

CAQM flags 17 dust violations on Ring Road

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Commuters travelling along Delhi's Ring Road could soon see stricter cleaning enforcement, after the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) found 17 violations of high visible road dust and construction waste accumulation during a surprise inspection drive covering 35 kilometres of the Inner and Outer Ring Road.

The inspection, conducted on October 3, 2026, under "Operation Clean Air," aimed the assess visible road dust and check whether road-cleaning and sweeping operations were being carried out effectively along the Ring Road, one of the city's busiest and most heavily used corridors.

For the drive, CAQM deployed four Flying Squad teams to inspect roads falling under the jurisdiction of the Public Works Department (PWD), Delhi. Together, the teams covered 25 road stretches spanning approximately 35 kilometres across the Inner and Outer Ring Road.

Across these stretches, the teams documented 17 instances of highly visible dust or accumulated Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste on the roads, pointing to gaps in how regularly and effectively the concerned agency was sweeping and cleaning these sections.

CAQM said these findings point to the need for strict



and effective implementation of prescribed road-cleaning, sweeping, and dust-mitigation measures by the agencies responsible for maintaining these stretches, rather than one-off cleanups.

The Commission stressed that regular, effective road-cleaning and sweeping operations are critical to controlling road dust and preventing passing vehicles from resuspending it into the air. It noted that accumulated C&D waste and visible dust left along roadsides and carriageways directly contribute to this resuspension, worsening ambient air quality for everyone travelling or living near these roads. This cycle repeats every time traffic moves over poorly maintained stretches.

PWD, Delhi and other concerned agencies have now been directed to take appropriate corrective measures to control road dust on a priority basis. CAQM further emphasised that road stretches under these agencies' juris-

diction must be kept clean and dust-free through regular sweeping, timely removal of accumulated dust and construction waste, and prompt corrective action wherever lapses are found.

CAQM said inspection drives under "Operation Clean Air" will continue across Delhi-NCR to assess on-ground implementation of various air pollution abatement measures, identify compliance gaps, and ensure concerned agencies take timely corrective steps rather than allowing violations to persist unchecked.

For residents who use the Ring Road daily, whether on two-wheelers, in cars or on foot near its carriageways, the findings offer a rare, independently verified snapshot of how inconsistently dust control measures are actually being enforced on one of the city's major arterial roads, despite road dust remaining one of the most significant and persistent contributors to Delhi's poor air quality through the year.

Delhi set to get 382 EV charging stations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Power Minister Ashish Sood said on Sunday that the Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) has approved 382 sites for setting up electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the national Capital.

The Delhi Government's Revenue Department and the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) identified 456 sites for EV charging infrastructure, of which the MHI approved 382, Sood said in a statement.

Under the Delhi EV Policy, notified on June 30, all 382 sites were reassessed over the past three months for

segment-wise deployment, with sites categorised separately for two-wheelers, three-wheelers and four-wheelers, he said.

The site-level assessment was carried out to ensure that Delhi's charging network supports upcoming statutory mandates, including 100 per cent electric registrations for three-wheelers and N1 light commercial vehicles from January 1, 2027, and two-wheelers from April 1, 2028, Sood said.

The Government has onboarded KPMG as the Project Management Unit (PMU), and the comprehensive site reassessment is complete, he said.



The Government is now set to float a tender for the first tranche of 160 to 180 high-readiness sites, Sood said. He said the success of an EV ecosystem should not be measured merely by the number of financial incen-

tives disbursed, but by the structural transformation of charging infrastructure on the ground.

"By prioritising power availability, grid feasibility and segment-specific charging nodes, we are ensuring

that when citizens transition to electric two-wheelers, three-wheelers and commercial vehicles, they are backed by world-class infrastructure across the capital," he said.

"Delhi's primary focus over the last quarter has been to lay a sustainable, future-ready infrastructure foundation that directly aligns with the bold deadlines set under the Delhi EV Policy 2026," Sood said.

"A true EV revolution cannot rely solely on short-term financial payouts; it requires robust, reliable and segment-specific charging infrastructure that eliminates range anxiety for everyday citizens," he added.

DDA collects 2.5 tonnes waste from sports complexes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has collected approximately 2.5 tonnes of waste from its sports complexes as part of a month-long "Swachhata Hi Seva" campaign, with single-use plastic bottles now banned and new segregation dustbins installed across these facilities, officials said.

The campaign, led under the guidance of Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu, began on September 17, 2026, and covers DDA's parks, green spaces, sports complexes and recreational facilities, focusing on cleanliness, environmental improvement, public awareness and citizen participation. DDA officials and staff, along with 75 RWAs, students, children, park users and others connected to public spaces, have been



taking part in the activities.

The cleanliness drive has covered Saket Sports Complex, Netaji Subhash Sports Complex, Squash and Badminton Stadium, Hari Nagar Sports Complex, Paschim Vihar Sports Complex, the Dwarka Sports Complexes in Sectors 11 and 17, Major Dhyan Chand Sports Complex,

Rashtriya Swabhiman Khel Parisar, Poorv Delhi Khel Parisar, Chilla Sports Complex, Yamuna Sports Complex, Qutab Golf Course and DDA Lake View Golf Course. Activities included cleaning of sports and recreational facilities, parking areas, green spaces and other public-use areas, along with upkeep of landscaped sections.

Beyond the sports complexes, the campaign includes three special initiatives. "Children to the Green, Learn, Care and Participate" engages children and students in cleanliness and environmental awareness activities, encouraging them to take responsibility for parks, trees and natural resources. "Bin before Overflow" focuses on regular monitoring and timely emptying of dustbins in parks to prevent overflow, littering and unhygienic conditions.

The campaign also includes plantation of native tree species and environmental awareness activities aimed at strengthening Delhi's green cover, promoting biodiversity and improving the ecological quality of public spaces, with awareness sessions covering proper waste disposal, prevention of littering, protection of trees and plantations, and responsible use of public facilities.

STATE BANK OF INDIA,
A.M.C.C. (62343), 1st Floor, NEAR AGRA CHOWK,
PALWAL-121102. E-MAIL: sbi.62343@sbi.co.in

(RULE - 8(1) POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the State Bank of India, A.M.C.C. (62343) Palwal Branch, under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No.3 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice Dated 04/05/2026, by calling upon the **Borrower:- (1) M/S SHASHI FOOTWEAR, Proprietor - Mrs. Shashi Garg W/o Mr. Vinod Kumar, Ground Floor, House No.1461, Ward No.23, Behind Chaupal, Thai Mohalla, Palwal, Haryana-121102 (2) Proprietor: Mrs. Shashi Garg W/o Mr. Vinod Kumar, Ground Floor, House No.1461, Ward No.23, Behind Chaupal, Thai Mohalla, Palwal, Haryana-121102** (hereinafter the borrower and guarantors are collectively referred to as the "the Borrowers") to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being **Rs.5,65,823/- (Rupees Five Lakh Sixty Five Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty Three Only) plus future interest** all the contractual rate w.e.f. 01/05/2026 with further interest and incidental expenses, costs within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice and future interest at the contractual rate on the aforesaid amount together with incidental expenses, costs, charges etc. thereon. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount vide acct. no.42283771750, notice is hereby given to the borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **Possession** of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section 4 of Section 13 of said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this the **29th Day of September 2026**. The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of **State Bank of India, A.M.C.C. (62343) Palwal Branch** for an amount being **Rs.5,65,823/- (Rupees Five Lakh Sixty Five Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty Three Only) plus future interest** at contractual rate w.e.f. 01/05/2026 and future interest at the contractual rate on the aforesaid amount together with incidental expenses, costs, charges etc. thereon.

The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

DESCRIPTION OF THE HYPOTHECACTION OF ASSETS

Owner :- M/S SHASHI FOOTWEAR, Ground Floor, House No.1461, Ward No.23, Behind Chaupal, Thai Mohalla, Palwal, Haryana-121102.

Proprietor:- Mrs. Shashi Garg W/o Mr. Vinod Kumar, Ground Floor, House No.1461, Ward No.23, Behind Chaupal, Thai Mohalla, Palwal, Haryana-121102.

Nature of Security: Hypothecation of Stock and Book Debts of Unit.

Date: 29/09/2026 **Sd/- Authorised Officer,**
Place: PALWAL **State Bank of India, A.M.C.C. (62343) Palwal**

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Nature of Security: Hypothecation of Stock and Book Debts of Unit.

Date: 29/09/2026 **Sd/- Authorised Officer,**
Place: HODAL **State Bank of India, A.M.C.C. (62343) Palwal**

Govt makes Pink Saheli Card must for free bus rides

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Government has notified that women residents can avail free travel on DTC and cluster buses only through the 'Pink Saheli Smart Card', officials said on Sunday. The change comes under the Delhi Transport Corporation (Free and Concessional Passes) (Second Amendment) Regulations, 2026. The Delhi Government said it has issued more than 19 lakh Saheli Pink Smart Cards so far.



"Female passengers who are residents of Delhi can travel free in Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and cluster buses, both AC and non-AC, only with the use of Pink Saheli Smart Card (NCMC). However, they will

have the option to purchase a ticket at the applicable fare for the journey," a Delhi Transport Department notification said.

Women who are not eligible for the free travel facility can also travel on DTC and cluster buses by purchasing tickets at the applicable fare, it said.

The provisions will also apply to transgender persons who are residents of Delhi, the notification added.

Launched in March this year, the NCMC-based card

replaced the paper-based pink tickets the government had issued after several extensions.

The Transport Department had earlier directed that the Pink Saheli Smart Card would be mandatory for availing the free travel facility from September 30.

The Government will focus on creating awareness about the smart card through depot and in-bus announcements, social media, print media and other channels, officials said.

The Pioneer

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, hitherto known as SUSMITA MISHRA ALIAS SUSMITA GHOSH D/O DWARIKA NATH MISHRA W/O ARINDAM GHOSH R/O 2001, TOWER-5, KALYPSO COURT, JAYPEE GREENS WISH TOWN, BEHIND AXIS HOUSE, SECTOR-128, NOIDA, GAUTAM BUDDHA NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH-201304 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as **SUSMITA GHOSH.**

I, Dipti Singh, Father of- No.15819896P Nk Devesh Kumar, R/o- Nagla Kishori, Saifai, Dist- Etawah, U.P.-206130, declare that in my son's service records my D.O.B is wrongly written as 01/01/1960 whereas my correct D.O.B is 08/10/1962 which may be amended accordingly.

I, Sheetal Devi, Mother of- No.15819896P Nk Devesh Kumar, R/o- Nagla Kishori, Saifai, Dist- Etawah, U.P.-206130, declare that in my son's service records my D.O.B is wrongly written as 01/01/1966 whereas my correct D.O.B is 16/11/1964 which may be amended accordingly.

I hitherto known as DR VIDYA NIDHI ACHARYA S/O SH SWAROOP MANDAL RESIDING AT 1072/6, WARD NO.-1, OL^o H OFFICE. MEHRAULI, GADAI PUR, PO GADAI PUR, DIST SO DELHI, DELHI-110030 have changed my name and shall hereafter known as **DR VIDYA NIDHI.** It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

DR VIDYA NIDHI ACHARYA [Signature (in existing old name)]

15 years on, two brothers held for gold misappropriation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Police arrested two brothers in West Bengal on Sunday for allegedly misappropriating 1,430 grams of gold and diamonds entrusted to them by a Delhi jeweller after nearly 15 years. The accused, Pintu Koley (47) and Mintu Koley (46), were arrested from Hooghly during the intervening night of October 1 and 2, they said.

The brothers, trained jewellery makers and designers, were booked in connection with an FIR registered at Kotwali police station in 2011. Police said the accused acquired expertise in jewellery designing while working with various jewellers in Delhi. They allegedly took advantage of the trust placed in them and misappropriated substantial quantities of gold and diamonds given to them for making jewellery.

They subsequently fled Delhi and settled in West Bengal. Both were declared proclaimed offenders in the case, after which police said a reward of ₹10,000 each was announced in 2012.

A Crime Branch team traced the brothers after developing specific information about their presence in Hooghly. The accused were found working as jewellery makers and undertaking orders from jewellers in Kolkata and Hooghly while allegedly maintaining a low profile to evade arrest.

"They were apprehended, and during interrogation, the accused allegedly disclosed that they wanted to start their own jewellery designing business but lacked funds. They allegedly planned to use the valuables entrusted to them to arrange finances for the proposed business," a senior police officer said.



EOW ARRESTS MAN IN FORGERY, FRAUD CASES



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police has arrested a man wanted in two cases involving alleged forged Government documents and financial fraud after tracking his movements across Mumbai and Gujarat, an officer said on Sunday.

Kushal Samir Mehta was apprehended from Borivali railway station in Mumbai on October 1 following surveillance and field verification, the EOW said in a statement.

Mehta is an accused in an FIR registered in 2022 at the EOW and another case registered in 2025, it read.

The 2022 case was registered on a complaint by a Senior Accounts Officer of the Ministry of Finance regarding alleged attempts to encash Government payments using forged sanction letters, treasury instruments and other documents.

The questioned documents related to payments of ₹7.62 crore in favour of one company and ₹11 crore in favour of another. Verification found the documents to be fabricated, and the payments were not released, read the statement.

In the 2025 case, a Gujarat-based businessman alleged that Mehta claimed access to Government departments and could facilitate Government-related work and the recovery of funds. The complainant alleged that he was induced to pay around ₹3.12 crore based on purported Government documents and assurances.

Police said Mehta had allegedly provided documents presented as communications or orders from various Government departments and agencies, along with purported court documents, treasury cheques, and demand drafts.

Sexual harassment complaints against police sent to Crime Branch

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A day after three female journalists accused Delhi Police officers of sexual harassment while covering protests against the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar near Jantar Mantar in the national Capital, Delhi Police on Sunday said they received complaints alleging sexual harassment by police officers during a protest in New Delhi on October 3, and that the same have been transferred to the Crime Branch for a "fair and impartial enquiry".

The police said three female journalists made the complaints while personnel were managing the law-and-

order situation during the protest. In a statement, Delhi Police said, "On 3-10-26, during the protest in the New Delhi area, while there was a law-and-order situation, allegations of sexual harassment were made by three female journalists against police officers." "New Delhi District has received their complaints, and the same have been transferred to the Crime Branch for fair and impartial enquiry," the statement said.

The police statement comes against the backdrop of protests near Jantar Mantar on October 3, where demonstrators gathered as part of an ongoing agitation demanding the resignation of Gyanesh Kumar over alleged

irregularities linked to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. The protests saw a significant police presence and multiple detentions as demonstrators attempted to reach the designated protest area near Jantar Mantar.

One of the journalists said that an Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) sexually assaulted her during protests. She alleged that the officer touched her inappropriately and pushed her away while she was recording the police action. She also said that she and others then went to a police station to file a case, but claimed the complaint was not registered immediately.

According to the complaint,



Police personnel detain activists near India Gate during a protest demanding the resignation of CEC Gyanesh Kumar in New Delhi on Sunday

when she confronted him, the officer fled the scene. In another complaint, a video journalist said she was covering the protest on Ashoka

Road at 3 pm. "I was recording the detention of Yogendra Yadav and Prashant Bhushan when I felt someone touching my back with their penis and

rubbing it against me. I moved sideways but still felt it on my thighs. When I turned, I saw a policeman standing very close to me," the complainant

stated. According to the complaint, when she confronted him about the inappropriate touching, he dismissed her allegation.

According to media, a female journalist said that an assistant commissioner of police sexually assaulted her when she was covering the protest. "Police personnel were detaining protesters, and there were no women police personnel present at the spot. I asked ACP Vivek Bhagat of the Delhi Police about the absence of women police personnel, following which he sexually assaulted me and pushed me back," she alleged.

