ protests in various parts of Bihar disrupted the assembly proceedings for about an hour on Friday. As soon as the House assembled for the final day of the monsoon session, RJD’s Alok Mehta rose in his seat to demand a discussion on the unrest that began with protests in the state capital a couple of days ago and spread to various other districts on Thursday over the NEET paper leak.

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



सेल SAIL



Great Place To Work.
Certified
FEB 2024 - FEB 2025



IT TAKES A
DIFFERENT TYPE OF STEEL
TO BUILD A NATION

SAIL- Building India's icons

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

(₹ Crore unless stated otherwise)

Sl. No.	Particulars	STANDALONE			
		Quarter ended		Year ended	
		30 th June, 2026	31 st March, 2026	30 th June, 2025	31 st March, 2026
		Unaudited	Audited	Unaudited	Audited
1	Total Income from Operations	26245.64	30813.45	25921.46	110810.24
2	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period (before tax and exceptional items)	2302.90	2653.46	889.76	5002.08
3	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after exceptional items)	2158.79	2323.68	889.76	4333.86
4	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax	1636.00	1679.51	685.48	3233.48
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period (comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and other Comprehensive Income (after tax))	1524.36	1958.91	567.86	3199.83
6	Paid-up Equity Share Capital (Face Value of ₹10/- each)	4130.53	4130.53	4130.53	4130.53
7	Reserves (excluding revaluation reserve)	55589.19	54064.83	52093.74	54064.83
8	Securities Premium Account	235.10	235.10	235.10	235.10
9	Net Worth	59719.72	58195.36	56224.27	58195.36
10	Paid up Debt Capital/Outstanding Debt	31969.95	31921.62	36074.92	31921.62
11	Debt Equity Ratio	0.54	0.55	0.64	0.55
12	Earnings per equity share (of ₹10/- each) (not annualised)				
	1. Basic (₹)	3.96	4.07	1.66	7.83
	2. Diluted (₹)	3.96	4.07	1.66	7.83
13	Debt Redemption Reserve	-	-	2.06	-
14	Debt Service Coverage Ratio (number of times)	1.66	7.26	2.74	3.84
15	Interest Service Coverage Ratio (number of times)	4.80	5.25	2.04	2.86

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

(₹ Crore unless stated otherwise)

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

Note:

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

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

For and on behalf of Board of Directors
Sd/-
(Dr. Ashok Kumar Panda)
Chairman & Managing Director

Place : New Delhi
Dated : 24th July, 2026

Buy SAIL SeQR TMT bars for a strong home at www.sailsuraksha.com



स्टील अथॉरिटी ऑफ इण्डिया लिमिटेड

STEEL AUTHORITY OF INDIA LIMITED

There's a little bit of SAIL in everybody's life

Registered office : Ispat Bhawan, Lodi Road, New Delhi 110 003

Tel: +91 11-24367481, Fax: +91-11 24367015, E-mail: investor.relation@sail.in, Website: www.sail.co.in

CIN: L27109DL1973GO1006454



SAIL Steel



Steel Authority of India Limited



SAILsteelofficial



Steel Authority of India Limited



■ States Focus ■



SIX-MONTH EXTENSION FOR BENGAL CHIEF SECRETARY: GOVT

The Centre on Thursday approved a six-month extension in service for West Bengal Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Agarwal beyond his scheduled date of retirement on July 31, according to an official order.

The extension will take effect from August 1 and remain valid till January 31, 2027, following approval by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), a senior official said on Thursday.

The state Government had forwarded a proposal to the Centre on July 15 seeking an extension for Agarwal, who assumed charge as the chief secretary on May 11 this year. A senior state Government official said the extension would ensure continuity in the administration at a time when several key policy decisions and developmental programmes are underway.

(PTI)



ANNAMALAI TO LAUNCH COASTAL CLEANUP DRIVE IN SOUTH TN

Former BJP chief K Annamalai, who launched the “We The Leaders” movement, is scheduled to visit a few southern coastal districts to launch a massive coastal cleanup drive, a source said on Friday.

He would visit Kanyakumari on August 2 in his capacity as leader of the movement to officially launch the state-wide initiative from the Kanyakumari Beach Road, and initiate a similar drive in Uvari in Tirunelveli district, Manapad and Tiruchendur in Tuticorin district.

Interestingly, Kanyakumari district has registered the highest number of volunteers for the “We The Leaders” that Annamalai had announced on June 5, an insider said.

(PTI)

Drugs worth ₹6.89 cr seized in 3 separate operations in Mizoram, 2 held



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Aizawl

Drugs worth more than ₹6.89 crore were seized in three separate anti-drug operations in Mizoram, police said on Friday.

Two persons, including one from Assam, were arrested in connection with the seizures, they said.

The biggest haul was made in the early hours of July 21 when two men riding a scooter were intercepted on the Zokhawthar-Melbuk road near Mualrawt in Champhai district, close to the India-Myanmar border, police said.

The suspects abandoned the scooter and fled after spotting the police patrol, they said.

A search of the vehicle led to the recovery of 6.73 kg of methamphetamine tablets, estimated to be worth ₹4.75 crore, they added.

A case was registered at the Zokhawthar police station under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

In another operation on July 23, a special police team intercepted a truck on the basis of intelligence inputs in Saitual district. A search of the vehicle led to the seizure of 2 kg of morphine, valued at around ₹2.09 crore in the illicit market, the statement said. The truck driver, identified as Kabir Hussain (30) of Tarapur village in Assam’s Cachar district, was arrested, police said.

On the evening of July 15, the Champhai Police Special Task Force intercepted a car at the Khankawn check gate and recovered 24 grams of heroin, valued at ₹4.8 lakh, from the possession of the driver, they said.

Extended fast by 2 days as negotiations were on: Wangchuk

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

Sonam Wangchuk on Friday termed the end of his 26-day hunger strike the “beginning of accountability”, saying he decided to call off the fast only after receiving assurances from the Government and MPs across parties on his key demands for examination reforms and protection of the peaceful protesters.

The educator-activist also said that he extended his fast by two days because negotiations with the Centre were continuing.

“End of hunger... Beginning of accountability,” Wangchuk posted on X, where he shared a video explaining his decision to end the fast, which he began at the Jantar Mantar on June 28 in support of the Cokroach Janta Party’s (CJP) ongoing protest demanding accountability for paper leaks, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan’s resignation, and reforms in the examination system, among others.

According to the post, Wangchuk ended his fast after 26 days upon getting assurance from the Government and MPs of all



Social activist Sonam Wangchuk with Union Health Minister JP Nadda, Union Minister of State Jitendra Singh and Apex Body of Ladakh at Medanta Hospital after Wangchuk ended his 26-day indefinite hunger strike at Medanta Hospital in Gurugram

PTI

political parties that the issue of accountability in the ‘failing’ examination system would be discussed in Parliament.

The Government also assured that the families of those students who took their lives after the NEET-UG paper leak in May would be adequately compensated, and no cases would be registered against the students and youth protesting peacefully.

In the video, Wangchuk also disclosed that he extended his hunger strike by two days because negotiations with the Centre were continuing.

“Negotiations were on for these assurances since the last two days, for which I had to extend my hunger strike. I could have extended it further if required,” he said.

Wangchuk also shared the text of the assurance letter that Health Minister J P Nadda read out at the hospital before he broke his fast.

“The Government is positive on not registering cases against those protesting peacefully at Jantar Mantar in Delhi and those who participated in the march to Parliament on July 20,” the letter said.

1st week of Monsoon Session washed out as Opposition sticks to Pradhan’s resignation demand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

The first week of the Monsoon session of Parliament was washed out as the Government and the Opposition continued to be at loggerheads over the demand for Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan’s resignation before a debate on NEET paper leak issue in both Houses.

Hitting out at the Opposition, the Government said making “excuses” and attaching “pre-conditions” before a debate will send a wrong message to the country. In the first week of the session, both Houses

could not take up any legislative agenda except for introduction of a bill each in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

In Lok Sabha, a bill to replace an ordinance which increased the number of judges of the Supreme Court from 34 to 38 was introduced but could not taken up for consideration and passage despite being listed every day. The bill has to be passed into an Act of Parliament before the session concludes on August 13 else the ordinance will lapse.

In Lok Sabha, Question Hour could not be held for even 15 minutes in five days.

In Rajya Sabha, a bill was



introduced on Friday to make insult to the national song Vande Mataram a criminal offence, despite being listed for introduction on multiple days.

When Lok Sabha met at 12

noon after an earlier adjournment, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju pointed to the Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi and said the Government has

repeatedly reached out to Opposition parties to let debate on the paper leak take place. He said while several Opposition MPs are of the view that the debate should take place, Gandhi should make his party members understand the need for a discussion. Rijiju said making excuses and attaching pre-conditions before a debate will send a wrong message to the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also assured of a stringent law on paper leaks and holding trial of the accused in fast-track courts, he said, while also noting that activist Sonam Wangchuk

has ended his hunger strike.

He said the Union Cabinet will take a decision on the proposed law on Friday.

However, the Congress and other Opposition parties continued to insist on resignation of Pradhan and shouted slogans like “Istifa do”, following which the House was adjourned for the day.

Similarly, Rajya Sabha was adjourned within minutes of assembly after Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge sought to raise the issue of lathi-charge on students who are protesting against the paper leak and pressing for the resignation of Pradhan.

CBI brings Avinash Arjun Rathod back from UAE in joint operation

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH

■ New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), along with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), coordinated the successful deportation of Red Notice subject Avinash Arjun Rathod from the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Rathod arrived in Mumbai on 23 July 2026 and was immediately taken into custody by the Maharashtra Police. Rathod is the main suspect in a major financial fraud worth hundreds of crores. He avoided arrest for years after running an investment scam that took people’s savings.

The CBI says this case shows India is getting better at finding and bringing back economic offenders who escape overseas.

According to official reports,

Rathod is wanted for large-scale financial fraud. He and his team convinced people to invest in several schemes by promising fake fixed monthly returns. After collecting the money, he moved it through different bank and demat accounts, cheating investors.

Investigators say the scheme primarily operated through APS Wealth Ventures, a Pune-based company that Rathod started in 2011. He and his team promoted it as a stock market investment and targeted middle-class families, Government workers, and professionals across Maharashtra, including Pune, Mumbai, and Vidarbha. They promised high fixed returns and claimed investments could double in 20 months. People invested anywhere from a few lakhs to over a crore, with some putting in all their life savings.