The journalist said she and others subsequently went to a police station to lodge an FIR, but alleged that no action

had been taken so far. The Press Council of India expressed "shock and dismay" over the police's treatment of journalists covering the protest and urged the Delhi Police to act on the complaint immediately.

"Behaviour of this kind cannot be normalised in a democracy. Journalists must be allowed to work freely, without fear, and document those who gather to raise various issues," it said in a statement.

Earlier on Saturday, senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had demanded answers from Union Home Minister Amit Shah on allegations of misconduct with women by Delhi Police personnel during the protest.

BJP alleges JNU students, Punjab buses fuel protests



Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor on Sunday alleged that the ongoing Jantar Mantar protests are being sustained not by Delhi residents but by the same faces who participated in the CJP movement in July. He claimed the AAP and its allies cannot mobilise even 50 people from the Capital itself.

Kapoor said it was extremely unfortunate that a handful of people associated with Communist ideology were bent on vitiating Delhi's political atmosphere and disrupting law and order. He said the faces seen hovering around Jantar Mantar two or three times a day currently were the same faces witnessed during the CJP movement earlier this year.

He further alleged that videos seen the previous day showed either one or two buses being brought in daily from Punjab, or students from JNU associated with communist ideology participating in the protests and raising what he called objectionable and uncivilised anti-Government slogans, suggesting the demonstrations lacked genuine local support from Delhi citizens.

Protest turns tense, 3 FIRs filed, Neha Bora detained

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

High drama unfolded in the national Capital on Sunday as protests and marches demanding Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar's resignation turned tense, with demonstrators breaking barricades, blocking buses carrying detainees and attempting to move towards Jantar Mantar. The Delhi Police registered three FIRs and briefly detained All India Students' Association (AISA) national president Neha Bora on the third consecutive day of agitation at Jantar Mantar.

AAP workers, members of its student wing ASAP, NSUI workers, AISA activists and members of other organisations took part in the demonstrations, prompting a heavy deployment of Delhi Police and paramilitary personnel across central Delhi.

Visuals from the protest showed AAP workers blocking buses carrying people detained during the demonstration as security personnel tried to clear the area. The situation escalated when protesters broke through barricades and moved towards Jantar Mantar. Delhi Police and the Rapid Action Force

were deployed as security personnel attempted to stop the protesters from advancing. Women protesters were also seen climbing onto a vehicle as the situation grew tense.

At the AISA protest, the organisation claimed that their national president Neha Bora was picked up by Delhi Police in a private vehicle without an official number plate and taken to an unknown location during the protest. Later, they claimed that she was released at the Narela Industrial Area police station. They claimed Bora was released without her phone and bag, adding that a team of lawyers was being sent to the police station to assist her. They also alleged that no woman police officer was present inside the vehicle when Bora was taken away, calling it a violation of procedure. The allegations are baseless, a senior police officer said. The officer claimed some protesters attacked police personnel on duty and bit them.

A fresh attempt to reach Jantar Mantar on Sunday brought protesters face-to-face with heavy police barricading in Central Delhi, as the agitation entered its third day. Activists of the AISA began marching



Police personnel try to evict members of the AISA, SFI, and other student organisations during a protest in New Delhi on Sunday

from Andhra Bhawan Circle on Ashoka Road towards the designated protest site, raising slogans as security personnel stopped them from crossing the barricades.

Bora also framed the mobilisation in an X post as a women-led assertion of the right to protest, saying women could not be stripped of their freedom or prevented from taking to the streets.

In the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) protest, police detained more than a dozen workers while they protested at India Gate for Kumar's resignation. Speaking to reporters from inside a police bus, Bhardwaj accused police officers of maltreating him during the detention. "They are picking

me up and throwing me around like I am a football...They are standing there peacefully, yet these people are behaving so rudely towards them. What do these people think of the commoner? If this is how they treat politicians and journalists, imagine how they must treat the general public. This Government must go, and I urge everyone to come to India Gate and make their voices heard. That thief! That thief! That thief!" he said.

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal reacted sharply to the detention in a post on X. "This is absolutely shocking. Modi ji has left even Hitler behind," he said.

In another protest, the

Indian Youth Congress (IYC) held a protest march in Delhi. IYC workers attempted to march from the organisation's office on Raisina Road towards Jantar Mantar, carrying candles, posters and the Tricolour, raising slogans against the Election Commission (EC) and CEC Gyanesh Kumar. The protest came days after Delhi Police denied IYC permission to hold a demonstration at Jantar Mantar.

The protest is part of the larger agitation across cities over alleged irregularities in the Election Commission's functioning, the conduct of the SIR exercise, and the mass deletion of voters. The latest demonstration also took place under heightened security, with police personnel deployed at multiple points and barricades placed to regulate the movement of protesters.

Sunday's demonstration came a day after authorities detained more than 150 protesters in Delhi. More than 500 people, including student activists and political leaders, had also been detained during protests in central Delhi on Friday. Bora, AAP leaders and activist Yogendra Yadav were among those detained that day.

INDIA bloc to protest outside ECI office



CEC Gyanesh Kumar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi units of INDIA bloc parties will hold a joint protest outside the Election Commission of India (ECI) office on Wednesday against the SIR and demand the resignation of CEC Gyanesh Kumar.

The decision was taken at a meeting attended by representatives of the Congress, Communist Party of India (CPI), Communist Party of India (Marxist), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), among others, according to a statement issued by the Delhi Congress on Sunday.

Delhi Congress general secretary Anil Bhardwaj said the parties had decided to jointly oppose what they termed a "flawed" SIR process and seek its immediate repeal.

"The voter list is the foundation of democracy. If any process is adopted that could potentially remove voters' names or impact their rights, the INDIA Alliance will not accept it at any cost," Bhardwaj said in the statement.

Bhardwaj said the October 7 protest would be a joint effort to "protect the rights of Delhi voters, fair elections, and the democratic system".

FIR filed in death of Delhi PhD student

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

An FIR has been registered in connection with the death of a 40-year-old PhD student from Delhi, who was found unconscious and injured at his rented accommodation in Munirka in August, police said on Sunday.

The FIR under Section 108 (abetment of suicide) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) was lodged at the Kishangarh police station on October 4 following directions from the Supreme Court and a complaint received from the security officer of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), they said.

The man was found in an unconscious and injured condition inside his rented house in Munirka village on August 18, a senior police officer said. The door was locked from inside, and neighbours broke it open. He was immediately taken to the AIIMS Trauma Centre by police. He remained under medical care for more than 45 days before



succumbing to his injuries at the hospital on October 3, police said.

Police clarified that the incident did not take place inside the IIT-Delhi campus. During the course of proceedings, neither the family members nor witnesses raised any suspicion or allegation against any person, they said.

According to police, the PhD student was alone in the house when the incident took place, a fact corroborated by footage from a CCTV camera installed outside the premises.

The FIR has been registered following the apex court's directions, and the officer said further proceedings will be carried out in accordance with law.

Delhi CGHS told to conduct immediate safety audits

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

All Cooperative Group Housing Societies (CGHS) in Delhi have been directed to conduct an immediate, comprehensive safety audit of their buildings, covering structural integrity, fire safety and lift maintenance, with managing committees given three months to submit compliance reports, according to a circular issued by the office of the Registrar of Cooperative Societies.

The circular, issued by Deputy Registrar (Policy) Anil Kumar, draws on directions from the Minister for Social Welfare, Welfare for SC/ST, Cooperative and Election, GNCTD, communicated in a letter dated September 12, 2026, calling for a comprehensive safety audit across Delhi's cooperative housing societies.

Under the directions, societies must undertake a structural safety audit through qualified structural engineers or agencies, verify that they hold a valid Fire Safety Certificate or NOC and that fire-fighting



and safety installations are functioning properly, and confirm valid lift inspection or safety certificates with proper lift maintenance.

Any serious structural or safety deficiency found to pose an imminent risk to life or property must be brought immediately to the notice of the competent authority, with appropriate precautionary measures taken without delay. The department has asked all societies to submit a time-bound compliance report, which it will use to monitor compliance and coordinate further action as needed.

The circular invokes Rule

106 of the Delhi Co-operative Societies Rules, 2007, which places responsibility on a society's Management Committee to carry out repairs and maintenance of the property, conduct regular inspections, and take immediate action to repair and maintain it. The rule also requires societies to prepare and regularly update a Disaster Management Plan and a Fire Prevention Plan.

Accordingly, all CGHS managing committees have been directed to immediately inspect their buildings, common areas and facilities to ensure there is

no structural damage, major cracks, seepage, leakage, or damage to roofs, external walls or staircases, or any other condition that could affect the safety of the building and its residents.

Committees must also verify the validity of Fire Safety Certificates or NOCs, confirm fire-fighting and safety installations are functioning, and check the validity of lift inspection and safety certificates wherever applicable.

Where structural defects, damage or other safety deficiencies are found, the Managing Committee must take immediate remedial action. If the matter requires intervention from a civic or competent authority, the Committee has been directed to take it up with DDA, MCD, Delhi Fire Service or any other relevant authority, and to pursue the matter until necessary action is taken.

Committees have also been told to maintain proper records of inspections conducted, deficiencies identified and the action taken in response.

2 sisters-in-law jump in Jaitpur over video dispute

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Two women, sisters-in-law to each other, were injured after jumping from heights within minutes of each other at a house in Khadda Colony, Jaitpur Extension, in southeast Delhi, following a dispute over a video, police said on Sunday. Police admitted both to the AIIMS Trauma Centre.

Police said, the incident took place on October 2 at the house. One woman, about 25, was working in the kitchen when the other allegedly recorded her and sent the video to someone else, leading to a quarrel between them.

During the altercation, the 25-year-old woman sustained injuries after an incident on the first-floor balcony of the building. She received immediate assistance and was taken to Feliz Hospital for treatment.

The other woman, aged about 24, subsequently locked herself inside a room, following which a PCR call was made to Kalindi Kunj police station. On receiving the information, Kalindi Kunj SHO Raman

Kumar rushed to the spot along with a fire brigade team.

As the woman had locked herself inside the room, police and fire brigade personnel opened the door with the fire team's assistance. They found she had sustained injuries near a shaft area of the house, likely through a window opening into the room. Police and fire brigade personnel launched a rescue operation and brought her out safely.

Police said the dispute that preceded the incident centred on one woman having allegedly recorded a video of the other and shared it with a third person, which triggered the altercation between the two. Further details on the exact circumstances and the current medical condition of both women were not immediately available.

Investigators are expected to examine the full sequence of events, including the nature of the video and the identity of the person it was allegedly sent to, to determine what led to the confrontation between the two women.

Raahgiri Day: For three hours, Connaught Place forgot it was a traffic circle

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

For one Sunday morning, the Inner Circle of Connaught Place belonged not to honking cars and impatient commuters, but to children on cycles, grandmothers attempting Zumba steps, and a crowd that walked where it usually squeezes past traffic. Raahgiri Day, in collaboration with Sundays on Cycle, turned Delhi's most iconic commercial circle into a vehicle-free public space on Sunday morning. For those three hours, the city's busiest roundabout briefly became a playground.

A cycle rally flagged off the event, led by Delhi Cabinet Minister Ashish Sood, NDMC Chairman Manoj Kumar Dwivedi and Special Commissioner of Delhi Police

(Traffic) Ajay Chaudhary, alongside Raahgiri Foundation co-founder Sarika Panda Bhatt. What followed was less an official event than a city deciding, for a few hours, to behave differently with its own streets.

Sood said Raahgiri was not merely about individual fitness, but a celebration of the health and wellbeing of Delhi as a whole. By clearing Connaught Place of vehicles and opening it up to cycling, yoga, Zumba, skating, badminton and tug-of-war, he said the initiative gave citizens a weekly chance to reclaim public space for walking and healthy community activity. He pointed to cycling specifically as a tool against pollution, one the Delhi government is backing through dedicated cycling tracks across the city and its Electric Vehicle Policy.

Dwivedi said hosting Raahgiri at Connaught Place sent a strong signal for a cleaner, pollution-free Delhi, crediting the enthusiastic participation of youth for inspiring the city toward more sustainable mobility. He called it a movement toward safer roads and stronger recognition of cyclists' and pedestrians' rights, not just a one-off recreational morning.

Chaudhary used the platform to push road safety directly, appealing to Delhiites to follow traffic rules, avoid triple riding and driving on the wrong side, and treat pollution control as both a collective and personal responsibility.

Built around the theme "Roads are beautiful when they belong to people," the morning unfolded as a genuine cross-section of the city at play, cycling alongside cricket, badminton next to folk dance,



puppet shows drawing children while chalk art spread across the tarmac, with a dedicated fitness zone and interactive stalls threaded through it all. Families, senior citizens and children shared the same stretch of road that, on any ordinary weekday, none of them would dare walk through together.

By afternoon, the mood shifted from fitness to festival, as Euphoria Band took over Central Park with a live performance that had young participants singing and dancing their way through the final stretch of the morning, music folding fitness, recreation and community into one unbroken celebration.

The event drew together an unusually wide coalition: the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Delhi's Urban Development Department, Fit India, Delhi Police,

DDA and NDMC, alongside Raahgiri Foundation, Nagarro Foundation, the International Council on Clean Transportation, Gurujal, Walk21, its Regional Dialogues, and BYCS India Foundation, each lending a piece to a morning built entirely around the idea that a road need not always be a corridor for traffic.

What played out across Connaught Place was less a single event than a proof of concept, a glimpse of what the city's streets could feel like if they occasionally stopped serving only vehicles. For a few hours, Delhi's residents walked, cycled and danced through a space usually defined by its congestion, and in doing so, quietly argued that roads could belong to people too, not just for a Sunday morning, but as something worth returning to again.

Kerala orders probe against CEC Gyanesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Keralam Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala has ordered a Vigilance probe into the corruption allegations in the KSTP road work project and the death of a Malaysian engineer associated with it in 2006, when incumbent CEC Gyanesh Kumar was serving as the PWD secretary in the State, sources said on Sunday.

The development comes amid protests by the Congress and other Opposition parties against Gyanesh Kumar over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls across India.

Gyanesh Kumar is a Kerala-cadre IAS officer who headed various departments in the State before moving to central ministries.

Chennithala ordered the probe after KPCC leader Malayinkeezhu Venugopal filed a complaint seeking an investigation against Gyanesh Kumar on Saturday.

Speaking to reporters, Chennithala said he examined the complaint and found



Keralam Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala

prima facie merit in the allegations.

"I am convinced that a detailed Vigilance inquiry is essential," he said, adding that he has spoken to Chief Minister VD Satheesan before directing Vigilance Director Manoj Abraham to take lawful steps to conduct a detailed investigation.

In 2006, a World Bank-funded project worth Rs 215 crore was undertaken by the Kerala State Transport Project (KSTP) for the reconstruction of the MC Road from Angamaly to

Thiruvananthapuram.

He said PATI-BEL, a joint venture between the Malaysian firm and Bhageeratha Engineering, had undertaken the project.

A Malaysian company undertook the work, while its project engineer, Lee See Been, allegedly raised several complaints during the construction and later returned to Malaysia, where he died by suicide.

Chennithala said two suicide notes were reportedly recovered, one addressed

to the engineer's wife and another to the director of the company, in which Gyanesh Kumar was explicitly mentioned.

The minister said after the incident, Vigilance had examined the matter, including the contents of the note written in Kuala Lumpur, but the investigation did not progress after the Government changed in 2006.

"This is a case that was hushed up. After the Achuthanandan Government came to power back then, this case did not move forward," he alleged.

Responding to questions about the allegations, Chennithala said they included demands for money to clear bills and delays in payments allegedly linked to corruption.

"I haven't seen the suicide note myself; this is information reported through the media," he clarified.

The minister said the Vigilance had been instructed to investigate all aspects of the complaint and take further steps based on its findings.

Asked whether Gyanesh

Kumar's position as Chief Election Commissioner posed any legal impediment to the investigation, Chennithala said all legal aspects had been examined and there was no hurdle.

He said the inquiry concerned an incident dating back to 2006, when Kumar was serving as PWD secretary, and was a continuation of an earlier investigation that had been abandoned midway.

"The investigation pertains to an incident from the time he served as the PWD Secretary of Kerala in 2006. Therefore, he will not get the protection attached to the post of Chief Election Commissioner," he said, citing legal advice.

Chennithala said the Vigilance Director would proceed in accordance with the Vigilance Manual and applicable legal procedures.

The minister said he has a duty, as Home Minister, to order an inquiry after receiving a complaint alleging that an investigation into serious corruption had been compromised due to external influence.

Adityanath renames Bhadohi district to Sant Ravidas Nagar Bhadohi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhadohi

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday announced that Bhadohi district has now been renamed Sant Ravidas Nagar Bhadohi.

Announcing the new name during a programme held here, Adityanath said, "Now our Bhadohi district will be called Sant Ravidas Nagar Bhadohi." The chief minister was addressing a gathering here after he inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for 112 projects worth over ₹1,340 crore.

"On the occasion of Guru Purnima, the Government had said that Bhadohi district, currently known for its carpet industry, would in the future be known by the name of Satguru Ravidas ji Maharaj, a medieval saint who united society through his spiritual devotion," Adityanath said.

He added that it is "deeply gratifying" that Sant Ravidas's 600-year-old vision, in which everyone



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during the Provincial Teachers' Dignity Conference organised by Akhil Vishwa Gayatri Parishad, at Ram Manohar Lohia Law University in Lucknow

had food and benefited from welfare schemes without discrimination, has been realised.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, more than 80 crore people in India are currently receiving free ration. In this context, it is truly fitting that this district bears the name 'Sant Ravidas Nagar Bhadohi'," Adityanath said.

Bhadohi was a part of Varanasi district before it became the 65th district of the state on June 30, 1994.

The district has under-

gone several name changes, with the last such renaming carried out on December 6, 2014, when the Akhilesh Yadav-led Samajwadi Party Government officially changed its name back to Bhadohi from Sant Ravidas Nagar-Bhadohi.

On July 29 this year, Adityanath announced that the Bhadohi district would once again be renamed after Sant Ravidas Nagar, as the ruling BJP kicked off a Dalit outreach initiative from the prime minister's constituency, Varanasi.

Six UP Congress leaders accused of defacing CEC's house released on bail

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Agra (UP)

Six Congress leaders accused of allegedly writing slogans with black paint on the gate and outer wall of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's residence in Agra were released from Agra district jail on Sunday, a day after a local court granted them bail.

The six leaders — Mukesh Dhangar, Anil Yadav, Rajesh Kumar, Manoj Gaur, Rajesh Gautam and Pankaj Chaudhary — were arrested on September 29 in connection with the September 28 defacement incident in the Vijay Nagar area.

The court granted them bail on Saturday after the police dropped the attempt-to-murder charge during the investigation.



Black ink smeared on the gate of Gyanesh Kumar's Agra residence

After his release, Congress leader Anil Yadav renewed his attack on Kumar, saying the party's agitation would continue as long as the chief election commissioner (CEC) remained in office.

"The fight will continue as long as Gyanesh Kumar, the killer of democracy, remains in office," Yadav said, alleging that Kumar

had deprived crores of people of their voting rights.

Advocate Santosh Dixit, who represented the accused, said the police would now file its chargesheet, following which the defence would present its case and make submissions before the court.

Navy sailor held for leaking classified data to Pakistan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Coimbatore (TN)

An Indian Navy sailor accused of "transmitting" classified maritime intelligence to a Pakistani operative was arrested, officials said on Sunday.

According to official sources, the espionage operation involved a social media "honey-trap".

The Andhra Pradesh Police Counter Intelligence (CI) cell arrested 31-year-old Pradeep Mukherjee on October 3 at INS Agrani, a naval leadership training facility in Coimbatore.

Mukherjee, a West Bengal native who joined the Navy in 2014, was actively posted with the Eastern Naval Command in Visakhapatnam.

At the time of his arrest, he was attending a manage-



Representative image

ment development course and had been at the Coimbatore facility for approximately one week.

A female Pakistani intelligence operative reportedly contacted Mukherjee several months ago. Over time, the handler leveraged the online relationship to extract sensitive data regarding strategic naval assets, fleet movements, and the operational framework of the Visakhapatnam base.

Case filed against Udhayanidhi Stalin for involving minor in poll campaign

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Dharapuram (Tamil Nadu)

Tiruppur police have filed a case against DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin for allegedly involving a minor in an election campaign, officials said on Sunday.

The case was filed under the Representation of the People Act and the Juvenile Justice Act, officials added.

According to police officials, the incident occurred during a campaign rally near the Periyar statue in Dharapuram town on Saturday.

Udhayanidhi allegedly brought a minor boy onto a campaign van and handed him a microphone. The boy reportedly made disparaging remarks against Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay. The Dharapuram Town



Udhayanidhi Stalin

Police have registered a First Information Report (FIR) against the DMK leader under Section 123(1) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and Section 83 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. Authorities stated that the involvement of a child in campaign activities is also a

direct violation of Election Commission guidelines, which strictly prohibit children from participating in election-related events.

Udhayanidhi was in the town seeking votes for DMK candidate S Suganya ahead of the October 6 Dharapuram by-election. The campaigning came to an end on Sunday.

Hamami probe widens in Australia

The United Arab Emirates' attorney-general said Saturday that the incident was an attempted terrorist attack. International media organisations have identified Hamami as the aircraft's copilot. Reports in US media have also raised questions about his professional history, including claims that he was previously removed from flight training with Oman Air following concerns over extremist views. Despite those reported concerns, he subsequently returned to aviation and eventually became a commercial pilot.

Hamami's online activity is also emerging as a major focus of the investigation.

According to investigation more than 2,000 posts made between November 2021 and August 2022 on a social media account reportedly connected to him. The account used the name Pilot Hamam al-Hamami and described its owner as a civilian pilot from Muscat, while including biographical information consistent with Hamami's known identity. The posts reportedly contained repeated expressions of support for violence, including violent and degrading statements directed at women and homophobic rhetoric.

In one exchange, he threatened severe violence against a woman and described using her as an example to intimidate others. In another discussion concerning domestic violence, he compared an assault on a woman with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, portraying violence as a means of forcing another party to accept new boundaries.

The reported online activity is likely to face closer examination as Australian and international investigators attempt to reconstruct Hamami's ideological development, personal associations and professional history.

Netanyahu hails Captain Smit

The Israeli PM's Office later posted on X that Netanyahu had invited both PM Modi and Machchhar to light a flame at the Independence Day ceremony. "You are a hero for Israel, India, and the entire world. I invite Prime Minister Narendra Modi and you to light a flame on Israeli Independence Day," the post said.

During the conversation, the 38-year-old pilot recounted how he was allegedly attacked by his co-pilot inside the cockpit and shared details of the incident.

Machchhar said the co-pilot had wanted to pray before the alleged attack. Out of respect, he said, he looked towards the front of the cockpit while the co-pilot prayed.

"While he was praying, out of respect, I was just looking at the front and not at the back, and suddenly, after, I would say about four-five minutes, there was a big blow to the back of my head," Machchhar said.

"My first thought was that there was catastrophic damage to the aircraft and something

was not right. But then after that, the blows kept coming one after the other, and that's when I realised that it's not the aircraft, it's the other guy who was in the cockpit with me," he added.

The incident occurred on Wednesday aboard flydubai flight FZ1073, which was carrying 174 passengers and was bound for Israel.

According to reports, the co-pilot allegedly attacked Machchhar with a crash axe, an emergency tool kept inside the cockpit, and attempted to take control of the aircraft.

The aircraft transmitted emergency signals and then made a rapid descent of more than 17,000 feet from around 34,000 feet before making an emergency landing in Saudi Arabia. Reports said the severity of the descent resulted in damage to part of the aircraft's rudder. The co-pilot was identified as Omani national Hamam al-Hammami, according to people familiar with the matter. Machchhar received initial treatment in Tabuk before being shifted to Abu Dhabi for further medical care.

(PNS)

West Asia crisis hits livelihoods: EAM

Bilateral trade is now estimated at around \$67 billion, with energy accounting for a significant share of India's imports from Russia. The surge in imports, however, has also contributed to a widening trade deficit for India.

On the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Jaishankar described the situation as unfortunate and reiterated India's longstanding call for an end to the fighting through dialogue and diplomacy.

He said India had moved beyond simply advocating negotiations and had become more actively involved in discussions with both Moscow and Kyiv. India's engagement initially included efforts concerning the safety of shipping in the Black Sea and has since expanded to issues such as grain and energy exports and possible arrangements to prevent attacks.

GST Council may ease tax rules

The Law Committee, comprising officials from the Union Government, States and Union Territories with legislatures, examines legal provisions under GST and recommends statutory amendments and clarifications to the council. One of the key recommendations is to raise the monetary threshold for prosecution. The threshold, which was last revised in 2017, is proposed to be increased to ₹10 crore from the existing ₹5 crore. The committee has also proposed lowering the maximum imprisonment for certain offences. For tax evasion in the ₹5 crore-₹10 crore range, the maximum sentence is proposed to be reduced to two years from three years at present.

Another proposed change is to give courts greater discretion in determining punishment. Under the current framework, offences can

FROM PAGE - 1

attract imprisonment along with a fine, but there is limited scope for courts to choose between imprisonment, a fine, or both depending on the gravity of the offence.

The proposed enforcement changes are part of the Government's Next-Generation GST reform agenda, following the major rate rationalisation implemented in September 2025.

The GST Council is also expected to consider a proposal to allow employers to claim input tax credit on premiums paid for insurance coverage provided to employees. Under the law, GST is exempt on individuals buying life or health policies for themselves or their family. However, when a business buys life or health cover for its employees, tax is charged on that cover, and until now the business could not claim ITC on it. Currently, an 18 per cent GST is levied on all such group insurance policies.

One of the proposals seeks to allow small sellers using e-commerce platforms to treat the platform's warehouse as their registered place of business in States where they do not have their own premises. A seller would need a genuine presence in one State, where physical verification and Aadhaar authentication would be completed, and registrations in other States could be obtained with the consent of the e-commerce platform without further tax-officer involvement. The move could enable around 9.5 lakh small sellers to access the national market without establishing physical offices in every State where their goods are stored, while creating greater tax parity across competing e-commerce business models, sources said. The council may also consider a proposal to protect input tax credit of genuine buyers who have valid invoices even if an upstream supplier defaults on tax payment.

Delhi, Mumbai turn up the heat on CEC...

Uddhav Thackeray, Raj Thackeray, NCP-SP's Jayant Patil, Congress leaders Balasaheb Thorat, Vijay Wadettiwar and Jitendra Awhad, Shiv Sena's Shashikant Shinde and former minister Anil Deshmukh attended the march.

Uddhav described the moment as a "second battle for independence," saying the fight was against the "tyranny and authoritarian conduct" of those in power rather than against any individual, caste or religion. He alleged 13 crore voters had been denied their right to vote through the Special Intensive Revision exercise, claiming it was designed to help the BJP in Maharashtra and West Bengal despite public anger against the Government. He questioned how many illegal Bangladeshi immigrants had actually been identified through SIR and warned the situation could eventually lead to prosecutions similar to the Nuremberg Trials.

Raj Thackeray said he had raised concerns over alleged vote manipulation as early as 2017-18, pointing to an increase of 60 lakh voters in

Maharashtra between the 2024 Lok Sabha and state Assembly elections held just six months apart. "What kind of Viagra was used by the people who are in positions to increase the voters?" he asked, demanding the SIR exercise be cancelled and elections conducted using ballot papers instead of EVMS.

Thorat said Rahul Gandhi had raised allegations of vote theft with supporting evidence, criticising changes to the Election Commission's appointment process, including removal of a Supreme Court judge from the selection panel, and calling Kumar a "symbol of this corrupt administration."

Political party flags were barred from the Mumbai march, with participants asked to carry only the national tricolour. Cockroach Janta Party founder Abhijeet Dipke also extended support, referencing his earlier 'Jail Bharo Andolan' and urging people to treat the moment as "now or never."

Both cities' protests form part of a wider agitation spreading across India over alleged irregularities in the Election Commission's functioning and the conduct of the SIR exercise, with Delhi's confrontations marked by detentions and barricades while Mumbai's march proceeded largely unimpeded behind a rare show of unity among rival Maharashtra Opposition leaders.

Bypoll campaign ends across West Bengal...

The bypoll will be held on October 6, with the counting of votes slated for October 9.

The two bypolls in Bengal were necessitated after Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari vacated Nandigram, which he had won alongside Bhabanipur, while Rejinagar fell vacant after AJUP chief Humayun Kabir retained Nawda upon winning both seats in the 2026 Assembly elections. Besides the BJP and the Congress, the Left, ISF and the Ritabrata Banerjee-led Democratic Trinamool Congress are also in the fray.

Tamil Nadu too is witnessing a five-way contest with allies battling each other ended on Sunday, with ruling TVK founder and CM Joseph C Vijay wrapping up his party's campaign with an expansive roadshow that went for over three hours. TVK is keen to win both seats and increase its tally in the 234-member Assembly to 109, just nine short of a simple majority. While the Congress, the VCK and the IUML are part of the TVK-led coalition ministry, the two Left parties — CPI (M) and CPI with two MLAs each, extend crucial outside support to the Vijay-led Government.

In Assam Lok Sabha bypoll former MLA Sibamoni Bora of the Congress is pitted against BJP's Devashish Sharma, a former IAS officer who had resigned as Nagaon district commissioner in September to enter electoral politics, and AIUDF chief and MLA Badruddin Ajmal is also in the fray. The bypoll was necessitated after sitting MP Pradyut Bordoloi quit the Congress to

join the BJP ahead of the Assembly elections earlier this year. He is now a saffron party MLA.

A dazzling goodbye as Nagoya brings...

He said the Asian Games in Japan will shape the next generation of Asian sport.

"From the first competition to the very last, Asia's finest athletes captivated us with their performances. Over 350 records have been broken, including more than 50 world records. This is a record for our Asian Games."

As per tradition, the OCA chief called upon the youth of Asia to carry this spirit forward and meet again in four years' time for the 21st Asian Games in Doha in 2030. At the opening ceremony on September 19, the diverse athletes from various Asian countries and regions were represented by multiple layers of rainbow-coloured hearts. For the closing ceremony, the empty space in the centre of the heart was beautifully filled with the emotions and sense of unity.

The idea was to unite the athletes to serve as a catalyst for Asian nations to continue working together in a peaceful environment for many years to come. At the heart of the performance is the 'bon-odori' dance, which originated in Japan and is now popular also in other Asian countries, transcending generations and nationalities. This was showcased in 'Matsuken Samba II', a song that is packed with Nagoya's unique charm and cherished by the Japanese people.

The arrival of the dignitaries was followed by a dazzling laser light show, with the performance of artists from the Nagoya School of music and dance, wearing costumes adorned with cherry blossoms. This was followed by the athletes parade. Only the flag bearers, including India's Neeru Dhanda, marched in. The contingent of the 45 countries then entered the arena to the accompaniment of light and music.

It was followed by the visuals of some memorable performances and contests during the Games. The torch and the OCA flag from the first Asian Games and the current OCA flag were passed on to Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani by the OCA president.