To gain trust, the accused gave



small early returns to the first investors, using a Ponzi-style method that encouraged people to refer others and grow the

scheme. By early 2023, things started to fall apart. When investors asked to withdraw their money in March 2023, Rathod

said he was ill and asked for more time until 10 April.

During this time, his wife, Vishakha Rathod, ran the office and spoke with investors. But on the promised date, both disappeared. Investors then found out their money was gone and the couple had escaped to Dubai.

Numerous investors filed complaints with the Economic Offences Wing of Pune Police. An FIR was registered at Chaturshringi Police Station, and the investigation revealed the extent of the fraud.

Losses are estimated at ₹125 crore from over 600 investors, and the total could reach ₹700 crore over several years. No matter the final amount, many families lost their savings, retirement money, and financial security.

A non-bailable warrant was issued, and Indian authorities asked INTERPOL for help.

A Red Notice was put out for Rathod, making him wanted worldwide. Getting him back from the UAE took ongoing efforts by the MEA, coordination from the MHA, and steady follow-up by the CBI. He returned on 23 July 2026, ending years of work. After the suspect arrived in Mumbai, Maharashtra Police took him into custody and will present him in court.

The CBI may lead or closely monitor the investigation, focusing on tracing funds, identifying additional suspects, and recovering assets for victims.

This case highlights the persistent issue of investment fraud, which exploits public trust in financial markets and the allure of ‘assured returns.’ The APS Wealth Ventures case serves as a reminder of the risks associated with unregulated or inadequately vetted investments.

Road safety experts call for adoption of low-cost safety solutions to reduce accidents

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

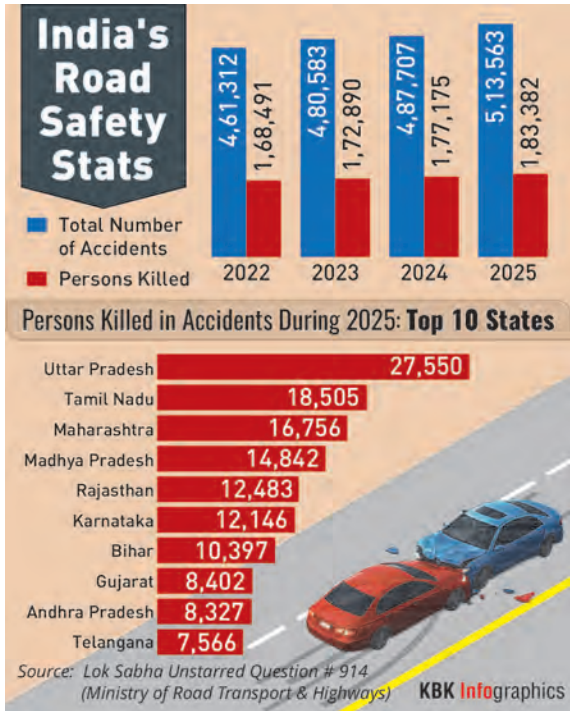
■ New Delhi

Road safety experts on Friday highlighted the alarming state of road safety in the country and underscored the urgent need for practical, scalable and cost-effective solutions to prevent road accidents. They noted that India can significantly reduce road fatalities through affordable and evidence-based interventions in cities.

Speaking at a conference organised by the India chapter of International Road Federation (IRF), IIT Delhi professor emeritus Geetam Tiwari said road markings to enhance night-time visibility can substantially improve road safety in cities. Implementation of international best practices can reduce crashes while improving mobility for all road users, Tiwari added.

IRF president emeritus K K Kapila said most urban crashes occur due to everyday design deficiencies on ordinary roads operating at normal traffic speeds.

“Low-cost engineering measures such as roundabouts, raised pedestrian



crossings, traffic-calming measures, improved street lighting and safer intersection designs have been proven to reduce crashes by 20 to 80 per cent, often at a fraction of the cost of major infrastructure projects.

“Such interventions can

be implemented much faster and deliver immediate safety benefits,” Kapila added.

Jitendra Kaushik, CEO, Onnyx Electronics, showcased innovative technological solutions supporting urban traffic safety.

Rajasthan CM’s Gram Vikas Chaupal focuses on participatory rural governance

VIVEK SHARMA

■ Jaipur

Rajasthan Chief Minister Shri Bhajan Lal Sharma’s Gram Vikas Chaupal initiative is focusing on participatory governance by taking the administration directly to villages and facilitating interaction between the Government and rural citizens.

With an emphasis on strengthening governance at the grassroots, the Chief Minister has been visiting rural areas, holding open interactions with villagers, inspecting development projects, and reviewing the implementation of welfare schemes on the ground. The initiative aims to create a direct communication channel between policymakers and citizens to address public concerns and improve service delivery.

The Gram Vikas Chaupal serves as a platform where women, farmers, youth, livestock rearers, frontline workers, and local residents discuss issues ranging from agriculture and employment to water conservation, sanitation, animal husbandry, education, and rural infrastructure. Beneficiaries of



Government schemes have also shared their experiences directly with the Chief Minister, providing feedback on implementation.

One of the instances highlighted during the initiative involved schoolgirls informing the Chief Minister that their Government Senior Secondary School did not offer a Science stream. Following the interaction, Shri Bhajan Lal Sharma directed officials to address the issue, and the Science stream was subsequently approved and introduced, according to the state Government.

The Chief Minister has also interacted with children, women, and senior citizens while reviewing the condition of village schools,

Anganwadi centres, and other public facilities. These visits have enabled the Government to identify local challenges requiring administrative attention.

Beyond grievance redressal, Gram Vikas Chaupal has also been used as a mechanism for monitoring development projects. During village visits, officials present progress reports on ongoing works, while the Chief Minister reviews implementation, directs timely completion of projects, and seeks accountability from the concerned departments. Several local issues have also been addressed through discussions with officials during these visits.

In another instance cited by the Government, a woman

appealed for the transfer of her husband to a location closer to home because of their child’s special medical requirements. Acting on the Chief Minister’s directions, the transfer order was issued within hours, officials said.

According to officials, the programme is not limited to grievance resolution. Villagers are also encouraged to share ideas and suggestions for future development planning, with the objective of making them active participants in Rajasthan’s development process.

Political observers say the Gram Vikas Chaupal combines public participation, administrative accountability, and direct interaction between citizens and the Government. They note that the initiative seeks to strengthen rural governance by enabling the administration to respond more effectively to local issues.

As Rajasthan continues to focus on rural development, Gram Vikas Chaupal has become an important part of the state’s outreach efforts, with the Government presenting it as a model for citizen-centric governance.

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

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rescue operations conclude in rain-battered Palghar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Palghar

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

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



A worker transplants paddy saplings at a field in Maharashtra PTI

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

Kadam said the death toll rose to two after another

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

The official said 244 persons were rescued from

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

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

occupants safely out of the partially submerged car.

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

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

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

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

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



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Thiruvananthapuram

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

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

The BJP leader also claimed that he was part of the ministerial committee that framed the legislation and was, therefore, clearly aware of the developments that the Modi Government has implemented for the youth of the country since 2014. "Therefore, we must reject the false propaganda being spread against Modi on this issue," he asserted.

His assertion comes amidst intense protests in Delhi by the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) and students against the Centre and Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the alleged irregularities in various nationally-conducted exams, including NEET.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Chhatarpur

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Bengaluru

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Agartala

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Agartala

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

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

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



Abhishek Debroy

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

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

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

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

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



Editor's
TAKE

Exam leak response shifts to fast-track courts

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

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

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

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

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

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

The price of Western pragmatism

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



NILANTHA
ILANGAMUWA

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

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

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

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



THE SEIZURE OF
THE GRAND
MOSQUE IN MECCA
IN NOVEMBER 1979
EXPOSED THESE
CONTRADICTIONS
WITH
EXTRAORDINARY
CLARITY. YAROSLAV
TROFIMOV'S THE
SIEGE OF MECCA
PRESENTS THE
UPRISING NOT AS
AN ISOLATED ACT
OF FANATICISM BUT
AS A MOMENT THAT
REVEALED THE
INTERNAL
TENSIONS OF
SAUDI RELIGIOUS
AND POLITICAL LIFE

The writer is a columnist
based in Colombo

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIC TALK



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



DEEBA
SALIM IRFAN

2ND OPINION

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

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

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

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

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

The things we leave for later



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

facebook.com/dailypioneer @TheDailyPioneer
 instagram.com/dailypioneer linkedin.com/in/The Pioneer

LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS CHALLENGE TRADITIONAL INDIAN VALUES

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

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

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

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

KABIR AHMED SAIKIA | ASSAM

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

Education reforms need accountability

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

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

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

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

NR RAMACHANDRAN | CHENNAI

Nuclear safeguards must remain

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

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

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

SANJAY CHOPRA | MOHALI

Assam struggles against the deluge

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

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

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

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

KIRTI WADHAWAN | KANPUR

Bundelkhand’s long road from neglect to renewal

For decades, Bundelkhand remained on the margins of development. Today, however, the region is witnessing a remarkable turnaround. Backed by major investments in infrastructure, improved connectivity and new industrial initiatives, Bundelkhand is steadily emerging as a key growth centre for Uttar Pradesh



Although Uttar Pradesh’s Bundelkhand region is advancing towards becoming the state’s second Noida today, for nearly seven decades after Independence it was condemned to a fate marked by bandits, drought and mass migration. Spanning roughly 29,000 Sq Kms and home to nearly 8.2 million people across seven districts, this vast territory was systematically kept outside the mainstream of development for a prolonged period. Under successive regimes of the Congress, the Bahujan Samaj Party and, above all, the Samajwadi Party, resource scarcity, neglect of schemes and administrative apathy remained the norm. Promises were routinely made, yet tangible change on the ground remained conspicuously absent.

This is the same land that, under the leadership of Rani Lakshmbai of Jhansi, raised the banner of self-respect during the Revolt of 1857. Stung by that uprising, the British administration deliberately set out to cripple Bundelkhand economically and socially as a punitive lesson.

After Independence there was hope that the land of these great warriors would finally receive its rightful due. Instead, successive Congress, BSP and especially Samajwadi Party governments converted colonial-era neglect into a permanent political arrangement. The old pattern was further entrenched so that the absence of development could always be excused by a ready-made narrative of backwardness and insecurity.

The artificial narrative of ‘Dasyu Pradesh’: A design to keep investment away

During the tenures of Mulayam Singh Yadav and Akhilesh Yadav, Bundelkhand’s image was deliberately projected as the stronghold of the dacoits of Chambal and Bundelkhand. Rather than recognizing the region’s latent potential, official policy reduced it to a mere “dacoit-affected zone.”