Bashim, Qatar's most accomplished athlete, took the centre stage. He took the OCA flag, and the giant screen showed him competing in high jump event and him watching from the stands in a digital imagery. He was also shown riding a horse and lighting the cauldron.

Qatar's equestrian rider Jassim Al Kuwari then entered the stadium on a horse and took over the OCA flag from Bashim. He rode the horse for a couple of rounds of the central platform being going out. The creative concept, 'Al Makan Makanukum/This Place Is Yours', reflected the idea of preparing a place for a guest before their arrival. In the Handover story, the OCA Flag becomes Doha 2030's first guest, arriving four years before the Games.

(PTI)

GRAPEVINE

Bihari babu's seesaw

Bihar's administration has seen swift changes over the last two months, as the entire mid-to-top level has been overhauled. Now the exercise is to take hold at the topmost level, and the first to move out from the Bihar Chief Minister's Office is 1984 batch (retired) IAS Deepak Kumar, who has been removed from the position of Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister. He has now been appointed as the Vice Chairman of the Bihar State Disaster Management Authority. While his replacement could be Sanjay Kumar, who superannuated as Union Education Secretary in June this year, the major switchover being worked on is the Chief Secretary (CS) post, held by 1992 batch Pratayay Amrit, former CM Nitish Kumar's long-time confidant. Names of top bureaucrats like 1990 batch KK Pathak, now at the Center, 1992 batch Deepak Kumar Singh, currently serving as Principal Secretary to the Bihar Governor, and Harjot Kaur of the same batch are doing the rounds in power corridors for the CS post. Harjot was appointed BPSC chairman last week and could emerge as the front-runner to create history as the first woman CS of the State.

Culture vs urban ministries

A four-year tussle between the Ministries of Culture and Urban Ministries over allotting space for the library in Kartavya Bhawan has now reached the courts after the Supreme Court took a suo motu case. The Ministry of Culture was protesting the lack of space in shifting the library from Shastri Bhawan to Kartavya Bhawan. The space allotted for 8.5 lakh books was so small, and Urban Ministry officers wanted to sell the old books to old-book vendors, the Ministry of Culture accused them. They accused the architects and civil engineers of allotting less space in the building to initiate the sale of old books to the Daryaganj vendor gang. With Shastri Bhawan to be pulled down as part of the Central Vista revamp plan, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and Central Public Works Department (CPWD) are yet to find space for one of the oldest Union Government libraries, founded in 1891, and its second-largest, after the National Library, Kolkata.

TVK treads cautiously

The new regime in Tamil Nadu, actor-turned-politician Vijay-led TVK Government, has reached a tacit understanding with the NDA Government at the Centre. Seeking to foster cordial Centre-State relations, a core advisory team of two former bureaucrats, IAS (retd) U Sagayam and IPS (retd) officer M Ravi, is advising the TVK leadership on streamlining State security, law enforcement, and administrative structures, and both are in direct touch, keeping in good humour, with Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan. Grapevine has it that the move is being seen as a pragmatic approach for the novice TVK Government, where Congress is in alliance in the State, to meet the expectations of the masses and enhance the developmental capacity of the Government. TVK was a big surprise, coming to power by trampling the biggies of the regional DMK and AIADMK in Dravidian culture.

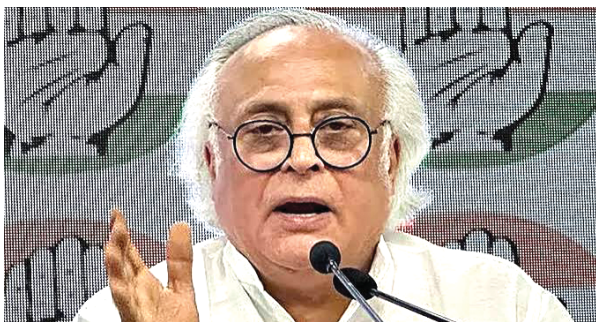


Congress slams retrospective environmental clearances

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday slammed the Modi Government over the issue of retrospective environmental clearances, and said the "ecologically damaging saga" continues. The Congress general secretary in-charge communications shared the screenshot of a media report which claimed that the Union Environment Ministry has directed its central and State-level expert bodies to resume processing 'post-facto' environmental clearance (EC) proposals, two

months after the Supreme Court permitted it to take such pending, rejected or returned proposals to their logical conclusion in accordance with law. "The ecologically damaging saga of retrospective environmental clearances continues," Ramesh said on X. 'On May 16, 2025, a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court had categorically rejected such clearances, the former environment minister said, adding that this was a bold verdict and 100 per cent right. However, on November 18, 2025, a three-judge bench



Congress leader Jairam Ramesh

of the Supreme Court led by the Chief Justice himself by a 2-1 majority overturned the earlier Supreme Court decision, Ramesh said and stressed that this was, to put

it most mildly, just wrong. Thereafter, on July 29, 2026, another three-judge bench of the Supreme Court headed by the present Chief Justice unanimously struck down

the facility for retrospective environmental clearances provided by the Modi Government initially on March 14, 2017 and later reaffirmed in an Office Memorandum on July 7, 2021, he pointed out. This was a most welcome development but the verdict also allowed those cases where such approvals had already been granted to be taken forward, Ramesh said. That exemption diluted the impact of the judgment which essentially condoned the past but shut the door for such violations of law in future, he said. The Ministry of

Environment, Forests and Climate Change has now initiated the implementation of this July 29, 2026 judgment, Ramesh said. "It needs to be told again and again that ignorance of the law has never been the cause for seeking retrospective environmental approvals. It has always been the standard operating practice to start a project and seek environmental approvals later by presenting a fait accompli - the 'baad mein dekha jayega' approach," Ramesh said. In any case, ignorance of the law, feigned or otherwise, should never be a cause for exoneration, he added.

Case booked over false Form-7 in Karnataka

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

An FIR has been registered at Vyalikaval Police Station here based on a complaint alleging that 778 "false" Form-7 applications were submitted during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

In Vijayapura, eight voters have challenged MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal's claim that their names figured in the rolls despite their absence. The Bengaluru case was registered on a complaint by Congress leader Anoop Iyengar, alleging irregularities in Ward-64 of the Malleshwaram Assembly constituency. Booth agent Vasantha Lakshmi has been named in the FIR. But the FIR did not mention which party she belonged to. The complaint alleges that Form-7 applications



Representative image

were submitted claiming that voters were either absent from their residences or had permanently shifted, although they were actually residing in the constituency. It further alleges that individuals linked to the BJP and RSS targeted voters belonging to a particular community and misused the Form-7 process. The applications were allegedly submitted in the name of Vasantha Lakshmi. Police are investi-

gating the allegations.

Meanwhile, the SIR controversy intensified in Vijayapura after Yatnal, who has been expelled from the BJP, on September 30 claimed that names of persons missing and those located elsewhere have figured in the electoral rolls. Eight voters subsequently approached the Deputy Commissioner's office, claiming they were alive and demanding legal action against Yatnal.

BJP ALLEGES FORM-7 CASES
Bengaluru: BJP Karnataka unit president BY Vijayendra on Sunday alleged that the Congress Government was pressuring police to file cases against BJP workers over Form-7 applications during the ongoing SIR of electoral rolls, following Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's sit-in at the CEO's office on Thursday. Vijayendra said the BJP had raised the issue with Director General of Police MA Saleem after former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, Leader of Opposition R Ashoka and other senior party leaders met him on Friday. He warned that the party would take to the streets if police action against its workers continued. He said Form-7 was a provision under the electoral-roll revision process. (PNS)

AAP mocks Congress over defections history

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Panaji

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Goa on Sunday took a swipe at the Congress over the history of defections by its MLAs, sharpening friction within the Opposition ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections. Mocking the grand old party's credibility with the slogan "*Ek Kachori Do Samosa*, Is Congress *Ka Kya Bharosa*" (One kachori, two samosas, how can Congress be trusted?), the AAP, in a post on social media, shared



AAP flag

pictures of former Congress MLAs who joined the ruling BJP in 2019 and 2022. In 2019, as many as 10 Congress MLAs switched sides to the BJP, while eight more legislators defected to the ruling party in 2022. The jibe came two days

after senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot addressed the party's ongoing *Goy Rakhon Yatra* (Save Goa Campaign) in Sankhalim, the assembly constituency represented by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant. The Congress has been using the campaign to mobilise public support ahead of the 2027 polls and present a united opposition front against the BJP-led State Government. Hitting back, Goa Pradesh Congress Committee working president Sunil Kawthankar condemned the AAP for repeatedly tar-

getting his party instead of the ruling BJP. He noted that the AAP's remark followed the Congress's successful rallies in Sankhalim and Minister Vishwajit Rane's Valpoi constituency. "This itself speaks volumes about the Delhi-based party's intentions," Kawthankar said. Taking an indirect jab at the AAP's ally, the Goa Forward Party, Kawthankar added that the real question was whether alliance partners agreed with the jibe and still trusted the Arvind Kejriwal-led party.

Terrorist hunt on in J&K after villager freed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jammu

After eliminating a Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) Commander, Mohammad Asif alias Hashim Moosa, in the Central Kashmir district of Budgam, a fresh search was launched by the joint team of security forces in the forested areas of Rajouri and Udhampur districts after recording suspected movement of terrorists in the area on Sunday.

According to ground reports, suspected movement of a group of three terrorists came on the radar of the security forces after a villager was abducted by them late Saturday night from a forward area in the Sunderbani sector of Rajouri. The villagers alerted the security forces, following which a search was launched in the area. The abducted villager, identified as Anil Sudan, was later released by the suspected terror-



Security personnel in J&K

ists in the wee hours of Sunday after they reached a location near Dua Khad forest around 3:15 am. During the day, combing and search operations were intensified in different directions to track down the footprints of the suspected terrorists.

Till late evening, no contact was established between the security forces and the terrorists. Additional troops were also rushed to the area to plug the gaps and prevent the escape of the terrorists hiding in the jungle area. In a separate anti-terrorist operation, a joint team of security forces also cordoned off the Mandugala Dhok forest in Rajouri after locals reported the movement of two persons wearing black dresses and carrying backpacks and weapons. Another search operation was conducted at Chigli Keya village in Udhampur, the officials said. On September 17, two Pakistani terrorists were killed in an encounter with security forces in the Majalta area of Udhampur, while one terrorist was reportedly injured but managed to escape.

Rebel TMC MLA sustains burn injuries

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

Bidi and tea tycoon and Democratic Trinamool Congress MLA from Sagardighi in Murshidabad, Bayron Biswas, has been hospitalised with severe burn injuries, sources in the rebel TMC group said, adding he suffered burns in a fire at his residence in Murshidabad's Samserganj. The incident occurred on Saturday. He was admitted to a nursing home with about 30 per cent burn injuries, mostly to his legs and hands, sources said, adding his condition was stable. A senior officer in Jangipur said that preliminary inquiry indicated that the fire originated from the AC in the MLA's room. Other sources, however, said that he had attempted suicide. "The cause of the fire is being ascertained," he said. The family runs bidi factories, tea plantations,



Rebel TMC MLA Bayron Biswas

schools, and hospitals, etc. Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari and former Congress MP Adhir Chowdhury also expressed concern over the incident and prayed for his early recovery.

Newborn strangled in MP hospital, kin suspected

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

A newborn girl was allegedly strangled to death inside the Special Newborn Care Unit (SNCU) of a hospital in Madhya Pradesh's Ashoknagar district, with police suspecting the involvement of her mother or grandmother. The incident has raised questions over the safety and monitoring of newborns inside the hospital's restricted-care facility.

The baby, reportedly the third girl in the joint family, was born around 11:50 pm on Friday to a family from Sakarra village in the Chanderi area. She was admitted to the SNCU shortly after birth for medical care. According to police, the newborn was found dead between 3 pm and 4 pm on Saturday. Kotwali police said investigators were questioning the circumstances surrounding the death. Police suspect either the child's mother or grandmother was involved, as both were present at the SNCU. The mother is currently under greater suspicion, according to the police. A post-mortem examination found marks around the newborn's neck, indicating strangulation. Compression marks were also reportedly observed on the neck. The final autopsy findings are awaited, and police are collecting evidence to establish how the infant died and who was responsible.

Over 250 elephants saved from collisions in 9 months: NFR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Guwahati

The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) on Sunday said more than 250 elephants have been saved from train hits in the last nine months through intensified efforts by all stakeholders in its jurisdiction. From January to September this year, timely interventions by the railway personnel helped save 255 elephants across its Alipurduar, Rangia, Lumding and Tinsukia divisions, NFR chief spokesperson Kapinjal Kishore Sharma said.

A combination of NFR's technology-driven systems, enhanced vigilance and close coordination with the forest department has led to the success, he said. The NFR has taken several



Representative image

proactive and technology-driven measures to prevent elephant-train collisions in vulnerable areas. These include deployment of an AI-based Intrusion Detection System (IDS) using Distributed Acoustic System (DAS) technology, which provides real-time alerts on elephant movement near tracks.

Jaishankar bids farewell to Bangladesh envoy Hamidullah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday met Bangladesh's outgoing High Commissioner to India, Riaz Hamidullah, in New Delhi for a farewell call and acknowledged his contribution to relations between the two neighbouring countries. Following the meeting, Jaishankar said he was pleased to receive the Bangladeshi envoy and wished him success in his future assignments. The meeting comes as Hamidullah concludes an 18-month tenure as Bangladesh's High Commissioner in India. Reflecting on his tenure, Hamidullah said he had sought to maintain and strengthen India-Bangladesh relations around the principles of mutual trust, dignity and shared interests. He said his focus had been on building a relationship that could remain sustainable over the long term. Hamidullah also highlighted his



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meeting Bangladesh's outgoing High Commissioner to India Riaz Hamidullah in New Delhi on Sunday

effort to engage beyond traditional diplomatic channels, saying he sought to connect with people and strengthen the people-to-people dimension of relations between

the two countries.

The diplomat assumed charge as Bangladesh's High Commissioner to India in April 2025. Before his posting to New Delhi, he served as

Secretary (West) in Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The farewell meeting takes place amid continued diplomatic engagement between New Delhi and Dhaka. In recent days, India's High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Dinesh Trivedi, has held meetings with senior Bangladeshi officials, including the State Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Liberation War Affairs, with discussions focusing on bilateral and mutual-interest issues. India has also reiterated its preference for a positive, constructive, and forward-looking relationship with Bangladesh, maintaining that bilateral concerns should be addressed through established diplomatic mechanisms. Hamidullah is set to leave the post after completing his tenure in New Delhi. His departure marks another diplomatic transition in India-Bangladesh relations as both sides continue engagement on a range of bilateral matters.



Editor's
TAKE

India steps into the role of mediator

Kyiv's endorsement of India's Ukraine peace proposal strengthens New Delhi's credentials as a credible peacemaker and could bolster its standing

All through the Russia-Ukraine war India has maintained a neutral stance and kept away from entering active mediation, focussing on its oil requirements which naturally tilt it in favour of Russia and making its neutrality look rather superficial. However, that has changed now with India coming up with a truce plan that Kyiv has praised as 'comprehensive.'

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha has now said what New Delhi's diplomats have waited years to hear. Of four proposals to end the conflict, before Kyiv, from India, Turkey, Egypt and the United States, he called India's the most comprehensive, adding that for the first time India has signalled willingness to play an active role. Kyiv will consider a truce, he said, but only if energy infrastructure and the Black Sea are covered together.

The praise is earned. India's plan, as Kyiv describes it, pairs an energy ceasefire with a Black Sea truce. That is shrewd design. Both sides gain from safe shipping lanes that steady destabilise, fertiliser and fuel prices worldwide. Moscow has rejected an unconditional ceasefire along the front line and demands a comprehensive settlement. A narrower package lets it say yes without abandoning that position.

India's advantages are unusual. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's line that this is not an era of war is quoted in both capitals. He has visited both leaders, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar travelled to Kyiv last month, and the Kremlin has said it would welcome Indian efforts. Vladimir Putin has also praised Modi's ideas for a settlement. A country that buys Russian oil, trades with the West and speaks for much of the Global South can reach rooms where Western envoys cannot.

The prize is real, and the timing is right. The war's costs keep mounting for everyone, and fatigue is showing. Successful mediation would confirm India as a convening power, strengthen its case for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council, and ease the energy and food-price shocks that reach Indian households.

The obstacles are formidable. The plan's details have not been published in full, and Moscow's response to the specific framework is unclear.

India's long-criticised neutrality will be tested the moment it must press either side. New Delhi should therefore do what it does best: stay patient, keep both channels open, and anchor any package in verification. It should back a Zelenskyy-Putin meeting, which Kyiv itself has floated, as the vehicle for turning a truce into talks.

One proposal will not end this war. But credibility is a currency, and India holds a good deal of it. Spent wisely, it can earn New Delhi a standing that no summit communiqué can confer.

Election Commission: A question of trust

The questions were once raised by the Opposition. Today, they are being raised from within the Election Commission itself. India's voters deserve an answer



PRITAM SINGH

For well over a year, the Opposition has been asking uncomfortable questions about India's electoral rolls. We were dismissed as bad losers, conspiracy theorists and politicians unwilling to accept the people's verdict. That argument has suddenly become much harder to make. Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi recorded objections at least 14 times over 10 months to decisions and processes within the Election Commission. Their concerns reportedly ranged from decisions taken without their knowledge to changes in voter-registration procedures, deletion and restoration of voters and the increasing centralisation of control over electoral-roll systems. These are not accusations made at a political rally. They are objections recorded by two members of the three-member Election Commission. The issue is no longer merely what the Opposition alleges about the EC. The issue is what Election Commissioners themselves were saying inside the Election Commission.

Warning Bells Within

Some of what has now emerged should concern every Indian, irrespective of political affiliation. Changes to Form 6, used for registration of new voters, were reportedly described by the two Commissioners as "illegal and unauthorised". They also raised concerns over the centralisation of electoral-roll management and the diminishing authority of officials on the ground. The case of Goa is particularly revealing. Ninety-seven voters were examined by Electoral Registration Officers and found eligible under the prescribed process. Yet their inclusion was blocked by the centralised system. Officials sent eight emails in seven days seeking intervention. The final roll was published on February 21. As of September 20, the 97 names remained missing. By itself, 97 may seem an insignificant number in an electorate of hundreds of millions. But constitutional rights are not protected according to statistical convenience. For the citizen wrongly denied a vote, the loss is absolute. Even a single wrongful exclusion should invite correction. Repeated instances, procedural objections and warnings from within the Commission itself demand something more: an explanation.

Questions We Asked

This is precisely why the questions raised by Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi cannot be brushed aside. Beginning with his presenta-



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WHETHER EVERY
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WILL COUNT, AND
WHETHER THE
INSTITUTION
CONDUCTING AN
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ONE ELECTION

The author is Member of
Uttarakhand Legislative
Assembly and Former
President of Uttarakhand
Pradesh Congress Committee

tion in August 2025 on alleged irregularities in the Mahadevapura Assembly segment of Bengaluru, he has repeatedly questioned voter-roll integrity and demanded greater transparency. The Election Commission disputed those allegations and challenged their evidentiary basis.

The EC was entitled to dispute them. But an allegation does not become irrelevant merely because the institution facing it denies it. It becomes more significant when subsequent evidence reveals serious concerns being expressed within that very institution. First came the allegations. Then came the denials. Now come the documents. No responsible political party should claim that every deletion is fraudulent or that every electoral defeat proves manipulation. But neither should a constitutional institution expect questions to disappear merely by describing them as politically motivated.

The Missing Voters

The scale of the issue makes complacency impossible. Draft electoral rolls released during the Special Intensive Revision process saw more than 13 crore names excluded across 30 States and Union Territories. Many exclusions will undoubtedly be legitimate - involving deaths, migration, duplication and other valid reasons. But at this scale, safeguards against wrongful exclusion become more important, not less. However, after recent public and political protest across India, commission had to reconsider its past decisions. However, the damage to India's Democracy has been done. Every number represents a citizen. Nobody can say how an excluded citizen would have voted. Nor should it matter. Democracy cannot operate on the principle that disenfranchisement becomes serious only when we know which political party the

disenfranchised voter supported. The question is simpler: Was every eligible citizen given a fair opportunity to remain on the electoral roll and exercise the franchise? If there is uncertainty about that answer, the Election Commission must remove it.

Trusting the Referee

The Commission has responded to the latest revelations by saying differing views are part of institutional decision-making and that its eventual decisions over the past year were unanimous. That explanation deserves to be heard. But it also throws up uncomfortable questions.

If concerns serious enough to include words such as "illegal and unauthorised" were recorded, how were they resolved? If Commissioners questioned decisions allegedly taken without their knowledge, what procedures were subsequently followed? If the final decisions were unanimous, what changed between objection and assent?

India's Constitution entrusted the EC with something more precious than administrative authority - it entrusted it with the faith of the Indian voter.

Governments will come and governments will go. Political parties will win and lose. But if citizens begin doubting whether their names will remain on electoral rolls, whether every legitimate vote will count, and whether the institution conducting an election is indifferent to who wins it, the damage extends well beyond any one election.

An Election Commission does not become independent because it declares itself independent. Its conduct must leave citizens with no reasonable cause to believe otherwise. Trust, once lost, cannot be restored through assertions. It must be earned: through transparency, accountability and answers.

Daiv Vani

WISDOM FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE

The Devotee Who Argued with God

Devotion, at its most honest and unfiltered, does not always resemble quiet, passive submission.

Markandeya, destined from birth to die at the young age of sixteen, spent his final hours in unwavering, unbroken worship of Shiva, refusing outright to leave the sacred Shivaling even as Yama, the god of death himself, arrived personally to claim him as fate had decided.

When Yama's noose reached toward the boy to take his life, it encircled the Shivaling itself instead, provoking Shiva to emerge in tremendous fury and strike down death on the spot, granting Markandeya eternal life in recognition of his unshaken, uninterrupted devotion.

The story does not celebrate passive, quiet faith here. It instead celebrates a devotion so complete and so fiercely held that the boy refused to interrupt his worship even to save his own life in that final, desperate moment, trusting entirely and without reservation in what he had chosen to hold onto.

We often treat our own commitments, to our values, our relationships, our faith, as conveniently flexible the very moment fear or crisis arrives, abandoning them exactly when they are needed most desperately.

Today, identify one commitment you tend to quietly drop under pressure, and hold to it a little longer than feels entirely comfortable.

-DAIV



SAKSHI SETHI

2ND OPINION

Even though our kids spend years studying for exams, some of the most significant tests they will encounter in life don't have textbooks, grades or answer keys. Children learn fractions, mathematics, grammatical rules, scientific ideas, and a plethora of other topics from us as educators and parents. Additionally, we celebrate high percentages and flawless results while preparing students for exams, competitions and entrance exams. However, in the process of finishing the curriculum and getting ready for the next exam, we might be forgetting to ask a straightforward question: Are we educating kids just to do well in school or are we also training them to function with confidence outside of it? Consider a student who is adept at calculating percentages but lacks the knowledge necessary to handle a monthly budget.

The lessons schools don't teach

Someone else can produce a compelling article about environmental responsibility, but they are unable to prepare a simple dinner or handle a small emergency. Teenagers may be familiar with a number of mathematical formulas, but they may not understand how loans operate, what insurance is or the importance of consistent saving. These are not signs of a lack of intelligence rather they show a disconnect between what kids learn and what life ultimately demands of them. Naturally, academic knowledge is crucial. Science teaches inquiry, literature broadens perspectives, mathematics fosters reasoning, and history aids in our comprehension of society. Replacing these subjects is undoubtedly not the solution. The challenge is whether education can accommodate a different type of information the knowledge needed to get by in daily life.

One such area is financial literacy. Instant payments, internet shopping, subscriptions and easy access to credit are all part of the environment that children are growing up in. They should learn the distinction between requiring and desiring, borrowing and saving and income and expenditure before they start earning. A child may be better prepared for adulthood by a straightforward classroom exercise involving a home budget than through a chapter alone. Emotional education comes next. We frequently advise kids to be confident, handle stress or control their anger without actually teaching them how. It's not a soft extra to know how to handle disappointment, express emotions, settle disputes and seek for assistance. Throughout life, these skills influence relationships, the workplace and

one's own well-being. Additionally, schools can teach kids practical skills like basic cooking, first aid, personal safety, comprehending essential paperwork, basic home repairs and disaster preparedness skills that earlier generations frequently learned organically at home. Being able to take care of oneself is a sign of dignity. At eighteen, independence shouldn't start all at once. The same consideration should be given to communication. In addition to writing grammatically accurate responses, education should generate young adults who can talk properly in front of others, listen patiently, disagree politely and most importantly introduce themselves with confidence. When a youngster learns to communicate with empathy, they take that learning with them outside of the classroom. However, there is one risk.

Allow the youngster to create a budget. Instead, than only explaining first aid, let kids to take part in a demonstration. Maybe one afternoon every two weeks might be transformed into a Life Lab with no textbook and no competition. Children cannot be prepared for every scenario they may face through education. Uncertainty will always exist in life.

Students will still have to deal with money, relationships, obligations, disappointments and themselves years after they have forgotten a formula or an exam date. Maybe that's the test we ought to be getting them ready for.

The writer is an educator and a councillor

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

India's Asian Games surge

Apropos the news report '5 gold medals propel India to fourth spot at Asian Games' (Oct 4).Kudos to the entire Indian contingent for the inspiring crescendo of India's campaign at the 2026 Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya. Finishing fourth with 21 gold and 85 medals overall—second only to the tally achieved at Hangzhou in 2023—is a remarkable milestone and a sign of the growing depth of Indian sport.What makes the performance particularly significant is that it came with a relatively lean contingent of 495 athletes.

The sports ministry's emphasis on stringent selection and preparation appears to have paid dividends, demonstrating that quality and focused training can matter more than sheer numbers.Historic achievements such as 17-year-old Kumkum Mohod's individual recurve archery gold and Pranavi Urs's breakthrough victory in women's golf are especially encouraging. They underline how India is increasingly making its presence felt beyond traditional strengths such as cricket and hockey.As India looks towards the Los Angeles Olympics, this strong finish should provide valuable momentum and confidence. The performance reflects a sporting ecosystem increasingly capable of competing with Asia's best.

SANJAY CHOPRA | MOHALI

AI can assist, but teachers must guide

Teachers' Day and World Teachers' Day offer an opportunity to reflect on how education must evolve in an age increasingly shaped by Artificial Intelligence. AI can provide information, personalised learning, translations, practice exercises and even lesson plans within seconds. Yet its growing presence does not diminish the importance of teachers; rather, it makes their role more significant.The teacher is gradually moving from being merely a provider of information to becoming a guide who helps students interpret, question and apply what they learn. AI can explain a mathematical concept in several ways, but students still need to learn how to assess the accuracy of information, recognise errors and understand context.

There is also a danger in allowing students to depend excessively on AI for homework, projects and writing. Getting an answer is not the same as understanding a subject. Independent thinking, creativity and curiosity must remain central to education.Teachers also provide something AI cannot: empathy, experience and an emotional connection with students. They encourage children in failure, celebrate their achievements and help shape their values and character. Technology can provide information; teachers turn it into understanding and wisdom.

DATTAPRASAD SHIRODKAR | MUMBAI

A test for India-Bangladesh ties

The continued uncertainty over India's response to Bangladesh's repeated requests for the extradition of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina underlines the complexity of the issue and its wider implications for bilateral relations.Hasina has been living in India since fleeing Bangladesh on August 5, 2024, following the collapse of her government amid mass protests. She was subsequently tried in absentia by a special tribunal and sentenced to death, while the interim administration in Dhaka sought her extradition through a diplomatic note.The issue has since become a persistent irritant in India-Bangladesh relations.

With the Bangladesh Nationalist Party government under Prime Minister Tarique Rahman now in office, Dhaka has reiterated its demand. The matter has also complicated high-level diplomatic engagement between the two countries.India's decision to examine the request through established legal and diplomatic procedures is understandable, particularly given the nature of the charges and the death sentence. At the same time, prolonged uncertainty could further complicate relations with Bangladesh.New Delhi will need to balance legal obligations, humanitarian considerations and its larger strategic interests while dealing with a politically sensitive neighbour.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

PICTALK



Members of the Panghat Performing Arts Group perform during a full dress rehearsal for the upcoming 'Navratri' festival, in Ahmedabad, Gujarat PHOTO: PTI

From vultures to bustards: Reversing avian decline needs habitats, not robots

The worldwide decline of bird populations signals a deeper breakdown of the ecosystems on which human life depends. As habitats disappear and technology increasingly attempts to replace nature’s functions, the question is no longer simply how to save birds, but whether we understand what we stand to lose with them



Human existence has long been tied to the vibrant rhythm of avian life, but that natural orchestra is rapidly falling silent. Global biodiversity assessments show that nearly half of all bird species worldwide are experiencing active population decreases, with more than 12 percent facing imminent extinction. Worldwide and across the Indian subcontinent, collapsing bird populations are signalling an ecological crisis.

In India, citizen science data across 942 species reveals that 60% of evaluated species show severe long-term declines, leading to 178 species categorized as High Conservation Priority. Out of the three hundred and thirty-eight species evaluated for long-term trends over the past three decades, sixty percent show severe population declines. On an annual basis, roughly forty percent of evaluated species are shrinking year-over-year. While generalist species (e.g., Rock Pigeons, Asian Koels) adapt to human landscapes, specialized groups are collapsing rapidly. Grassland-dependent birds, migratory shorebirds, and waterfowl have dropped by over 50% alongside significant losses among insectivores and raptors.

Among these losses, the collapse of Indian scavengers including Gyps vultures and white-rumped vultures by ninety-eight to ninety-nine percent happened in the 1990s allegedly due to poisoning from veterinary diclofenac. The sudden removal of these birds left millions of rotting livestock remains specially across rural landscapes, triggered severe public health hazards, and increased rabies transmission risks due to expansion of feral dog populations. The high-voltage power transmission lines traversing open landscapes have, with time, caused fatal collisions and electrocutions especially among heavy, low-flying species like the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard whose habitats in various parts of India have already degraded rapidly due to heavy biotic interference.

Avian depopulation’s primary drivers, in addition to habitat fragmentation and chemical contamination, are overwhelmingly anthropogenic, interconnected, and cumulative. Relentless expansion of concrete infrastructure; agricultural conversion; disruption of wetlands; human encroachment and deforestation triggered loss of nesting, foraging, and sheltering sites; and forest fires are the prominent ones. Concurrently, the heavy application of synthetic pesticides decimates non-target insect populations, transforming otherwise green-looking farmlands into biological vacuums devoid of essential food sources. Rapid urbanization degrades habitats through acoustic masking, where high levels of continuous traffic noise impact the birds by shrinking the active space they rely on to defend territories, attract mates, and signal danger. Nighttime artificial illumination disorients nocturnal migrants.