This carefully constructed narrative sent a clear signal to industrialists and investors across India and beyond: Bundelkhand was unsafe for trade and capital. Dacoits received political patronage; their criminal pasts were glorified. Consequently, while new industries and infrastructure rose elsewhere in the state, Bundelkhand’s public identity remained confined to chilling tales of outlaw gangs.

The criminalisation of a generation of youth

The greatest disservice under Congress, BSP and SP rule was inflicted on the future of Bundelkhand’s young people. Hands that should have held quality education, modern skills and technical knowledge were steered instead towards pistols and the underworld, exploiting unemployment and despair.

With employment opportunities absent and the education system in ruins, local youth faced only two bleak choices: join mafia or dacoit gangs, or migrate to the slums of Delhi, Mumbai and Surat to work for subsistence wages. ‘Under Samajwadi Party governance’, youthful energy was channeled not into learning or livelihood but into muscle power and political muscle-flexing.

Government machinery as silent spectator and willing accomplice

During SP rule, successive dreaded dacoit gangs operated parallel administrations in full public view. The terror spread by figures such as Thokia, Dadua and Ragia was so complete that law and order simply ceased to exist in rural areas.

Most painfully, the state government and police administration remained passive onlookers instead of acting. Political patrons in power exploited these gangs for electoral advantage, booth capturing and ‘vote-bank consolidation’.

Punishment postings and the free rein of the mining mafia

‘Government machinery’ in Bundelkhand was deployed ‘not for public service’ but to silence ordinary citizens and plunder local resources. Police and



administrative officers regarded postings there as “punishment postings.” Those who arrived either capitulated to the corrupt system or chose silence. In return, under SP rule the mining and land mafias were granted open license to loot sand from the rivers. Illegal extraction from the Ken and Betwa drained the public exchequer while ordinary farmers feared even setting foot in their own fields.

The cost of limited political weight and step motherly fund allocation

A key political calculation behind this prolonged neglect was Bundelkhand’s modest electoral footprint — only four Lok Sabha seats and nineteen Assembly seats. Whether under Congress, BSP or the SP of Mulayam and Akhilesh Yadav, electoral strategy always prioritised regions with larger seat shares or stronger captive vote banks. Because of its limited political leverage, Bundelkhand never received priority in budgetary allocations. The bulk of state resources was diverted elsewhere, while the region was dismissed with the label “backward area” and token announcements.

Farmers parched by drought and relief looted by corruption

Bundelkhand’s natural geography is arid and plateau-like, yet successive governments left this structural challenge unaddressed. Between 2013 and 2015, under Akhilesh Yadav’s government, severe drought drove farmers into starvation, debt and suicide. Irrigation projects remained buried in files for years. The ultimate betrayal came when drought-relief supplies and “relief packets” themselves became ‘casualties of corruption’. The administration simply labelled the crisis a “natural disaster” and washed its hands of responsibility.

The end of neglect under the double-engine government

The arrival of the double-engine government—Narendra Modi at the Centre and Yogi Adityanath in Uttar Pradesh after 2017 — has brought an epochal shift. The Bundelkhand Expressway has linked the region directly to both the national and state capitals.

Mega projects such as the Defense Industrial Corridor (Jhansi node) and the Bundelkhand Industrial Development Authority (BIDA) are accelerating industrialisation. The centuries-old drinking-water crisis has been addressed through the ‘Har Ghar Nal Scheme’, freeing mothers and sisters from kilometres-long walks for water. Power supply has been fully stabilised, and scheme benefits now reach citizens directly, free of middlemen.

The story of Bundelkhand is a stark reminder of how a historically and strategically significant region was systematically sidelined for political convenience. Neglect that began under British rule reached its zenith under Congress, BSP and especially Samajwadi Party governments. Arming the youth with pistols, allowing dacoits to flourish, and denying basic amenities had become the region’s enforced destiny.

While the double-engine government since 2017 has begun writing a new chapter of development and has visibly transformed the atmosphere, the fact remains that the ‘planned impoverishment of Bundelkhand’ until 2017 is a documented chapter of history whose full redress will still require considerable time.

The author is an Assistant Professor at Allahabad Degree College, University of Allahabad

Dear youth, how about a real revolution?



ACHARYA PRASHANT

The state stands indicted. An administration under which question papers travel faster than justice has failed its first duty. The syndicates that sell children’s futures for cash deserve the harshest prosecution the law can build. Nothing that follows dilutes that verdict by one drop. In every act of injustice there are two things, not one. First, the action; second, your understanding of the action and response to it. You are examining the minister with full ruthlessness. Now extend the same examination to the examiner. If the test is fair, why should anyone be exempt? Including you.

The paper leaked, somebody sold it, and somebody also bought it. Show me one buyer of the paper in the march. Ask yourself: the students whom the next leak reaches in time, will they be marching or memorising the leaked paper? Is it not the ego’s oldest trick to shout about the action so that the actor is never discussed? Man acts from a corrupt centre, and no rearrangement of actions has ever cleaned a centre. Correction is the cleaning of the centre of the old one. Not that you leave the street, but that you clean the one who walks on it.

Look at what your placards demand. A fair examination, an accountable minister; in other words, a cleaner race. Not one placard in the whole capital asks the prior question: is this race so important that a young person takes his life for it? In 2022, this country recorded 13,999 student suicides. No paper had leaked in that year, and the children still died anyway. So the leak did not build the machine that equates a rank with a life.

A whole civilisation has told its seventeen-year-olds that their self-worth is tied to their scorecards. When the result collapses, the young person concludes that he has collapsed. That conclusion is the real killer. A movement that wins a resignation but leaves this machine untouched is preparing the next round of casualties.

A monkey entered the house and wrecked the room. Now the mother returns. Whom does she slap? The monkey, or the child who left the door open? I am only asking why one of them has ten million investigators and the other has none. Who opened the door? The people you now want to drag from their chairs were carried to those chairs by you. What exactly were you doing in the polling booth?

Outer revolution must follow inner revolution, or it is only an outing. Has your family’s extra income, legally called black money, not been quietly set aside for your sister’s dowry? On the morning of the great march: “Mummy, extra parathas today, I am off to do revolution.” Whose money bought the flour, beta? Here is a qualifying exam for revolutionaries. Announce at home: I refuse the corrupt rupee. This exam does not cancel your march; it qualifies you for it. A revolution that reaches the road but never reaches the dining table has not begun. It begins as one unbearable question: why am I the way I am?

Half a century ago, this country saw its largest student uprising, against corruption itself. Its young heroes then ruled states for decades. The record of that rule includes the very corruption convictions their movement was born to prevent. Fifteen years ago, another anti-corruption wave electrified the nation. Its crusader became a governing politician and collected corruption cases of his own. The chair did not corrupt the pure. The chair only handed a bigger stage to an ego nobody had ever questioned. Rotate the patients as often as you like; the disease holds the ward. They do not prove that marching is useless; they prove that unfit marchers are useless. And nothing changed, because the winners were the same unexamined egos as the losers. The failure was never in the feet; it was in the centre the feet carried. That is why fitness comes first. Not instead of the march, but before it. Suppose you win, and the minister resigns. The ego does not weep because it was hurt. It weeps because it has not yet been paid for the hurt. The resignation is the payment. And a compensated victim never again faces the mirror. Prosecute the guilty. A scalp is a trophy, and trophies educate nobody. Krishna stood on a battlefield, not in a hermitage. He took one warrior, and he refused to let him shoot a single arrow until that warrior had self-knowledge. He refused to let him fire, and he equally refused to let him flee. He purified the fighter, and then he said: Now Fight! The bar is honesty, and honesty does not take years at all. I have a problem with blindness on the street. Educate yourself in the self: one hour a day with a text that questions the questioner, before the phone is touched. Then educate the voter beside you.

Then vote, then organise, then contest, and then march. The march of the awakened is not merely permitted; it is awaited. The word revolution means a complete turning. So turn, but turn fully: towards yourself. There is no revolution without love. Not slogan-love, but love as the ego’s own decision to turn upon itself and dissolve. Rage rearranges the world and leaves the actor intact. Love alone changes the actor.

Dear youth, you want revolution, and you are right to want it. First the mirror, then the march. The real revolution is not housed in any ministry or maidan. It first lives in you. Then come out, and I will be marching in your middle.

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



BRAJESH KUMAR TIWARI

India today faces a striking paradox. Educated youth are struggling to find meaningful work, while firms are struggling to find job-ready technicians, mechanics, electricians, machine operators, repair workers and supervisors. This is not merely an unemployment problem; it is a capability mismatch. Degrees have expanded faster than usable workplace skills, and certificates have often grown faster than employer confidence. As Skill India completes eleven years on July 15, 2026, the central question is no longer whether India can train at scale. It is whether training can translate into productivity, wages, dignity and real bargaining power in the labour market.

What India did gain from Skill India Skill India’s most visible achievement has been its large scale. Under PMKVY, from 2015 to 31 December 2025, 1.64 crore candidates were trained or oriented, while 1.29 crore were certified. Women’s participation has also been notable, with 74.29 lakh women trained by 30 June 2025, accounting for nearly 45 per cent of total candidates. In the first three phases, where placement tracking was linked mainly to the Short-Term Training component, 56.89 lakh candidates were certified and 24.3 lakh were reported placed, reflecting a placement rate of about 42.8 per cent. PMKVY 4.0 has moved beyond basic placement reporting towards wider career pathways, including self-

employment, wage employment, on-the-job training and digital linkages. By 31 December 2025, it had trained 27.09 lakh candidates and certified 18.79 lakh. Its focus on future skills is visible through over 600 industry-aligned courses in AI, 5G, cyber security, green hydrogen and drones.

Yet the core criticism has become sharper: Skill India did better in mobilising candidates, issuing certificates and building scheme visibility than in transforming the labour market. PLFS 2025 shows why. Only 4.2 per cent of Indians aged 15-59 had received or were receiving formal vocational or technical training; among 15-29-year-olds, the share was just 5.0 per cent. The Economic Survey, using PLFS 2023-24, also noted that 65.3 per cent of the workforce had no vocational training, while only 4.1 per cent had formal training. The skilling architecture expanded, but its real penetration into the workforce remains shallow.

Quality has been an equally serious concern. The 2025 CAG audit of PMKVY found that 6.54 lakh certified candidates across 705 job roles did not meet the minimum entry age at the start of training. Many others were certified despite not meeting educational or technical eligibility norms. Field inspections found closed training centres, weak attendance compliance, and gaps in placement strategy, monitoring and recognition-of-prior-learning certification. The larger message was clear: India created a large certification system without fully protecting the credibility of certification.