Avian population declines impact humans directly because birds, silently but continuously, perform irreplaceable ecological, sanitary, and social functions that benefit humanity. Vultures serve as nature’s ultimate sanitation system. They are also capable of neutralising lethal pathogens like anthrax, cholera, and rabies from decaying biomass. Insectivorous birds and raptors naturalise pest populations by devouring millions of insects and rodents daily and stabilising agricultural yields without reliance on toxic chemicals. Frugivorous birds like hornbills and bulbuls ingest native fruits, process seeds through digestive tracts that enhance germination, and deposit them over immense distances, supporting the regeneration of biomes. For indigenous communities worldwide, birds are deeply interwoven with cultural identity. As per ethno-ornithology, traditional ecological knowledge is often found as referring to avian behaviours.

Technology does serve as a powerful partner in modern avian conservation, enabling scientists and conservationists to protect vulnerable species and preserve their natural habitats globally. In India, Technology boosts global bird conservation by mapping Amur Falcon migrations to stop poaching, locating cropland nests with thermal drones, and detecting hidden species like the Forest Owllet via AI bioacoustics to protect criti-



cal habitats. Internationally, advanced monitoring tools have proved to be vital in rescuing near-extinct species and reducing urban mortality. In North America, weather radar systems and predictive machine learning models forecast peak migration nights to trigger “Lights Out” initiatives, preventing millions of migratory bird collisions with illuminated skyscrapers. Simultaneously, GPS tracking and smart nest technologies in the United States and New Zealand enable real-time medical interventions for lead-poisoned California Condors and safeguard the eggs of flightless Kakapos, demonstrating how technology can support and revive living avian populations.

Faced with the challenges associated with the Avian population declines, however, instead of taking nature-based actions in the field to revive the avian population, humans are trying to engineer a dangerous philosophical shift now. Modern engineering is attempting to deploy technological substitutes, ranging from micro-drones for orchard pollination, seed-bombing aircraft for forest regeneration, and mechanized carcass incinerators to address scavenging and sanitation.

Replacing living networks with technological surrogates, however, fails across many operational dimensions. Micro-drones lack the flight endurance, battery efficiency, and navigational capability to manoeuvre through complex forest canopies or manage delicate floral anatomy. Aerial seed bombing drops unconditioned seeds without the digestive processing or natural nutrient-rich manure provided by frugivores. Chemical pesticides destroy topsoil food webs leaving persistent toxic residues and inducing pest resistance; in clear contrast to the self-regulating biological predator-prey chains and the balanced food-web. Use of technological solutions also exacts a heavy environmental toll through resource-intensive manufacturing and habitat pollution. Producing micro-batteries and equipment requires destructive rare-earth mining, processing, and high energy consumption. The rapid degradation of the short-lived devices floods natural ecosystems with toxic electronic waste and microplastics. AI data centres require huge natural resource. Wild birds, by contrast, are self-fuelling, self-repairing biological entities that do multi-layered work and run entirely on berries, insects, and sunlight while continuously enriching our environment.

A comprehensive, long-term strategy is a prerequisite for the reversal of avian declines and restoration of ecosystem stability. Conservation policy must shift away from ‘technological substitution’ and focus on habitat restoration and community-centric protection. Infrastructure planning must mandate safety measures, including bird diverters and the selective undergrounding of power transmission lines in high-risk zones. Regulatory agencies must enforce strict bans on pesticides and pesticides dangerous to scavengers while simultaneously incentivizing bio-safe organic farming. Urban planning must promote native vegetation, preserve mature trees, safeguard city wetlands, and enforce noise and light abatement zones. While forest management must focus on biodiversity conservation; the continuous forest corridors, natural wetlands, sacred groves, and grasslands must be legally recognised and protected from fragmentation, industrial encroachment, destructive conversion, and forest fires.

Technology may be used as a vital tool to protect, support, and monitor natural systems, but it can never serve as a substitute for the living evolutionary complexity of nature including avian life. The vital biological networks trapped in a dangerous philosophical deception today are undergoing a quiet, catastrophic collapse. Replacement of millions of years of evolutionary engineering with artificial patchworks is not technological progress; it is a recipe for systemic ecological collapse. It not only risks our world under the guise of development but also helps create an undesirable situation in which the younger generations will have to accept an impoverished natural world as the new normal. Can’t we let them inherit a better world?

The writers are Former PCCFs, UP and Maharashtra

Women, ageing and financial independence



RADHIKA BHARAT RAM

Early conditioning and experiences shape our actions, reactions, expectations and our overall life trajectory and narrative. We teach young girls to be responsible, adaptable, caring and supportive. These are important values, but alongside them, we must nurture an equally vital form of independence: financial independence—the ability to earn, save, invest, own assets and make informed financial decisions for themselves. An older woman’s financial security is rarely determined in old age; it is built over a lifetime. It is shaped by the opportunities she receives, the work she is able to pursue, the assets she owns, and more importantly, the financial agency and confidence she develops along the way.

India is entering a new demographic chapter. As people live longer and families evolve, ageing is a conversation that goes beyond retirement—it is increasingly about how we prepare for longer lives with financial security, purpose and dignity. India’s ageing population is projected to reach 347 million by 2040. This transition also has an important gender dimension. According to the Longitudinal Ageing Study in India (LASI), there are 1,065 women for every 1,000 men among Indians aged 60 and above, highlighting the growing feminisation of ageing and the need to address the distinct social and financial vulnerabilities older women may face.

Financial independence is a lifelong foundation

Financial independence is often viewed through the lens of income and earning capacity, but true financial agency extends well beyond simply income. It means having the knowledge, ability to understand and make decisions about one’s money, assets and future. A woman may be educated and earning yet remain financially dependent if she has limited understanding of her financial situation or is excluded from financial decision-making regarding her money, assets, property, health insurance and savings.

HelpAge India’s 2023 report, ‘Women & Ageing: Invisible or Empowered?’, highlights the vulnerabilities many women face in later life. The findings reveal that 69% of older women do not own any assets and 73% have no savings of their own. The lack of economic security from a savings perspective, is seen to impact the decision-making status of older women, of whom only 20% have always taken decisions for themselves. For 65% women, it has been either their spouse, in laws/parents, or other family members, who have always taken decisions at their behest. Financial vulnerability is often compounded by health concerns: 48% report at least one chronic condition, while 65% do not have health insurance. Financial security in later life is often shaped by decisions, opportunities and circumstances accumulated over a lifetime. Career breaks or no formal employment, years spent in unpaid household and caregiving work, limited ownership of assets & savings, or relying on someone else to manage finances may appear inconsequential at different stages of life. Over time, however, they can significantly influence a woman’s financial resilience, her ability to support herself, and her freedom to make independent choices as she grows older.

The invisible economics of care

Women have long carried much of the unpaid care within families, to their children, spouses, parents and grandparents. We celebrate this contribution, and rightly so, but we rarely ask what it means for the woman providing that care. What happens to the income she did not earn? What happens to the savings she could not build or the career opportunities she had to put on hold? Care has enormous social value as it holds families together, yet its economic value often remains invisible. The impact can become particularly clear in later life both in terms of health and financial well-being. 67% older women are in caregiving roles, while 31% older women are unable to manage the burden of their care taking roles, as per the HelpAge report. The answer is not for women to care less, but to ensure that caring for others does not come at the cost of their own financial security. Marriage, too, should not become a substitute for financial independence. It is a partnership rooted in companionship, shared responsibility and mutual support—not a retirement plan. Whether married, widowed, divorced or single, every woman should have the financial agency to support herself, build security for the future, and participate equally in decisions that shape her financial well-being.

From childhood to later life, financial agency must evolve

Financial empowerment can begin with simple lessons. For a girl, it may start with pocket money and learning how to save. For a young woman, it can mean earning, understanding credit and beginning to invest. For working women, it should include insurance, assets and retirement planning. It should also include planning for periods when she may step away from paid work to care for her family. As women grow older, the conversation must expand to pensions, healthcare costs, succession planning and protection of assets. For older women, however, financial empowerment should not be limited to protection and welfare. It should be about choice. Our understanding of older women must evolve in the same way.

They are not only dependents or recipients of care; they are caregivers, workers, mentors, entrepreneurs and community members. With the right support, they can continue to contribute and make decisions about their own lives. The older women we see tomorrow, are the girls we are raising today. If we teach girls that caring for others and securing themselves are competing priorities, they may continue to choose one at the expense of the other. But we can create a different future. A future where women can care for their families without becoming financially invisible. Where motherhood does not have to mean giving up financial independence. Where marriage is a partnership rather than a retirement plan, and where an older woman can make decisions about her money, healthcare and future with confidence. The goal is to ensure that women can live a quality life with choice, confidence, purpose, and dignity. Financial independence should not be a phase of a women’s life, it should be a foundation that stays with her from her first bank account to her later years. If we want tomorrow’s older women to age with dignity, we must start building that future today.

The author is Governing Body Member, HelpAge India

A tribute to the Captain who chose his passengers over his pain



DEVI SHARAN

When the news came that an Indian captain had been stabbed in the cockpit of a flydubai Boeing 737 and had still managed to open the door so others could reach him, I did not read it as another aviation headline. I read it as a captain’s report from the only place where a pilot is finally judged: alone, injured, and responsible for everyone behind the door. I was commander of Indian Airlines Flight IC-814 when it was hijacked (Kandahar) in December 1999.

For seven days we lived inside an aircraft that had ceased to be ours, first in Amritsar, then Lahore, Dubai and finally Kandahar. What stayed with me was not the drama that later filled books and screens. It was the narrower duty: keep the aircraft intact, keep the people alive, and do not let fear decide the next minute.

That is why Captain Smit Machchhar’s conduct on Flight FZ1073 from Dubai to Tel Aviv moves me so deeply.

On 30 September, cruising near 34,000 feet with about 174 passengers, most of them bound for Tel Aviv, Captain Machchhar was attacked by his co-pilot. He was struck and

stabbed. He went down. The aircraft began a violent descent, losing some 14,000 feet in seconds. From the floor of that cockpit, bleeding and still being hit, he understood what only a long-serving pilot understands with his eyes closed: the aeroplane was no longer being flown, it was falling. He told himself there was one push left. He made it. He opened the cockpit door.

That single act changed the arithmetic of the flight. Israeli passengers and crew could enter, overpower the attacker and, with help from others on board, recover the aircraft. It diverted to Tabuk in Saudi Arabia and landed. Every life entrusted to that cockpit was saved.

Captain Machchhar is now recovering, his head bandaged, his account given from a hospital bed to the Prime Minister of India. The world has rightly called him a hero. I wish to



call him something more precise: a captain. In our profession, skill is the entry ticket. The test comes later. A captain is measured by whether he can remain inside the problem when the problem has become physical, personal and immediate.

Procedures assume a functioning crew and a secure flight deck. They do not write the line

pilots train for engine failures, decompressions and rejected take-offs. We can simulate almost everything except the private instant in which a man decides that the aircraft and its people still belong to him. Captain Machchhar has shown that instant in public.

His bravery belongs to the highest tradition of professional aviation: not display, but

for the moment when the threat is the man beside you and the door is the only bridge to the cabin. Captain Machchhar crossed that line with a calm that was not the absence of pain. It was the refusal to let pain finish the decision. He has said he was fighting for his own life and, at the same time, could not allow the others to die.

That is the oldest sentence in command. It is not rhetoric. It is the bargain every passenger makes, usually without knowing it, when the cabin door closes. We accept their trust. In return we are expected, if the hour comes, to spend ourselves on it.

I have watched younger pilots train for engine failures, decompressions and rejected take-offs. We can simulate almost everything except the private instant in which a man decides that the aircraft and its people still belong to him. Captain Machchhar has shown that instant in public.

custody. He stood firm when the circumstances were at their most punishing, and by doing so he gave passengers and fellow aviators something rarer than relief. He gave them proof that the left-hand seat still means what it claims to mean.

As a fellow captain, I am proud to acknowledge him. The aviation fraternity owes him respect, and the younger generation of pilots owes him an example. Captain Smit Machchhar, you have earned both. I salute your professionalism, your courage and your devotion to duty, and I wish you strength, recovery and honour in the years of flying still ahead.

Conclusion

Captain Machchhar did what no checklist prescribes. Bleeding on a cockpit floor, with the aircraft in freefall, he chose the passengers’ lives over his own pain and opened the door that saved them all. That is command in its purest form: custody, not display. Skill gets a pilot into the seat; character keeps him there when everything else fails.

He has restored a quiet faith that the left-hand seat still carries its original meaning. The aviation fraternity owes him respect, and younger pilots owe him an example worth following. Captain, we salute you, and we wish you recovery and many more safe skies.

The writer is the Captain of IC-814, the Indian Airlines flight hijacked and taken to Kandahar in 1999.



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Allahabad HC rejects bail pleas of four cops in custodial death case



The Allahabad High Court has rejected bail applications of four Uttar Pradesh police personnel in connection with the 2021 custodial death case in Jaunpur district.

Rejecting their pleas, Justice Samit Gopal cited the CBI chargesheet, which accused the cops of causing grievous injuries to Krishna Kumar Yadav, alias Pujari, to extract a confession and subsequently murdering him by inflicting injuries sufficient to cause his death.

The CBI had also mentioned that false records were created to portray his death as an accident or assault by unknown persons rather than physical torture in police custody. The four accused cops are Jaysheel Tiwari, Ramkrit Yadav, Raj Kumar Verma and Angad Prasad Chaudhary. The CBI had filed the chargesheet against 11 police personnel after an FIR was lodged on February 12, 2021, under Sections 302 (murder), 34 (common intention), 120-B (conspiracy), among others, of the Indian Penal Code at Baksha village of Jaunpur district.

The Special CBI Judge in Lucknow subsequently framed charges on September 18, 2024.

(PTI)



The Art of Living shows the art of winning: How facts triumphed over noise in the SC



RANJIT KUMAR SINHA

A recent Supreme Court judgment has demonstrated the true art of winning a high-stakes environmental battle. The case centers on the 'Art of Living International Centre,' run by 'Vyakti Vikas Kendra, India,' an organisation founded in 1981 by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

It took over eight long years from the conclusion of the "World Culture Festival" in March 2016 to the Supreme Court's definitive judgment on August 22, 2026-for complete legal vindication to arrive.

For millions of followers of the spiritual organisation spread across more than 180 countries, this protracted legal journey was far more than a corporate appeal; it was a deeply personal fight to clear the movement's name against persistent allegations of environmental harm.

The high-profile media coverage and initial interim penalties imposed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT), New Delhi, had cast a long shadow over a foundation renowned globally for humanitarian work and environmental conservation.

The SC's final order-which set aside all adverse findings, directed a full refund of the ₹ five crore deposit, and explicitly affirmed that the

site was already degraded before the event-served as a profound moral vindication, restoring complete credibility to the organization's eco-friendly principles.

The saga began when the World Culture Festival was organised from March 11 to 13, 2016, on the Yamuna floodplains in Delhi.

According to official figures published by The Art of Living Foundation, the event's sheer scale heightened the stakes of the legal battle. Built across a massive seven-acre temporary stage, the festival hosted an estimated 0.35 to 0.375 crore (35 to 37.5 lakh) physical attendees from over 155 countries over three days, alongside a global live-stream audience spanning 1.8 billion (180 crore) viewers across 700,000 locations worldwide. Featuring over 36,000 performing artists, it stood as one of the largest peaceful cultural gatherings in modern history-a factor that severely amplified the subsequent media glare and environmental scrutiny.

Just a month before the event, an environmentalist approached the National Green Tribunal (NGT). Supported by other activists and media campaigns, they alleged that the massive festival would severely harm the riverbed and surrounding wetlands.

The NGT appointed an expert committee, which conducted a brief visual check and made a startling claim: the event site had suffered damage that would



cost ₹100-120 crores to fix. Despite a letter from the committee's chairman admitting this figure was unscientific, the number made global headlines.

Just two days before the festival, the NGT imposed an interim environmental compensation fee of ₹ five crore on the organizers. The timing left the organization with virtually no time to challenge the order before the event began. Later, the NGT held the organizers responsible under the strict "no-fault liability" rule. It ordered that the ₹ five crore be used for site restoration and held the organization liable for any extra costs to build a public biodiversity park.

Faced with intense media scrutiny, public outrage, and procedural hurdles, the Art of Living (AOL) chose a dignified response. The organisation paid the ₹ five crore deposit under protest ("without prejudice") to ensure the peaceful conduct of the event.

Rather than engaging in public shouting matches or

aggressive media debates, the team quietly collected hard, verifiable evidence. They gathered over 50 clear satellite images, government communications, rain data, and expert records to build a methodical legal defence.

When the case reached the Supreme Court, this quiet, fact-based strategy paid off completely.

The SC noted that the site was already full of construction debris and garbage long before the event took place. Rejecting the assumption that AOL caused the pre-existing damage, the bench observed that the expert committee went on a somersault and admitted it was impossible to "assess the ecological status of the riparian ecosystems at the site before the event" or "determine the state of ecosystem to which restoration has to be carried out."

Crucially, the Supreme Court highlighted a massive spatial error in the NGT's assessment. While AOL was allotted less than 25 hectares

(around 61 acres) of land for the event, the NGT's committee assessed a vast stretch of 170 hectares (around 420 acres) and unfairly fastened the financial burden of rehabilitating this entire expansive area onto AOL.

The Supreme Court also agreed that relying on a single internet photo taken during heavy monsoon rains in September was unscientific and unreliable. Rebuking the NGT's selective approach, the Apex Court noted that the Google image was "in stark contrast with the entire surrounding material" and questioned how the NGT found that image reliable while failing to grant the same indulgence to the images produced by AOL.

The SC drew a clear line between restoring actual damage and forcing a private entity to fund government infrastructure. Rejecting the NGT's order forcing AOL to fund a public biodiversity park across land it never occupied, the bench firmly held: "Effectively, the Tribunal burdened the appellant with the task of developing something that it never destroyed."

The SC struck down the NGT's misuse of Section 17(3) "no-fault" liability. Clarifying the true scope of environmental law, the bench ruled: "The alleged person must be a 'polluter' before it is held as absolutely liable in law...the principle cannot be invoked unless the degradation is attributable to the alleged person. In the present case, the causal link has not been

established by any standard."

Beyond individual vindication, this landmark judgment offers a crucial lesson for authorities, tribunals, and civil society. By defeating an ideologically charged campaign purely through unshakeable facts, satellite evidence, and constitutional law, the Art of Living set a blueprint for how spiritual and social organizations can withstand targeted legal activism without resorting to public vitriol.

Pulling up statutory bodies and the NGT for acting mechanically, the Supreme Court emphasised that environmental enforcement cannot operate on speculative assumptions or administrative double standards.

The SC made it clear that public authorities must exercise objective due diligence rather than penalising organisers ex post facto on unproven claims-thereby establishing a vital safeguard against mechanical, narrative-driven litigation.

Ultimately, the Supreme Court set aside the NGT judgment, cleared the organisation of all liability, and ordered a full refund of the ₹ five crore deposit.

In doing so, the Art of Living truly demonstrated the art of winning-proving that high-stakes legal battles are won not by noise, but by calm patience, solid facts, and unshakeable truth.

The author is a senior journalist covering legal affairs. Views presented are personal

SC to hear pleas for suspension of CEC Gyanesh Kumar on Monday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a batch of pleas seeking suspension of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and challenging the manner in which the poll panel led by him took decisions, allegedly without the approval of two election commissioners.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana is scheduled to hear the pleas filed by Rakesh Kumar Singh and advocate Shailendra Mani Tripathi, who have also challenged the decisions, guidelines and software changes allegedly made by Kumar without the concur-



rence of his two colleagues.

The PIL, filed by Patna resident Rakesh Kumar Singh, has urged the top court to determine whether Kumar has been individually exercising powers that legally belong to the Election Commission (EC) as a whole, and, if so, to declare those actions unauthorised and take appropriate legal

action. "Direct that respondent No.3 (CEC) shall not exercise the functions of Chief Election Commissioner of India pending final hearing of the present petition; direct that during such period, the business of the Commission be transacted by the unanimous decision of respondent Nos. 4 (Sukhbir Singh Sandhu) and 5

Any process which disenfranchises Indians is arbitrary: Justice Bhuyan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Hyderabad

Supreme Court judge Justice Ujjal Bhuyan on Sunday said any process which disenfranchises millions of Indian citizens was intrinsically arbitrary and a negation of the constitutional order. No amount of "whataboutery" can justify it.

Justice Bhuyan, who delivered the valedictory address at the 19th Justice Bodh Raj Sawhney Memorial Moot Court Competition at NALSAR University of Law, said the Indian Constitution does not provide for two classes of citizens - one class of citizens with voting rights and the other class of citizens without voting rights. Any process which leads to wholesale disenfranchisement of Indian citizens making them citizens without voting rights would be violative of Articles 326 and 14 of the



Constitution of India, he said. "If any process results in disenfranchising millions and millions of Indian citizens making them second class citizens in their own country in the sense of being citizens without a voting right, such a process is intrinsically arbitrary. No amount of whataboutery can justify it," he said.

"It strikes at the very heart of the Constitution and I would go to the extent of saying that it is a negation of the Constitutional order which we have adopted based under

Constitution of India," he said. Observing that Indian citizens' right to vote is intertwined with India's long years of struggle against foreign rule, he said it is a manifestation of freedom achieved after long struggle and sacrifice and Article 326 cannot be tinkered with at all. "No authority can do it; no court can endorse it or condone it. No one is above the Constitution," he said. Justice Bhuyan said the right to vote or the right to be a voter is not a mere statutory right that flows from parliamentary legislation like the Representation of the People's Act 1951, but a Constitutional right forming a distinct part of democracy itself. Thus positioning itself within the framework of the basic structure of the Indian Constitution. Citing a Supreme Court order, he said the apex court observed that the right to vote of a citizen cannot be

divorced or separated from the mandate of Article 326.

The right of a citizen to be a voter and to vote is of the greatest importance and forms the foundation of free and fair election.

Section 22 of the Representation of the People's Act permits deletion of an entry in the voter's list but only after the said voter has been given a reasonable opportunity of being heard, he said.

He cited another Supreme Court judgment and said the SC has laid down the guidelines to be followed in case of deletion of voters.

Except in the case of a dead person, the name of a voter once enlisted in the electoral roll cannot be deleted without notice and hearing, he said.

"From the persona of an Indian citizen, the right to vote or right to be included in the voters list cannot be detached.

It will be like taking out the soul from the body," he said.

Justice Bhuyan said US judge Justice Frankfurter had expressed the view that in a democracy the highest office is not that of the President but that of the citizen.

He further quoted him as saying: "Democracy is always a beckoning goal, not a safe harbour, for freedom is an unremitting endeavour, never a final achievement."

"I ask myself, what is the worth of a citizen without his/her voting rights," Justice Bhuyan asked. Justice Bhuyan, who served as the Chancellor of NALSAR, said he can be legitimately proud of the students of the institution. "You have shown to the country and the world what a university student that too, a student of law should be like. You are brilliant. You are bold and you are brave," he said.

Split verdict in JITF-NTPC matter leaves dispute unresolved

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi High Court's recent split verdict in the JITF-NTPC dispute has left unresolved the dispute involving an arbitral award of nearly ₹1,889 crore, involving Public Money.

On September 2, 2026, a Delhi High Court Division Bench delivered a split verdict in the long-running dispute between State-owned power major NTPC and infrastructure company JITF. However, the 1:1 split left the matter unresolved.

Justice C Hari Shankar allowed the appeal, set aside the Single Judge's order and restored the 2019 Arbitral Award "in its entirety."

However, Justice Om



Prakash Shukla disagreed on four claims - 1, 3, 3A and 5A - which together account for the bulk of the ₹1,889 crore award in favour of JITF in January 2019.

Justice Shukla upheld the

Single Judge's order primarily on the grounds of the express contractual provisions, holding that arbitrators, being creatures of the contract, could not rewrite the contract while awarding the

claims in favour of JITF.

The dispute dates to a 2008 plan to transport coal from the high seas to NTPC's Farakka plant through the inland waterways system. Under a 2011 Tripartite Agreement, JITF was responsible for developing the unloading infrastructure, NTPC had a contractual commitment relating to 3 MMTPA for seven years, while IWLAI was responsible for maintaining the stipulated water depth.

NTPC's challenge included issues relating to JITF's poor performance, extension of the Commercial Operation Date (COD), as per the explicit contractual compensation provisions, and the award of ₹1,108 crore under Claim 5A

towards termination-related damages, without submission of any proof of loss.

Both judges considered the statutory framework governing judicial interference with arbitral awards, including the principles under Sections 34 and 37 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, and relevant Supreme Court jurisprudence including Associate Builders, Saw Pipes and Ssangyong Engineering. However, they differed on the application of these principles to the Tribunal's findings.

The difference of opinion now goes to the Chief Justice for consideration by a Third Judge or Larger Bench, leaving the final determination on the disputed claims subject to further judicial proceedings.

Delhi court orders FIR into alleged kidnap of minor by mother to Australia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A Delhi court has directed the police to register an FIR and launch a thorough investigation into a case where a two-and-a-half-year-old minor was allegedly taken to Australia without the biological father's consent using forged visa documents.

Relying on the recent orders passed by Judicial Magistrate (First Class) Vikas Madaan at Tis Hazari Courts, the SHO of Tilak Nagar Police Station has been directed to register an FIR within seven days under Section 175(3) BNSS. The court explicitly observed that the allegations are serious and cognizable in nature, requiring a field investigation to be conducted by the state machinery as the evidence is away from the reach of the complainant.

According to the complaint, the minor child was illegally removed from India. The complaint alleges the active involvement of the mother's father, retired Indian Army officer Ex-Subedar Major Joginder Singh, who allegedly travelled specifically from Melbourne to Delhi to facilitate this orchestrated move.

"The Court has rightly observed the gravity of the matter. Taking a minor across international borders



without the consent of the father, based on fabricated documents, is a serious offense. We are hopeful for a fair, swift, and impartial police investigation as directed by the court to uncover the entire conspiracy," said Advocate Monika Verman, representing the complainant.

"This incident exposes a significant flaw in the Australian immigration system, as my signatures were forged on the mandatory consent document (Form-1229) to obtain the child's visa, which was granted without any cross-verification from me. My own Indian passport was stolen to facilitate this fraudulent process, and an Indian-origin migration agent based in Australia actively assisted in securing this visa through these fabricated documents. Since India is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, while Australia is a contracting

party to that Convention, navigating the legal framework requires direct administrative intervention; therefore, I have officially notified the relevant Australian immigration departments regarding the visa fraud, and have received an official acknowledgment from the authorities for due action," he stated.

The complainant has also brought the matter to the attention of relevant Australian authorities, including the Australian Department of Home Affairs and the office of the Minister for Home Affairs, Tony Burke, who currently serves as Australia's Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Immigration and Citizenship. The cross-border child-welfare and return issues are also being pursued before the appropriate authorities. The matter will now proceed to the police investigation stage, and the allegations remain subject to investigation and due process of law.

Rohini court lawyers to protest against assault by police

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Rohini Court Bar Association has called for a complete abstention from judicial work at the district court complex on Monday to protest against the alleged manhandling and physical assault of an advocate at a police station. It also said that no police official of any district will be allowed to enter the court premises that day.

In a notice dated October 3 and signed by Bar president Rajiv Tehran and honorary secretary Pardeep Khatri said Advocate Kamaldeep was allegedly manhandled and assaulted at the Mahendra Park police station on September 29.

The notice said the Bar's executive committee took up the matter with



the joint commissioner of police, the DCP (North-West) and the principal district and sessions judge, North-West district, and also spoke to the senior police officers concerned.

"During these interactions, assurances were given by the DCP that strong and appropriate action would be taken against the erring police officials," the notice said.

However, instead of action against the police personnel, a case was sub-

sequently registered against Kamaldeep, and the senior police officers did not inform the executive committee about it despite the assurances, the association alleged.

The executive committee termed the conduct "not merely an instance of police high-handedness and intimidation of a practising advocate" but also a serious breach of the trust reposed by the Bar in the assurances given by the senior police authorities. It described the manner in which the matter had proceeded as "backstabbing of the entire legal fraternity".

The association "strongly condemns the conduct of the Delhi Police and the concerned DCP, North-West district, for misleading the executive committee", the notice said. It added that the

dignity, safety and professional independence of advocates "cannot be compromised", and any attempt to intimidate a practising advocate would be resisted by the bar "through all lawful means". The executive committee resolved that there shall be complete abstention from judicial work at the Rohini Courts on Monday, October 5, "as a mark of protest against the incident and the subsequent action".

"Further, no police official of any district shall be permitted to enter the Rohini Court premises, including the Nayab Court, on the said day," the notice said. All members of the Bar have been asked to remain united and extend full cooperation in observing the decision.

AI demands agile corporations: VP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Corporate agility and evolved governance standards are needed as artificial intelligence, advanced data analytics, and complex business models reshape how enterprises function, Vice President CP Radhakrishnan said on Sunday.

Emphasising that trust, transparency and impeccable corporate governance sustain investors' confidence, he cautioned that if their confidence is lost, then progress is never possible.

He was addressing a function in the national capital to mark the 58th Foundation Day of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI). ICSI, the apex body for company secretaries, have more than 80,000 members and over 2.5 lakh students.

Against the backdrop of rapid technological advances, the Vice President said what is important today might become outdated in the coming months or years,



Vice President CP Radhakrishnan and others during the 58th foundation day celebrations of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI), at Bharat Mandapam, in New Delhi

but everyone needs to adapt to the evolving situation.

"Artificial intelligence, advanced data analytics, digital platforms and increasingly complex business models are reshaping the way enterprises have to operate," Radhakrishnan said, adding that the role of company secretaries is becoming more important.

Company secretaries have a key role in ensuring regu-

latory compliance and in upholding corporate governance practices.

"The fast-paced evolution driven by artificial intelligence and advanced data analytics demands corporate agility and evolved governance standards," the Vice President said.

According to him, technology may transform the manner in which information is generated, and deci-

sions are supported, but the values of integrity, accountability and transparency are the responsibilities of the company secretaries. "Nothing can replace human thinking," Radhakrishnan said, as he mentioned that company secretaries work to uphold the legal, strategic and ethical foundation of India Inc. Good governance at the Centre and states is a must to protect the interests of the people, he said.

While highlighting the importance of company secretaries, he also said that their corporate governance practices have a more direct impact on individuals.

As India aims to become a self-reliant and developed nation, Radhakrishnan also expressed hope that country will become world's single largest economy.

"I always insist why we want to become the single largest economy, that is not to dictate terms to others, but nobody should dictate unwanted terms to us... that is what the self-respect of a nation lies in," he said.

Govt raises deepwater gas price ceiling

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Government has raised the ceiling price for natural gas produced from difficult fields such as the KG-D6 block of Reliance Industries and BP to \$ 9.89 per million British thermal units (MMBtu) for the six months beginning October 1, from \$ 8.90 previously, while keeping the ceiling for gas produced from the legacy fields of state-run ONGC and Oil India Ltd at \$ 7 per MMBtu.