Employer linkage remains the weakest link. NITI Aayog found that 94 per cent of surveyed employers were willing to hire more PMKVY-trained candidates, and IIPA reported that 70.5 per cent of sur-



veyed candidates were placed in their desired skill sector. Yet placement tracking was mainly linked to PMKVY’s first three phases, not PMKVY 4.0. When tracking weakens, accountability also weakens. This is worrying for MSMEs, which need trusted hiring signals and easy apprenticeship routes, not just more course completions. The rural-urban divide also persists. PLFS 2025 shows youth unemployment at 8.3 per cent in rural India and 13.6 per cent in urban India. Secondary education attainment was 61.9 per cent in rural areas and 79.7 per cent in urban areas. Skill India has widened access, but structural gaps in schooling, connectivity, migration networks and local employer density remain unresolved. India’s skilling strategy should not be based on a single model viewed only through the lens of a foreign system. Germany shows the importance of tying classroom instruction to practical workplace training. Almost 89 per cent of vocational upper-secondary students participate in programmes that blend school-based learning with on-the-job experience. In this way, some 94 per cent of recent vocational graduates get a job within two years. South Korea, meanwhile, demonstrates how robust academic rigour, institutional rigour and competent quality assurance

can enhance results, even when vocational education attracts comparatively fewer students.

Another key lesson from Singapore is to not see vocational education as a lesser or second choice. The Institute of Technical Education and the broader SkillsFuture ecosystem have given vocational skills more social recognition, career mobility and lifelong relevance. The Philippines shows how a national mechanism can broaden the horizons of competency-based assessment and certification, with 13.76 lakh enrolments and nearly 10.81 lakh workers certified in 2024.

The importance of legally supported apprenticeship programmes is underscored by Brazil. By April 2026, the nation boasted 7,26,025 active young apprentices, suggesting the efficacy of a system in which employers participate in workforce development. India does not have to follow the entire path of any of these models. The big takeaway is that we are going to need a trusted skilling system that enables meaningful employer involvement, stronger apprenticeships, portable qualifications, high-quality standards, and job outcomes - not just enrolment and certification numbers.

Viksit Bharat is not only a GDP target; it is a productivity target. India cannot become a major manufacturing hub, high-value services exporter, green-transition economy and digital public infrastructure leader when only about 4 to 5 per cent of its people are formally vocationally trained. Manufacturing needs technicians, machine operators, quality controllers, maintenance workers and supervisors. Services need coders, cloud-support staff, logistics workers, care workers, sales teams and hospitality professionals. Green growth will

require solar technicians, EV maintenance workers, building-efficiency specialists and workers for recycling, waste management and industrial retrofitting. PMKVY 4.0’s shift towards electronics, IT-ITES and future skills is therefore welcome, but India needs a much wider base of applied workers, not only a small class of elite engineers.

AI can support this transition, but it cannot replace basic institutional reform. For most workers, the need is not advanced AI-building skills, but stronger digital ability, data awareness and problem-solving. AI should be used for personalised learning in Indian languages, adaptive practice and better matching of learners with jobs and apprenticeships. Used well, AI can improve assessment quality and make reskilling continuous; used poorly, it will create one more dashboard without creating one more employable worker. India now needs hard but practical reforms. PMKVY 4.0 should restore compulsory tracking of placement, wages and retention, publish district-wise outcomes, and link public payments more closely with verified employment results. Apprenticeships must become simpler for MSMEs through pooled agencies, standard contracts, digital stipend support and shared trainers. In the medium term, vocational education must enter schools, ITIs, polytechnics and universities as a mainstream pathway, with portable credits under NCFE. Skill India’s first decade proved it can certify at scale. Its second must prove that skills improve young Indians’ bargaining power.

The writer is an Associate Professor at Atal School of Management, JNU

Your Trusted Management Advisory

www.transglobeadvisors.in

Order Order

Pet dog plays crucial role in solving 2021 Mohali murder



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Delhi court acquits man in 2011 murder case

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

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

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

Centre assures strict steps to curb NEET paper leaks

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

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

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



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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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



requested the bench to withdraw the same.

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

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

purpose, and objectives of the protest".

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

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

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

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

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

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

The ensuing clashes left several police personnel and protesters injured.

SC restricts uploading proceedings online



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

court proceedings on social media.

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Pune

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

Additional Sessions Judge Aniruddha Gandhi granted anticipatory bail to the Dhangekar couple on Thursday on a personal bond of ₹25,000 each with one surety of the like amount, subject to conditions. The court, however, rejected the anticipatory bail application of Shedge, whose name allegedly figured in the suicide note and a video purportedly recorded by the deceased before taking the extreme step.

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



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

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

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

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

SC proposes special courts for Manipur violence cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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



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

Senior advocate Vrinda Grover informed the bench

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

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

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

"We direct the legal aid counsels to immediately

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

SC to hear pleas on police action against students

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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



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

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

iexceed

Appzillon™

AI Powered Digital Banking Solutions

WWW.i-exceed.com

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

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

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

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

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

(PTI)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(PTI)

The Pioneer

RANCHI | SATURDAY | JULY 25, 2026

BUSINESS

11

India engaged with US for negotiating trade pact: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

File photo

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

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

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

India, Israel conclude second round of trade pact negotiations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

The negotiations were held here during July 20-23.

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

fying areas of convergence," the Commerce Ministry said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

The project will be housed

under a Special Purpose Vehicle, Vizag Power Transmission Ltd.

Its scope involves the establishment of a 4×1500 MVA, 765/400 kV GIS substation at Pendurthi (Vizag) and a 3×1500 MVA, 765/400 kV Khammam-II substation.

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

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

Rupee recovers 18 paise to settle at 96.55 against US dollar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

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

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

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

information has been made available to their clients.

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO)

ues to be one of India's most important FTA blocs. This pact came into force in January 2010.

India's exports to ASEAN increased from about \$18.1 billion in 2009-10 (pre-FTA year) to \$38.4 billion in 2025-26, more than doubling over the period.

Major markets include Singapore, wherein exports increased from \$7.6 billion in 2009-10 to nearly \$11.9 billion in 2025-26 (30.9 per cent share of ASEAN exports); Malaysia, where exports increased from \$2.8 billion in 2009-10 to over \$6.8 billion in 2025-26 (17.8 per cent share); Vietnam, from \$1.8 billion in 2009-10 to \$6.7 billion in 2025-26 (17.3 per cent share); and Thailand, where exports increased from \$1.7 billion in 2009-10 to US 5.1 billion in 2025-26 (13.2 per cent share).

Crude oil futures ease 2% to ₹8,876/barrel on profit-booking

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Crude oil futures fell 2 per cent to ₹8,876 per barrel on Friday as traders booked profits after the recent rally, even as global benchmark Brent hovered near the \$100-a-barrel mark amid geopolitical tensions in West Asia that kept supply concerns alive.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), crude for the August delivery declined by ₹148, or 1.64 per cent, to ₹8,876 per barrel in a business turnover of 17,232 lots. The September contract also eased ₹154, or 1.79 per cent, to ₹8,426 per barrel in 2,125 lots.

Traders said profit-booking capped gains after crude prices logged their strongest weekly rally in months on fears of supply disruptions.

In the international markets, Brent oil futures for September delivery traded marginally lower at \$100.28 per barrel on the Intercontinental Exchange,

while West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for the same month contract fell 0.53 per cent to \$91.70 per barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

"Brent crude prices are holding near \$100 after crossing the level for the first time in two months this week," said Anindya Banerjee, Head of Commodity and Currency Research, Kotak Securities.

He said the rally was triggered by Yemen's Houthi attacks on two Saudi oil tankers in the Red Sea, as well as US President Donald Trump's threat of a massive strike on Iran, and Kazakhstan's suspension of exports through the Caspian pipeline following drone strikes.

Banerjee said investors are watching the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, warning that any significant disruption to shipping through the Red Sea could propel Brent towards \$120 per barrel, as global oil inventories have been depleted by months of continuous drawdown.

Sensex, Nifty fall 5th day on US tariffs, West Asia tensions

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

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

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

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

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

FROM THE WORLD

PAKISTAN

Imran son seeks global help

Former prime minister Imran Khan's son has urged the international community to intervene claiming his father, who has not been incarcerated for 1,100 days, urgently needs medical attention.

Currently lodged in solitary confinement at the Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi, the 73-year-old international cricketer turned politician was arrested on August 5, 2023 after an Islamabad trial court found him guilty of corrupt practices in the Tosha Khana (national treasury) case. Imran Khan has been subsequently arrested and convicted in several other cases leading to continued incarceration.

"It has now been around 1,100 days since my father, Imran Khan, was imprisoned, and my brother and I haven't heard his voice since March. For months, we've been denied contact with him," Kasim said. (PTI)

CHINA

Attacks Philippine ships again

Chinese coast guard ships fired powerful water cannons at two Philippine fisheries vessels on Friday in the South China Sea, the third confrontation in the disputed waters this week as Manila hosted annual ministerial meetings at which Asian and Western Governments renewed their alarm over China's maritime aggression.

The latest high seas faceoff happened near the Scarborough Shoal, the Philippine coast guard said, adding that a Chinese coast guard ship also approached a Philippine Government fisheries vessel, the BRP Datux Paduhinog, at a distance of seven meters (23 feet) in what it called a "reckless" maneuver that created a serious risk of collision.The Chinese coast guard reiterated China's sovereign control over the fishing atoll and said it took control measures against several Philippines vessels illegally operating in the waters. (AP)

Drones target US base in Iraq, conflict escalates

JULIA FRANKEL/ STELLA MARTANY

■ Irbil

Drones carrying explosives targeted a city in northern Iraq where US forces are stationed and sirens rang out in Bahrain on Friday, hours after the American military said it finished its 13th night of strikes against Iran.

The conflict has flared again over the past week, as the US pounded Iran while Tehran attacked ships in the Strait of Hormuz and targeted US assets and allies in the region.

The strait, which is a crucial passage for the world's energy supplies, is at the centre of the latest fighting since Iranian attacks can effectively shut the waterway, sending fuel prices soaring worldwide and causing widespread economic turmoil.

The strait, which is a crucial passage for the world's energy supplies, is at the centre of the latest fighting since Iranian attacks can effectively shut the waterway, sending fuel prices soaring worldwide and causing widespread economic turmoil.



The Iranian-allied Houthi rebels added further pressure this week by targeting two Saudi tankers in the Red Sea, making good on a threat to cut off an alternative route for the region's oil.

Despite the war's unpopularity

— and its widespread damage to Iran and the global economy - the latest round of fighting has no clear off-ramp. Iran's Health Ministry said 55 people have been killed and over 600 wounded in strikes in recent weeks. The US and Israel

attacked Iran on February 28 and have offered shifting goals for the war, including toppling Tehran's Government and eliminating its nuclear programme. But the conflict has devolved into a fight for control of the Strait of Hormuz - with Iran apparently hoping to win concessions by inflicting damage on the global economy and the US trying to limit that damage.

US-led forces intercepted and shot down five explosive-laden drones over Irbil on Friday morning, according to security officials in northern Iraq. "Fortunately, the incident caused no casualties or damage," they said.

An Associated Press journalist heard at least seven blasts in the city, the capital of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region, and saw at least four plumes of black smoke rising from areas near or

inside a base at the city's airport that hosts US forces. Flights continued as normal at the airport, the state-run Iraqi News Agency reported, citing the facility's director.

US military officials in Iraq did not respond to a request for comment. In recent years, the US maintained about 2,500 troops in Iraq for training and to conduct operations against the Islamic State group with Iraq's military. Many of those have withdrawn, but a small contingent of military advisers and others remains - many of whom have moved to Irbil.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard urged people in neighbouring countries to stay away from bases with American troops while asking people to report the places where they are stationed, according to a statement read out on state TV.

As the US has bombed Iran, Tehran has targeted several countries in the region that host American troops. Bahrain, which is home to the US Navy's 5th fleet, said it intercepted and shot down Iranian aerial attacks on Friday. It did not say if there were any casualties or damage.

US strikes overnight hit a naval base for the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard in the north of Iran, the semiofficial news outlets Fars and ISNA reported Friday morning.

Blasts from US bombardment overnight were also reported on Iran's Qeshm Island, a base for naval assets including drone boats that Iran can use to attack vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, as well as in Isfahan province, home to a major Iranian air base and one of Iran's nuclear sites. (AP)

Sri Lanka welcomes US tariff reduction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

■ Colombo

Sri Lanka on Friday welcomed the US decision of lowering to 10 per cent the tariff on goods imported from the island nation saying it will send a strong signal to investors about the country's economic reforms.

The US imposed the 10 per cent tariff on goods imported from Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and 13 other countries as part of a wider action against products made using forced labour. The decision to lower tariffs from 12.5 per cent to a minimum of 10 per cent was a result of Sri Lanka's decision to ban the import of goods produced using



forced labour. "The move is expected to deliver positive results for exporters, while reflecting Sri Lanka's ongoing commitment to fair trade, responsible business practices, and internationally accepted labour standards," a statement from the Ministry of Finance said. The tariff reduction will enhance the competitiveness of Sri Lankan exports in the US

market, sending a strong signal to investors and buyers about the country's dedication to sustainable economic reforms, it added.

The island's main trade chamber, reacting to the US decision, said, "The reduction will provide some relief to exporters navigating a highly competitive and uncertain market place."

Under the 'Trump Tariffs' announced in early 2025, Sri Lanka was billed to pay a reciprocal tariff rate of 44 per cent, which if implemented, was to have a devastating effect as the US is Sri Lanka's single largest export market.

The local exporters then feared that the 44 per cent tariff would have been non-competitive and would push

Sri Lankan exports out of the US. Later, Sri Lanka's tariff was brought down to 20 per cent alongside those of Vietnam, Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia, and Cambodia.

In February this year, the US Supreme Court struck down and invalidated the reciprocal tariffs.

In early June, the US imposed a 10 per cent tariff for 15 countries that had enforced forced labour import prohibitions and a 12.5 per cent for 45 countries with no such prohibitions.

On July 10, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake gazetted Sri Lanka's prohibition on the importation of goods produced using forced labour.



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

PTI

Pakistan expresses concern over recent tensions in West Asia

SAJJAD HUSSAIN

■ Islamabad

Pakistan on Friday expressed concern over the recent West Asia tensions and called for dialogue, restraint and de-escalation by all sides to achieve peace in the region.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said this in a meeting with his Iranian counterpart Seyyed Abbas Araghchi on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) in Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, the Foreign Office said.

Pakistan, which previously mediated a ceasefire between the US and Iran, is making efforts to prevent the collapse of the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which was signed last month between the two countries.

The Islamabad MoU is a 14-point interim peace deal aimed at ending the war between Iran and the US. The two countries have engaged in hostilities over the past week with the US attacking Iran and Tehran targeting ships



Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar

in the Strait of Hormuz and American assets in the region According to the Foreign Office, the two ministers reaffirmed the close and long-standing ties between Pakistan and Iran and reviewed the evolving regional situation.

Dar, who is also Pakistan's deputy prime minister, expressed "deep concern over recent regional tensions and underscored the importance of dialogue, restraint, de-escalation by all sides, and sustained diplomatic engagement to achieve lasting peace and stability", it said. (PTI)

UK PM begins work from new No 10 North

ADITI KHANNA

■ London

British Prime Minister Andy Burnham began work from the new No 10 North in Manchester on Friday, which is designed to split the Government's power base out of 10 Downing Street in London.

The new northern England branch of the PM's office at Heron House in Manchester was declared "open for business" as Burnham arrived to chair the first meeting of the National Economic Council of senior ministers, mayors and business leaders.

He plans to spend at least one day a week at No 10 North, which he said would be more than just an office. "It's not just a new office. Through this place, power is



going to flow, energy is going to flow, new ideas are going to come through," said Burnham, in his address to the staff.

"I cannot tell you what a proud moment this is. I think this might be the best day of my life. "My generation of people growing up here, and it's true of places all over

the country, to get on in life you had to leave where you were because things weren't here... that is what No 10 North is all about: putting power in every postcode so that people can turn things around for themselves and make changes just as this great city has done and the other English cities are doing

through devolution. "Turning things round because of that ability to be able to do more for themselves," he said.

Burnham, who took charge as Prime Minister on Monday, was joined in Manchester by Chancellor John Healey and Louise Haigh, who is overseeing the "Office for the Prime Minister and Cabinet" – a new department that will encompass 10 Downing Street, No 10 North and the Cabinet Office. "This isn't about Government working in its old way, it's about the Treasury, No 10, close together, the heart of Government, then driving the same mission from here right out into all parts of the country," he stressed. (PTI)

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

ASSOCIATED PRESS

■ Seattle

A seaplane carrying 11 people crashed near an island tourist destination north of Seattle and caught on fire, prompting a quick, successful rescue by multiple agencies via boat and air to get injured passengers and the pilot to hospitals.

Videos posted on social media show the aircraft banking to one side as it flies low over the water near some boats close to shore. The plane makes a hard landing, first on one float, then briefly skips into the air before hitting the rocky coast. The person taking the video gasps as a crunching sound is heard when the plane



crashes just out of sight. Witnesses rushed to help. People can be seen getting out of the plane as smoke rises before bright orange flames engulf the fuselage, which came to rest partially submerged against a large

rock. "An Urgent Marine Information Broadcast was issued to mariners in the area, and numerous good Samaritan vessels responded to assist," the US Coast Guard said Friday in a statement about the crash, which hap-

pened. The crash, which involved a pilot and 10 passengers, happened more than two weeks after a seaplane carrying eight people made a rough landing in New York City's East River, causing minor injuries. In 2022, federal regulators ordered seaplanes to be inspected following a deadly crash in the waters of Puget Sound northwest of Seattle.

Thursday's crash happened in Shallow Bay near Sucia Island in the northern San Juan Islands. The archipelago between Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia, is a popular summer vacation spot known for its ferries, whale watching and hiking.

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

ASSOCIATED PRESS

■ Warsaw

Poland's main Opposition party faces a split in a disagreement over its future direction, with the party leader saying on Friday that more than 30 lawmakers have effectively left.

The conservative nationalist Law and Justice party ran Poland from 2015 to 2023, when the current liberal Government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk took power. During that time, it tightened control over the courts by appointing loyalist judges to higher courts and punishing critics with disciplinary action.

The Tusk Government's efforts to reverse those changes have repeatedly been blocked by two successive presidents sympathetic to Law and Justice.

Still, tensions within Law and Justice have simmered as a national election next year approaches, and it faces a challenge from parties further to its right. Longtime



leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski and Mateusz Morawiecki, Poland's prime minister from 2017 to 2023, have been at the centre of the spat.

Morawiecki represents a relatively moderate faction and in April set up an association called Development Plus, which many in the party view with suspicion.

South Africa mourns veteran freedom fighter Shanthie Naidoo

FAKIR HASSEN

■ Johannesburg

South Africa is mourning the passing of anti-apartheid activist Shanthie Naidoo, who died peacefully on Friday at the age of 91.

A central figure in the liberation struggle, Naidoo was one of the grandchildren of Gandhian lieutenant Thambi Naidoo, as the then young lawyer Mohandas Gandhi, later to become the Mahatma, led the fight against laws discriminating against Indians at the turn of the 19th century.

During the height of the apartheid-era state repression, Naidoo endured 371 days of solitary confinement and brutal interrogation, yet steadfastly refused to betray her comrades, most notably her friend and political sister, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the former wife of Nelson Mandela. Naidoo was born in Pretoria on March 6, 1935, directly into the frontline of South African resistance.

Her grandfather, Thambi Naidoo, was a key lieutenant to Mahatma Gandhi during the early satyagraha campaigns, and her parents, Roy and Ama Naidoo, made their family home in Doornfontein. (PTI)



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

KIM TONG-HYUNG

■ Seoul

A United Nations committee voted on Friday to inscribe a major archaeological site in the West Bank and a set of castles in southern Lebanon as World Heritage sites, despite objections from Israel, which had urged the committee to reject the bids.

The decision at a UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation meeting in South Korea came days after Israel's Foreign Ministry urged the committee to reject efforts to designate the small West Bank town of Sebastia and the Lebanese castles, calling the nominations a "weaponisa-



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

List and the List of World Heritage in Danger after reviewing the nominations on an emergency basis.

Sebastia, a hilltop town about 10 kilometers (6 miles) northwest of Nablus in the

Israeli-occupied West Bank, is identified by scholars as ancient Samara, capital of the biblical Kingdom of Israel. The area's archaeological remains span the Iron Age, Roman, Byzantine and Islamic periods. Christian and Islamic tradition holds that John the Baptist was buried there, according to a UNESCO website.

Sebastia's nomination, first submitted by the Palestinian delegation to UNESCO in 2012, argued that World Heritage status was needed to help preserve the site, saying it remains largely undeveloped under Israeli control and requires additional conservation despite attracting

tourists. The designation comes as Israel, which does not recognize a Palestinian state, moves to expropriate large swaths of land around the site, even as it faces pressure to crack down on violence by Israeli settlers in the Palestinian territory.

The five castles in the Mount Amel region are recognized for their layered architectural heritage, combining Crusader, Ayyubid, Mamluk and local influences, reflecting the evolution of fortified architecture over nearly nine centuries, according to a UNESCO description. In Tuesday's statement, Israel's Foreign Ministry accused the Palestinian delegation of

waging a "hostile, one-sided campaign" at UNESCO by falsely portraying Sebastia as an area facing an emergency, calling the effort a political attempt to "erase the site's profound, well-documented Jewish and Christian history."

Israel withdrew from UNESCO in 2019, accusing the organization of being biased against it and of downplaying its historical ties to the Holy Land.

Israel's Foreign Ministry also took objection to efforts to list Beaufort Castle in southern Lebanon as a World Heritage site. The castle was part of the nomination covering five castles in the

Mount Amel area. The ministry said Hezbollah, an Iran-backed militant group, has turned Beaufort Castle into a military stronghold by building tunnels beneath the site and launching rockets from the area, and accused UNESCO of ignoring those developments.

UNESCO and the Lebanese embassy in South Korea declined to comment on the Israeli claims about Hezbollah.

The UNESCO committee placed another Lebanese site, Tyre, an ancient Phoenician city in the southern part of the country, on the list of world heritage sites in danger. (AP)

From Rejections to a Movement of Ideas

The TEDxKanke Journey

■ By Rajeev Gupta
Curator, TEDxKanke

Success is often celebrated at the destination. But the real story lies in the uncertainty, the rejections, the sleepless nights and the difficult decision to continue when there is no guarantee of success.

My journey with



TEDxKanke has been exactly, a journey of persistence, purpose and people. On July 31, 2014, I took voluntary retirement from government service after more than 21 years of service in Bihar and Jharkhand. As the Treasury Officer at Doranda Secretariat Treasury, Ranchi, I had spent most of my professional life within the structured world of government.

But I also carried a dream to create a platform in Ranchi where ideas, experiences and extraordinary human stories could be heard. I had been deeply inspired by TED Talks and wanted to bring a TEDx chapter to Ranchi. Between 2014 and 2018, I applied for licences under several names: TEDxRanchi, TEDxMGRoad, TEDxMorabadi, TEDxTagoreHill and others. Every application was rejected. Each rejection was disappointing. But I kept applying.

In 2019, I applied once again, this time under the name TEDxKanke. In August that year, after five years of persistence, the licence was finally approved. It was a moment of immense happiness. I immediately shared the news with my co-organiser, Kanishka Poddar, and together we began working towards building the platform.

But I soon realised that getting the licence was only the beginning. The next question was how do we actually move forward? I had no clear understanding of funding or sponsorship. There was no financial model ready. There was no large organisation behind us. We had a licence, a dream and the conviction that Ranchi deserved a platform for ideas worth spreading.

That was it. The sponsorship dilemma: In the early days, approaching people for support brought its own set of challenges. Many of those whom we approached were interested in TEDxKanke. But often, there was an expectation that they themselves should be on the TEDxKanke stage as speakers. That created a difficult situation. TEDxKanke was never meant to be a platform where people could simply buy their way onto the stage.

As a team, we wanted to host people because of their ideas, their work and the impact of their journeys, and not merely because they could support the event financially. We had to remain clear about one principle: the stage must belong to those who deserve to be heard. That decision was not always easy. It also meant that funding became even more challenging.

Building a team without money: The next challenge was building a team. In the beginning, there was no money. And when there is no money, it is difficult to convince people to commit their time, energy and talent to a project whose future is

uncertain. People have jobs. People have responsibilities. People need to earn. So, in the initial days, building a committed team was a major challenge. We had to rely on belief, belief in the idea, belief in the platform and belief that something meaningful could eventually emerge from our efforts. Slowly, people began to come together.

Our inaugural event on February 23, 2020, featured 13 speakers, including British solo cyclist Hannah Kern, French AI diversity champion Caroline Chavier, and Ambassador Deepak Vohra (Retd. IFS). The event brought together extraordinary voices from different backgrounds and demonstrated what was possible when a committed team came together around an idea.

The support from Ranchi was overwhelming and gave us the confidence to continue the journey. Since then, TEDxKanke has hosted nearly 100 speakers covering technology, entrepreneurship, sustainability, education, leadership, and the arts.

Their talks have been published on the official global TED platform, taking voices from Ranchi to an international audience. Through themes like The Billion Dreams, An Era of AI, and TEDx Countdown, focused on climate action, we have intentionally bridged grassroots innovation with global conversations. More than an event: Today, TEDxKanke has a committed core team that has been instrumental in shaping its journey.

Among them, Amit Modi has played a significant role in strengthening the platform through strategic planning, digital outreach and community engagement. Along with Kanishka Poddar and many dedicated volunteers, he has helped TEDxKanke evolve from an idea into one of Jharkhand's most recognized platforms for ideas worth spreading. We are equally grateful to our institutional and ecosystem partners who have believed in this vision over the years.

Organizations like DigiCrow Consulting have played an important role in strengthening our digital outreach and helping TEDxKanke connect with a much wider audience. Their continued support demonstrates that meaningful ideas flourish when communities and businesses come together.

We also have a long list of potential speakers, extraordinary people with stories that deserve to be heard. Yet, somewhere, the struggle for sponsorship continues. That may sound surprising to many people.

But the reality is that creating a meaningful platform requires resources. Speakers may bring the ideas, but events require infrastructure, technology, production, travel, hospitality and a committed team. A good idea alone does not always pay the bills. Despite the challenges, I continue to believe deeply in TEDxKanke. For me, TEDxKanke is not merely an annual event.

It is a place where stories are heard live. It is a place where one person's struggle can become another person's strength. Sometimes, a story does not immediately change the world. But it can change one person sitting in the audience. And sometimes, that is enough.

I remember our last TEDxKanke event and one speaker in particular, Syam Kumar S. S. His story was not simply about overcoming disability. It was about redefining the boundaries of human possibility. Syam is an amputee who has undergone 16 major surgeries, including a kidney transplant. Yet, he went on to become the world's youngest solo skydiver with a prosthetic leg. He is also a



A different story of Jharkhand: Jharkhand is often viewed through the lens of mining, industry and natural resources. But Jharkhand is also a land of ideas, creativity, entrepreneurship, innovation, courage and extraordinary human potential. TEDxKanke is an attempt to bring that side of Jharkhand into the conversation. Our platform has brought together students, scientists, entrepreneurs, policymakers, artists, innovators, social leaders and changemakers. It has created a space where a local idea can connect with a global conversation. What began as a personal dream has gradually grown into a larger community movement. The licence was important. But, looking back, I do not think the licence was the real achievement. The real achievement was continuing after every rejection.



record-holding cyclist and a certified paragliding pilot. His talk, "Becoming Cybroid, Becoming Myself," explored the potential of brain-computer interfaces and digital

twins to shape a neuro-bionic future, a future where technology can help overcome physical limitations and redefine human capability.



Syam Kumar S. S. His story was not simply about overcoming disability. It was about redefining the boundaries of human possibility. Syam is an amputee who has undergone 16 major surgeries, including a kidney transplant. Yet, he went on to become the world's youngest solo skydiver with a prosthetic leg. He is also a record-holding cyclist and a certified paragliding pilot. His talk, "Becoming Cybroid, Becoming Myself," explored the potential of brain-computer interfaces and digital twins to shape a neuro-bionic future, a future where technology can help overcome physical limitations and redefine human capability.

But what stayed with me was not only the technology. It was the human being behind it. Syam's life is a powerful example of the intersection between human resilience and assistive technology. Modern engineering may have helped him push physical boundaries, but it was his determination that made the journey possible. He is a living testament to the fact that technology can expand human capability,

but the human will remain supreme. When someone like Syam stands on a stage and shares his story, the audience does not merely listen to a speech. They confront their own limitations. They begin to ask themselves: If he can overcome so much, what is stopping me? That is the power of TEDxKanke.

A different story of Jharkhand: Jharkhand is often viewed through the lens of mining, industry and



In 2019, I applied once again, this time under the name TEDxKanke. In August that year, after five years of persistence, the licence was finally approved. It was a moment of immense happiness. I immediately shared the news with my co-organiser, Kanishka Poddar, and together we began working towards building the platform. But I soon realised that getting the licence was only the beginning. The next question was how do we actually move forward? I had no clear understanding of funding or sponsorship. There was no financial model ready. There was no large organisation behind us. We had a licence, a dream and the conviction that Ranchi deserved a platform for ideas worth spreading.

Amit Modi has played a significant role in strengthening the platform through strategic planning, digital outreach and community engagement. Along with Kanishka Poddar and many dedicated volunteers, he has helped TEDxKanke evolve from an idea into one of Jharkhand's most recognized platforms for ideas worth spreading.



natural resources. But Jharkhand is also a land of ideas, creativity, entrepreneurship, innovation, courage and extraordinary human potential. TEDxKanke is an attempt to bring that side of Jharkhand into the conversation.

Our platform has brought together students, scientists, entrepreneurs, policymakers, artists, innovators, social leaders and changemakers. It has created a space where a local idea can connect with a global conversation. What began as a personal dream has gradually grown into a larger community movement.

The licence was important. But, looking back, I do not think the licence was the real achievement. The real achievement was continuing after every rejection. The real achievement was continuing when there was no clarity about funding.

The real achievement was continuing when building a team seemed almost impossible. The real achievement was remaining committed to the idea that a platform should be built for deserving voices even when that decision made the journey more difficult. The journey continues: Today, TEDxKanke has hosted

nearly 100 speakers from across the country and the world. We have a team, a growing community and a long list of stories waiting to be heard. But the journey is far from over. We continue to search for partners and sponsors who understand that supporting TEDxKanke is not merely supporting an event. It is supporting ideas, stories, young minds and the possibility of creating a more thoughtful society.

My request to the citizens, institutions, businesses and organisations of Jharkhand is simple: Let us come together to build a meaningful and inspiring society: A society where stories are heard. Where ideas are respected. Where young people are inspired to dream bigger. Where technology serves humanity.

Where challenges do not become excuses. And where one person's journey can give another person the courage to move forward.

Because, ultimately, TEDxKanke is not just about the people who stand on the stage. It is also about the person sitting in the audience who leaves the auditorium believing: "Perhaps I

BRIEFLY

Volpato has tested positive for cocaine, says Police



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

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

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

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

(AP)

British Open winner Ryan arrives back in New Zealand

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

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

"It's good to be back," he said. A few hours later, media found the 39-year-old Fox at his local bakery, enjoying his favorite steak, bacon, jam and cheese pie. He hopes in coming days to be able to show off his trophy to New Zealand, to get in some fishing and maybe a round of golf. But first, sleep. Fox has had a hectic schedule of travel and interviews since his win. "I had a glass of wine, took a couple of sleeping pills and had more sleep last night than I've had the last four nights. It's nice," Fox said. "I'm sure jetlag's going to get me and I feel like I'm going to be pulled in every direction possible over the next 10 days or so we're home. It's definitely nice to be home." I've got the golf clubs. We'll see how it goes over the next couple of days.

I'd like to catch up and play with some mates.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Mousmi Badhkar, Daughter of Mithun Badhkar, aged about 30 years, resident of vill. - Bhownagar, Post- Bhownagar, Thana- Jomphokhet, Dist.- Dhanbad, Jharkhand, do hereby solemnly affirm and state as follows:-
1. That I am the deponent herein and am fully acquainted with the facts of this affidavit. 2. That my correct name is MOUSMI BADHKAR. 3. That my correct date of birth is 08/02/2006. 4. That due to an inadvertent error, my Aadhaar Card contains incorrect particulars regarding my name and date of birth and wrongly written as Mouni Badhkyar D/o- Mithun Badhkyar and date of birth as 12/02/2008. 5. That My Secondary School Marks Statement issued by the Jharkhand Academic Council, Ranchi correctly records my name as MOUSMI BADHKAR and my date of birth as 08/02/2006. 6. That I request the concerned authority to correct my Aadhaar records by recording my name as MOUSMI BADHKAR and my date of birth as 08/02/2006. 7. That this affidavit is made for submission before the UIDAI/Aadhaar Enrolment Centre and any other authority wherever required.
SI.No.-08, Date-23.07.2026

BEFORE, THE EXECUTIVE MAGISTRATE, RANCHI

AFFIDAVIT

I, BIJENDRA SHARMA, S/o Late Kishori Mistri, aged about 58 years, resident of Adarsh Nagar Kokar Chowk, P.S.- Sadar, District - Ranchi (Jharkhand) do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as follows:-
1. That I am an Indian Citizen by birth and residing at above mentioned address. 2. That my actual and correct name is BIJENDRA SHARMA but in my Aadhaar Card my name has entered VIRENDRA VISHWAKARMA my Aadhar No. 6285 7622 9885 which has mentioned in my Ration Card and others documents. 3. That BIJENDRA SHARMA and VIRENDRA VISHWAKARMA both names and title are same and one person and I known as both the names and titles. 4. That the above statements are true to the best of my knowledge. If any wrong found I will fully liable for the same.
SI.No-5125, Date-13.07.2026

Glasgow 2026 gives CWG a fresh start

APARAJITA UPADHYAY ■ Glasgow

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

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

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

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

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



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

"Addressing plastic pollution

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

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



restore threatened marine ecosystems and diminished fish stocks."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Joseph declined selection for Pakistan Tests, says Sammy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Tarouba

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

"Yeah, it is a big loss. Mr Joseph has declined selection. That's the

reality of the situation," Sammy said at a press interaction ahead of the series opener.

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

Joseph has played 42 Tests for the West Indies, picking 130 wickets. He



has played across formats for the regional team. Despite Joseph's absence, Sammy remains confident

of his side's bowling abilities. The attack includes Shamar Joseph, Kumar Roach, Jayden Seales and all-rounders Justin Greaves and Keemo Paul. Spin options include Jomel Warrican, rookie Joshua Bishop and captain Roston Chase.

"What I could tell you (is that) we have a bowling line-up that we've seen that could take 20 wickets. That's the first start to winning Test matches," Sammy said when asked if West Indies had the firepower to take on Pakistan. "We saw it in New

Zealand. We saw it in the Australia series. We matched Australia with the ball. We matched New Zealand with the ball as well. And the confidence and the work that the batters have put in, you could see it bearing fruit in the Test series against Sri Lanka. "You know, much more consistency is coming through. So once we match these two batsmen scoring runs, we know we have the bowling line-up to take 20 wickets and help us win Test matches," Sammy said.

कार्यालय नगर परिषद्, रामगढ़

बंदोबस्ती हेतु आम सूचना (2nd Call)

रामगढ़ जिला अंतर्गत बिहार / झारखण्ड सहकारी समितियों अधिनियम- 1935 तथा बिहार / झारखण्ड स्वावलंबी सहकारी समितियों अधिनियम 1998 के अंतर्गत निबंधित एवं वर्तमान में नगर परिषद्, रामगढ़ क्षेत्र स्तर पर कार्यरत मत्स्यजीवी सहयोग समितियों / स्वावलंबी सहकारी समितियों के लिए वर्ष 2026-27 से 2028-29 की अवधि में अपने कार्यक्षेत्र अंतर्गत अवस्थित जलकरों के बंदोबस्ती हेतु प्रस्ताव प्रेषण से संबंधित आवश्यक सूचना ।

प्रस्ताव प्रेषण की अंतिम तिथि 31 / 07 / 2026

एतद द्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि वर्ष 2026-27 से 2028-29 की अवधि में रामगढ़ नगर निकाय के जलाशय की बंदोबस्ती की जानी है । संबंधित जलाशय की सूची कार्यालय रामगढ़ के सूचना पट्ट पर अंचलवार देवी जा सकती है या कार्यालय से प्राप्त किया जा सकता है ।

मत्स्यजीवी समितियों प्रस्ताव के साथ निम्नवर्णित दस्तावेज सलन करना अनिवार्य है :-

1. सहायक निबंधक सहयोग समितियों / जिला सहकारिता प्रदाधिकारी रामगढ़ के द्वारा वर्तमान क्लेन्डर वर्ष में निर्गत स्वच्छता प्रमाण-पत्र ।

2. आमसभा की कार्यवाही की अभिप्रमाणित छायाप्रति ।

3. अंकेक्षण प्रतिवेदन की छायाप्रति ।

4. विशेष आमसभा / निर्वाचन कार्यवाही की अभिप्रमाणित छायाप्रति ।

5. पूर्व से बंदोबस्त जलाशय की वितरण सूची ।

6. पूर्व के बकायेदार नहीं रहने संबंधी अभिप्रमाणित प्रमाण-पत्र ।

7. अद्यतन राजस्व जमा से संबंधित रसीद की छायाप्रति ।

8. सभी सदस्यों का नाम नगर परिषद्, रामगढ़ के पत्र के साथ तैयार सूची का सहायक निबंधन सहयोग समिति के द्वारा अभिप्रमाणित छायाप्रति ।

• नियम व शर्त कार्यालय सूचना पट्ट पर देवी जा सकती है ।

समितियों के साथ बंदोबस्ती सरकारी परिपत्रों सकल्यों एवं आदेश में की जाएगी । बंदोबस्ती का प्रस्ताव (स्वच्छता-प्रमाण-पत्र एवं अन्य उपरोक्त वर्णित दस्तावेजों के साथ) दिनांक 31 / 07 / 2026 तक कार्यालय अवधि में नगर परिषद्, रामगढ़ में जमा किया जा सकता है । निर्धारित तिथि तक जिन जलाशय की बंदोबस्ती का प्रस्ताव प्राप्त नहीं होगा उनके खुले ढाक से बंदोबस्ती की प्रक्रिया प्रारंभ कर दी जाएगी ।

कार्यालयक पदाधिकारी
नगर परिषद् रामगढ़

PR 385790 District (26-27)_D

GOVERNMENT OF JHARKHAND

SPORTS AUTHORITY OF JHARKHAND

(DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM, ART-CULTURE, SPORTS & YOUTH AFFAIR'S)

Gate No. 29-30, Birsa Munda Football Stadium, Morhabadi, Ranchi

Short e-TENDER NOTICE

Notice No. 03, Dated : 24/07/2026

e-Tenders in two parts Part-I (Technical and Commercial) and Part-II (price part) are invited from the reputed tenderers having good experience of following similar type works and having sound financial status:

NIT No.	Name of the works	Estimated cost in Rs./-	Earnest money to be deposited in Rs./-	Cost of BOQ (Non-Refundable) in Rs./-	Time of completion of work.
03/PR/SAJHA /2026-27	Renovation work of SAI Building at Birsa Munda Football Stadium, Morabadi, Ranchi.	69,71,633/-	1,40,000/-	10,000/-	4 Month
Start Date of Submission of Bids			27/07/2026 at 5.00 PM		
Last Date/Time of Submission of Bids			10/08/2026 at 3.00 PM		
Date/Time of opening of Bid (Technical Part)			11/08/2026 at 3.30 PM		
Tendering Officer and address for communication			Executive Engineer office, SAJHA, Morabadi, Ranchi		

1. e-Tender documents and BOQ including terms & conditions, specification etc. can be downloaded and submitted online on website <https://jharkhandtenders.gov.in>

2. Cost of bidding document for a non-refundable fee & Bid Security (EMD) shall be payable online through <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in>

3. Any Changes or any other information can be seen on <http://jharkhandtenders.gov.in>

4. The undersigned reserves the right to extend the date of submission and opening of tender/distribute the works among the tenderers or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason thereof

Sd./-
Executive Engineer
Sports Authority of Jharkhand

PR 385759 Art Culture Sports and Youth Affairs (26-27)_D

झारखण्ड सरकार

कृषि, पशुपालन एवं सहकारिता विभाग (कृषि प्रभाग)

कार्यालय: जिला कृषि पदाधिकारी, कोडरमा

पता: संयुक्त कृषि भवन, समाहणालय परिसर, कोडरमा

किसान भाईयों के लिए आवश्यक सूचना

कोडरमा जिले के कृषकों को सूचित किया जाता है कि विभिन्न अनुदानित उर्वरकों का कंप्यूटार प्रति बोरी अधिकतम खुदरा मूल्य (MRP) निम्न प्रकार है :-

COMPANY WISE MPR LIST 2026									
Sl.No.	Company	UREA	DAP	TSP	20:20:13	16:16:16	14:28:10	10:26:26	15:15:15:9
1	IFFCO	266.50	1350.00	0.00	2100.00	0.00	0.00	OLD:-1950.00 New:-2400.00	0.00
2	NFL	266.50	1350.00	1300.00	2250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1950.00
3	YARA	266.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
4	KFL	266.50	1350.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
5	INDORAMA	266.50	1350.00	0.00	1750.00	0.00	1775.00	1950.00	0.00
6	IPL	266.50	1350.00	0.00	0.00	2050.00	0.00	0.00	OLD:-1850.00 New:-1975.00
7	MATIX	266.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
8	HURL	266.50	1350.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
9	PPL	0.00	1350.00	0.00	1800.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
10	SAI	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
11	BEC	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

नोट :- 1. सूत्रिया की प्रति बोरी 45 Kg Packsize की होती है एवं शेष उर्वरकों की बोरी 50 Kg Packsize होती है ।

2. यदि किसी भी खुदरा विक्रेता द्वारा उक्त निर्धारित MRP से अधिक मूल्य पर उर्वरकों की बिक्री की जाती है तो ऐसी स्थिति में संबंधित प्रखण्ड के प्रखण्ड कृषि पदाधिकारी / प्रखण्ड तकनीकी प्रबंधक जिले के जिला कृषि कार्यालय तथा संयुक्त कृषि निदेशक कार्यालय में इसकी शिकायत की जा सकती है ।

3. यदि किसी विक्रेता द्वारा जबरन अनुदानित उर्वरकों के साथ गैर - अनुदानित उर्वरकों की बिक्री की जाती है तो ऐसी स्थिति में संबंधित विक्रेता की अनुज्ञप्ति रद्द करते हुए उनके विरुद्ध उर्वरक नियंत्रण आदेश, 1985 के तहत सख्त कार्रवाई की जाएगी ।

जिला कृषि पदाधिकारी
कोडरमा

PR 385730 Agriculture, Animal Husbandry And Co-opretive Department (26-27)_D

जिला ग्रामीण विकास शाखा, चतरा

प्रेस विज्ञप्ति

सूचना

एतद द्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि इस कार्यालय का पत्रांक 443 / जिओ दिनांक 16.03.2026 द्वारा मनरेगा अन्तर्गत चतरा जिला में संविदा अवाचित विभिन्न पदों यथा प्रखण्ड कार्यक्रम पदाधिकारी, तकनीकी सहायक(सहायक / कनीय अभियंता के समकक्ष), लेखा सहायक एवं कम्प्यूटर सहायक के रिक्त पदों के विरुद्ध अंतिम पदाधिकारी / प्रखण्ड तकनीकी प्रबंधक जिले के जिला कृषि कार्यालय तथा संयुक्त कृषि निदेशक कार्यालय में इसकी शिकायत की जा सकती है ।

अभ्यर्थी प्रमाण-पत्र जांच हेतु अनुपस्थित एवं एक पद विशेष के लिए एक से अधिक जिला में आवेदन पाये जाने के कारण उनकी अभ्यर्थिता रद्द कर दी गई जिसके फलस्वरूप पद रिक्त हो जाने की स्थिति में पदवार कुल-8 अभ्यर्थियों को चयन संघारित प्रतीक्षा सूची से करने को निर्णय लिया गया ।

उक्त के आलोक में पदवार रिक्त पदों के विरुद्ध निम्नलिखित अभ्यर्थियों के प्रमाण-पत्रों के सत्यापन हेतु आमंत्रित किया जाता है:-

क्र०	पद का नाम	आवेदन सं०	अभ्यर्थी का नाम	पिता का नाम	चयनित कोटि
1	तकनीकी सहायक (कनीय अभियंता के समकक्ष)	57521297751	MD SALMAN	MUSHTAQ ALI	UNR
2		57521294087	MD AZMAT HUSSAIN	Taiyah Hussain	UNR
3		57521293992	NIRAJ KUMAR	TULSI RAM	BC- I
4		57521293892	SUNIL KUMAR YADAV	SHOBHI YADAV	BC-II
5		57521298161	MITHILESH KUMAR PASWAN	SURESH PASWAN	SC
6	लेखा सहायक	57621295152	SARYU SAW	MATLU SAW	UNR
7		57621293010	DHARMENDRA KUMAR SONI	PARDEEP PODDAR	UNR
8	कम्प्यूटर सहायक	57721299709	NARENDRA KUMAR RANA	BHUNESHWAR RANA	BC- I

उपरोक्त अभ्यर्थियों को सूचित किया जाता है कि दिनांक 04.08.2026 को पूर्वाह्न 10:30 से अपराह्न 05:00 बजे तक जिला ग्रामीण विकास शाखा, चतरा के कार्यालय में आधार कार्ड, 2 पासपोर्ट साइज फोटो एवं आकरे द्वारा ऑनलाईन में सलन प्रमाण पत्रों के मूल प्रति के साथ सत्यापन हेतु उपस्थित होना सुनिश्चित करेंगे । उक्त तिथि को उपस्थित नहीं होने पर आपकी अभ्यर्थिता रद्द समझी जाएगी ।

उपायुक्त, चतरा ।

PR.NO.385750 Rural Development(26-27):D



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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



Pakistan in the semifinals.

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

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

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



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

SAUMOJYOTI S CHOUDHURY ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

India U20 men to face Singapore in 2 friendlies



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

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

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

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

Comeback from injury was very difficult: Mayank

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Harare

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

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

"It was very difficult. The two-



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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Harare

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

After being swept away by Ireland (0-2) and England (0-4), three-time T20 World Cup winners India produced a far better show in their series-opener here on Thursday, beating Zimbabwe



by seven wickets to take a 1-0 lead.

Young batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's 19-ball 50 and Mayank Yadav's fiery 4-0-18-2 set up an important win for India in the opening match here, against an opponent which has thrived in home conditions of late.

India chased down a modest 126 with more than six overs and seven wickets to spare, riding on Sooryavanshi's fifty, a quickfire 35 from Ishan Kishan and a measured 28 not out from skipper Iyer.

Abhishek Sharma, who began his T20I journey here at the Harare Sports Club and struck his maiden hundred in the format in the second game itself two years ago, would be keen to make amends after falling cheaply in the opening game.

Sooryavanshi set the record for being the youngest to score a T20I half-century. The young batter would have been relieved getting the monkey off his back, especially when he was specifically targeted with short balls on England tour.

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



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

FMSCI has been in regular talks with the ministry on not just the issue of recognition but to also chart the way forward for FI's India comeback.

Viswanathan Anand becomes FIDE interim president

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand has taken over the interim presidency of world chess body FIDE after its incumbent president Arkady Dvorkovich stepped aside following his inclusion in the European Union's list of sanctioned individuals related to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.

Dvorkovich, who hails from Russia, has decided to challenge EU's decision "by all means". The EU action could lead freezing of his accounts and travel bans. Anand has been the Deputy President of FIDE since 2022.

"The FIDE Council accepts and



ratifies the decision of Mr Arkady Dvorkovich to suspend the exercise of his rights, duties and prerogatives as President of the FIDE," the world body said in a statement.

In his statement, Dvorkovich said the EU's decision was unfair.

Judoka Tulika Maan suspended, withdrawn from CWG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Birmingham Commonwealth Games silver medal-winning judoka Tulika Maan has been withdrawn from the ongoing Glasgow edition after being handed a provisional suspension by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) for three whereabouts failures in the last 12 months.

Maan had won silver in the +78kg category in the 2022 edition and she was a strong medal prospect in Glasgow as well. She now stares at a two-year ban.

"She has committed three whereabouts failures in a 12-month period and NADA has sent notice to her. So, she will be withdrawn from the team," a judo coach told PTI on conditions of anonymity. The 27-year-old from Delhi is the second judoka to have been withdrawn from Glasgow CWG.

On Thursday, Arun Kumar, who com-



petes in the men's -73kg category, was pulled out of the Games after failing an out-of-competition dope test.

He was handed a provisional suspension by the NADA for testing positive for an anabolic steroid.

CRICKET AUSTRALIA OPEN TO HOSTING ASHES TEST IN INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Melbourne

After deciding to take the Big Bash League opener to Chennai later this year, Cricket Australia is now considering the idea of having an Ashes Test in India at some point in future.

CA chief executive Todd Greenberg, however, ruled out any immediate plan. Australia is preparing to the host the Big Bash Opener in Chennai in December. "Our relationship with the ECB (England and Wales Cricket Board) but also the BCCI is very strong, and clearly there are opportunities in India to put more content into certain areas," Greenberg told BBC's Stumped podcast.



Aston Villa sign Garnacho on loan after Rogers sale

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

Argentina winger Alejandro Garnacho went to Aston Villa on loan from Chelsea on Thursday, joining a Champions League team from one that has no European action this season.

Garnacho made the move just days after Morgan Rogers went from Villa Park to Chelsea for a record transfer fee for an English player.

The 22-year-old Garnacho, who was a Spain youth international, was not picked for Argentina's World Cup squad. His eight games for Argentina include the title-winning team at the 2024 Copa America when he was a Manchester United player.

Garnacho's one season at



Chelsea after a 40 million pounds (\$53 million) transfer saw coaches Enzo Maresca and Liam Rosenior fired as the 2025 Club World Cup winner placed 10th in the Premier League.

Colombia backs coach Nestor with contract extension

JOSE MANUEL VALLADARES ■ Bogota (Colombia)

Nestor Lorenzo will continue as Colombia soccer coach after the national team conceded only one goal in five games at the recent World Cup. The length of his contract extension with the Colombian Football Federation was not disclosed. Lorenzo, a 60-year-old Argentine, was initially hired in 2022 on a four-year contract.

The federation's executive committee confirmed the extension on Thursday after a meeting in Bogota.

Under Lorenzo, Colombia has 31 wins, 12 draws, and eight losses, scoring a healthy 96 goals overall and conceding 44.

Time to recharge'Colombia topped its group at the World Cup with wins over Uzbekistan (3-1) and Congo (1-



0), and a 0-0 draw against Portugal. After defeating Ghana 1-0 in the round of 32, Colombia was eliminated in the last 16 by Switzerland, falling 4-3 in a penalty shootout following a goalless 120 minutes.

"Now is the time to recharge and continue developing this project," Lorenzo told 365scores. "We will keep building a stronger national team, maintaining our attacking style and pursuing clear objectives."

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

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Frankfurt (Germany)

Jurgen Klopp was expected to be named Germany's new coach Friday, tasked with bouncing back from another disastrous World Cup.

The German soccer federation was expected to announce at a news conference Friday morning that it has agreed a contract with Klopp for his first coaching job since he left Liverpool in 2024. German media reported his deal will run through the 2028 European Championship and 2030 World Cup.

The former Liverpool manager has been the preferred candidate ever since Julian Nagelsmann resigned following Germany's shock loss on penalties to Paraguay in the World Cup round of 32 on June 29.