The new ceiling for gas from deepwater, ultra-deepwater and high-pressure, high-temperature discoveries is applicable for the period October 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027, according to a notification by the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell of the oil ministry. Gas produced from such difficult areas enjoys marketing and pricing freedom under the government's policy, but is subject to a Government-notified ceiling. The higher ceiling could provide some relief to producers developing India's more technically challenging



offshore gas resources, where production costs are generally higher than those from mature onshore and legacy fields.

For gas produced by ONGC and OIL from their nomination fields, the government has notified an APM price of \$11.22 per MMBtu for October, but the actual price remains capped at \$ 7 per MMBtu, according to PPAC.

The APM gas price applies to gas produced from the legacy fields of state-owned ONGC and OIL and is used by priority sectors including city gas distribution, fertiliser and power.

For gas produced from new wells of ONGC and OIL in their nomination blocks, the government allows a 10

per cent premium over the prevailing APM gas price, subject to the applicable ceiling. With the APM price for October capped at \$7 per MMBtu, the effective price for new-well gas would accordingly be up to USD 7.70 per MMBtu.

The higher price for new-well gas is aimed at incentivising ONGC and OIL to invest in developing additional reserves and bringing new production on stream, while maintaining the existing ceiling for gas from their older, legacy fields.

India follows separate pricing mechanisms for gas from legacy fields of national oil companies and newer discoveries in difficult areas. In April 2023, the govern-

ment shifted pricing of gas from legacy fields to a formula linked to 10 per cent of the monthly average crude oil import price, subject to a floor and ceiling. The ceiling was initially fixed at \$6.50 per MMBtu and was subsequently raised by \$0.25 annually after a two-year freeze. The APM ceiling was raised to \$6.75 per MMBtu from April 2025 and moved to \$ 7 in April this year.

Before the 2023 reform, APM gas prices were revised every six months based on international gas benchmarks and had fluctuated sharply, ranging from \$ 1.79 per MMBtu in 2021 to \$ 8.57 in the six months ended March 2023.

The separate regime for deepwater and other difficult fields was introduced to encourage investment in India's technically challenging hydrocarbon resources by allowing producers greater pricing and marketing flexibility. Reliance Industries and its partner BP produce gas from KG-D6 block in Krishna-Godavari basin, one of India's key deepwater gas-producing areas.

KVIC chairman bats for women empowerment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Manoj Goyal, Chairman, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)-under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Government of India-addressed the women artisans of Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad at an event held on Wednesday at the Sri Sh n m u k h a n a n d a C h a n d r a s e k h a r e n d r a Saraswathi Auditorium in Sion (East), Mumbai. As the chief guest, KVIC Chairman applauded the work of the women artisans and highlighted the significant role played by organisations like LijjatPapad in advancing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Vocal for Local' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

Addressing the congregation, KVIC Chairman Manoj Goyalopined that the



journey of Lijjat Papad established in 15 March 1959 with just seven women and ₹80. It was not merely an initiative to make Papads, but a dream of becoming self-reliant, living with dignity and standing on one's own feet. The recognition of LijjatPapad as a Village Industry by KVIC in 1966 gave fresh momentum to this journey. Today, through its 83 branches across 16 States, more than 45,000 women are associated with LijjatPapad and are progressing towards self-reliance and economic independence.

Over the years, the organisation has diversified its product range. Besides papads, it also manufactures spices, flour, detergent and liquid soaps. Its products have reached more than 30 countries, including the USA, Australia, Japan and South Africa.

KVIC Chairman said that the greatest strength of LijjatPapad is its quality, hard work, and discipline. He remarked that the organisation serves as an inspiring example of realizing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Vocal for Local' and 'Local to Global'. He said,

"Lijjat does not merely make papads; it weaves together dignity, self-confidence, and opportunity."

Goyal said that LijjatPapad's achievements have also received national recognition. The organisation was honoured with the Best Village Industry Award in 2003, the Brand Equity Award in 2005 and the Women Development Award in 2017. Several international platforms and media organisations have also showcased LijjatPapad's inspiring journey to world.

Highlighting the activities and initiatives of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), KVIC Chairman said that nearly 5 lakh artisans across the country are being provided employment out of which 80 per cent are women working in around 3,000 Khadi institutions.

India, Canada CEPA talks resume

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The chief negotiators of India and Canada will begin the fifth round of negotiations for the proposed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in Ottawa from October 5, with an aim to conclude the talks by the end of this calendar year, an official said.

The five-day talks may end on October 9. The fourth round of negotiations concluded here on September 18. The talks are moving at a faster pace as both countries are targeting to conclude the negotiations by the end of this year.

The negotiations are important as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit Canada around December this year, Canadian Prime Minister



Mark Carney has said last month. To give a further impetus to the talks, Canada's Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu will visit New Delhi later this month with a 300 strong business delegation. Sidhu and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal met in Mumbai last month to review the progress of negotiations.

CEPA is a kind of free trade agreement in which two countries either signif-

icantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them.

They also ease norms for the movement of skilled professionals and attract investments. The two countries first launched the negotiations in 2015. During 2015-17, they held over half a dozen rounds of talks on the proposed pact. After that, the talks were paused. In March 2022, the two

countries re-launched negotiations for an interim agreement, officially dubbed as Early Progress Trade Agreement.

In 2023, Canada paused negotiations again after the bilateral relations hit rock bottom following then Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations of a potential Indian link to the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar. India had dismissed Trudeau's accusation as "absurd".

In November 2025, the two countries decided to resume formal negotiations for the proposed free trade agreement.

The renewed vibrancy in ties between the two countries followed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's talks with his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney on the margins of the G7 summit at Canada's Kananaskis in June last year.

GDA vice-chairman inspects Nehru Cricket Stadium

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ghaziabad

Vice-Chairman of the Ghaziabad Development Authority (GDA), Nand Kishore Kalal, conducted a site inspection of Nehru Cricket Stadium at 8:00 am on Sunday along with MLA Sanjeev Sharma and senior officials of the authority. During the inspection, the vice-chairman reviewed in detail the facilities provided to players, youngsters, and the general public, along with cleanliness, maintenance, and other arrangements at the stadium.

Kalal directed the concerned maintenance agency to further improve cleanliness and maintenance arrangements and ensure



regular cleaning, proper upkeep and high-quality maintenance work throughout the stadium premises.

The following major works will be carried out at the stadium: Construction and improvement of the walking track, installation of an open gym, strengthening of the street-lighting system, development of stadium.

Jio Platforms target IPO at enterprise valuation of \$143-146 billion

PRASOON SRIVASTAVA
■ New Delhi

Digital services major Jio Platforms is likely to get listed by the end of this month at an enterprise valuation of \$143-146 billion or above ₹12 lakh crore, sources tracking the development said.

Jio Platforms IPO is touted as India's largest public offer at an estimated size of \$3.8 billion.

The company has concluded overseas roadshows and is expected to file final papers with market regulator SEBI for the initial public offering in the week starting October 12, banking and other sources who did not wish to be identified told the news agency. "Based on interest



received from overseas roadshows, Jio Platforms is likely to list at a base enterprise valuation of USD 143-146 billion or at least Rs 12 lakh crore by end of this month," one of the banking sources said.

An email sent to Jio Platforms (JPL) seeking comments based on available information did not elicit any reply. The overseas roadshows held in the US, UK, Dubai, Hong Kong and

Singapore were led by Jio Platforms Managing Director and Reliance Jio Chairman Akash Ambani and Reliance Retail Ventures Limited Executive Director Isha Ambani. One of the event vendors said that JPL is expected to hold a roadshow for the IPO in India in the week starting October 12 after filing the red herring prospectus.

According to banking sources, Jio Platforms is expected to start an anchor round before Dussehra and the issue is expected to open post-Dussehra before October 23.

"The company is expected to list on the stock exchange by the end of this month," the source said. The Securities and Exchange

Board of India (SEBI) issued its final observations on August 28. Jio Platforms had filed its draft IPO papers in June.

According to its draft prospectus, the company plans to issue up to 27 crore fresh equity shares, equivalent to about 2.9 per cent of its post-issue equity base.

Sources have indicated that the company may raise around \$ 3.8 billion from the offer. The public offering comes as India's primary market has remained active, with strong participation from retail investors and domestic institutions.

More than two dozen IPOs have been announced or launched since July 1, nearly matching the 28 recorded in the first half of 2026.

Jio Platforms houses

Reliance's digital businesses, including its telecommunications operations.

Reliance Jio Infocomm, the telecom arm of JPL, dominates the Indian telecom market with a 32.89 per cent market share in fixed-line connections, serving 157.9 million customers, and a 39.29 per cent share in mobile connections, with 506 million customers.

JPL has the largest 5G Standalone network outside China, with 26.85 crore 5G customers as of June 2026. Jio leads the Fixed Wireless Access segment globally with about 1.5 crore subscribers, roughly 1.5 times the second-largest player, US-based T-Mobile. Jio claims that its 5G network's carrying capacity is close to 60 per cent of

India's wireless data traffic, one of the largest in the world.

Leveraging its network and data traffic capacity, Jio has expanded its business into other areas of the digital ecosystem, including cloud, artificial intelligence and enterprise network services.

For FY26, Jio Platforms posted a 15 per cent rise in profit after tax to ₹30,053 crore and a 14.5 per cent increase in the annual revenue to ₹1,46,885 crore.

Analysts at Nuvama Research expect Reliance Jio's profit after tax to clock a compounded annual growth rate of 18 per cent between FY26 and FY30, at par with the oil and gas vertical of parent firm Reliance Industries Limited. (PTI)

CIJW school trains NCC cadets

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Aizwal

Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School (CIJWS), Vairengte conducted an intensive training programme for 83 NCC cadets from Mizoram from 21 September to 04 October 2026, providing young boys and girls an opportunity to train in the professional environment of one of the Indian Army's premier training institutions. The two-week programme was conceived to take the cadets beyond routine NCC training and expose them to the discipline, physical standards, field skills and team spirit of military life.

The cadets underwent drill, physical training, firing, map reading, fieldcraft, survival training, first aid and team-building activities, while also receiving an introduction to jungle warfare, weapons, equipment and night-vision devices. An important part of the programme was exposure to the changing charac-



ter of warfare. Visits to the Information and Research Centre, IED Hall and Technovation Hall familiarised the cadets with technology, innovation and developments relevant to modern military training.

The camp also provided a platform for motivational interaction, encouraging the cadets to develop confidence, discipline, leadership and a spirit of service.

Training together in mixed groups further promoted camaraderie and a sense of collective identity

amongst youth drawn from different parts of Mizoram. The initiative assumes particular significance as CIJW School continues to deepen its engagement with the youth of the State.

By bringing NCC cadets into the School's training environment, the endeavour seeks to broaden their exposure, strengthen their connection with national institutions, and inspire them to participate more in nation-building and national service opportunities.

Galgotias University jumps 24 places to 41st in THE rankings

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Greater Noida

Galgotias University has climbed 24 places to 41st among all universities in India in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2027, released today. The University was ranked 65th in the 2026 edition.

Among private universities and institutions in India, Galgotias has risen seven places to 20th, from 27th last year. Globally, it has moved up from the 1201-1500 band to the 1001-1200 band.

The achievement adds to the University's recognition in the QS World University Rankings 2027, where Galgotias is placed in the 1201-1400 global band, ranking 16th among private universities in India, 46th among all Indian universities and third among private universities in Uttar Pradesh. Its presence in both THE and QS world rankings marks an important milestone in its development as an interna-

tionally recognised institution. The 2027 edition ranks 2,297 universities from 118 countries and territories, up from 2,191 last year.

Research strength THE assesses universities on teaching, research environment, research quality, international outlook and industry. In the 2026 edition, research quality was identified as one of the University's strongest areas. Galgotias has more than 9,940 Scopus-indexed publications, over 80,780 citations, and an h-index of 104. Seven of its faculty members are among the world's top 2 percent of scientists, and the University

holds 16 government-funded research projects from agencies including ICSSR, ANRF, CSIR and SERB. Expanding international partnerships Galgotias University's international engagement spans Italy, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam and Singapore, connecting academic cooperation with student opportunities, faculty development and joint research.

Very recently, the University signed a five-year cooperation agreement with the University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy, to promote academic exchanges, joint research and scientific collab-

oration. Its recent Letter of Intent with Krirk University, Thailand, provides a framework to explore collaborative academic programmes, research, student mobility and faculty development, alongside entrepreneurship and women's leadership initiatives.

In Japan, the University has signed an MoU with the Yamanashi Prefectural Government and a Letter of Intent with the University of Yamanashi, establishing a foundation for talent mobility and clean-energy research, including green hydrogen. These agreements accompanied the visit of a 200-member delegation led by Yamanashi Governor Kotaro Nagasaki.

In Vietnam, engagements with Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology (HUTECH), Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics and Finance (UEF), and the Saigon Hi-Tech Park ecosystem connect academic collaboration with applied research, industry engagement and

semiconductor initiatives.

These relationships are also creating specific international study opportunities. Under the MoU with Girton College, University of Cambridge, 16 Galgotias students were selected for a fully university-sponsored, two-week summer programme in Artificial Intelligence and Entrepreneurship in 2026. Collaboration with YNOV Campus, France, supports master's programmes in Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security and Computer Science, structured around one year of study in India and one in France.

The University is also advancing its Galgotias Student-Centred Active Learning Ecosystem (G-SCALE) with consultancy support and mentorship from INSPIRE at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. The approach brings practical projects, collaborative problem-solving and application of knowledge into everyday learning.

Agni: The Forgotten Science of Digestion

Modern society obsesses over diets, superfoods, supplements and food choices, yet digestive and metabolic disorders continue to rise. This suggests the issue may not be only what we eat, but how well we digest and assimilate it. The important question is, what if the problem is not merely what we eat, but our ability to digest and assimilate what we consume?

More than two thousand years ago, Ayurveda placed this question at the very centre of its understanding of health. Its answer was Agni, the digestive fire, i.e., Ahara → Jatharagni → Bhutagni → Dhatvagni → Dhatu Nourishment → physiological function. In the classical texts, Agni is the principle of transformation that converts food into nourishment, nourishment into tissue, and life into vitality. The modern health crisis, Ayurveda would argue, is not merely a crisis of nutrition. It is a crisis of digestion.

In modern medicine of endocrinology this has been explained as Hormone → receptor → cellular response → organ function → physiological outcome, for a healthy and balanced body functions.

The Centrality of Agni

The importance of Agni in Ayurveda can hardly be overstated. *The Charaka Samhita* declares:

आयुर्वर्णं बलं स्वास्थ्यमुत्साहोपचयौ प्रभा ।
ओजस्तेजोऽनयः प्राणाश्चोका देहाग्निहेतुकाः ॥ ३ ॥
शान्तेऽग्नौ श्रियते, युक्ते चिरं जीवत्यनामयः ।
रोगी स्याद्विकृते, मूलमग्निमन्तस्मान्निरुच्यते ॥ ४ ॥
(*Charaka Samhita, Chikitsasthana 15.3-4.*)

"Life-span, complexion, strength, health, enthusiasm, corpulence, lustre, immunity, energy, heat processes and vital breath-all these depend on body-fire. One dies if this fire is extinguished, lives long free from disorders if it is functioning properly, gets ill if it is deranged, hence Agni (digestive fire) is the root of all".

This remarkable statement immediately reveals that *Agni* is presented as the foundation of life itself. The Sanskrit word Agni literally means fire. Just as external fire transforms raw substances into something useful, internal Agni transforms food into energy and vitality. Without fire, food remains uncooked. Without Agni, nourishment remains unavailable to the body.

Digestion as Transformation

One of the most striking features of Ayurvedic thought is that it views health as a continuous process of transformation. Food enters the body as an external substance. Through the action of Agni, it becomes part of the individual. This transformation is so central that Ayurveda places digestion before nutrition.

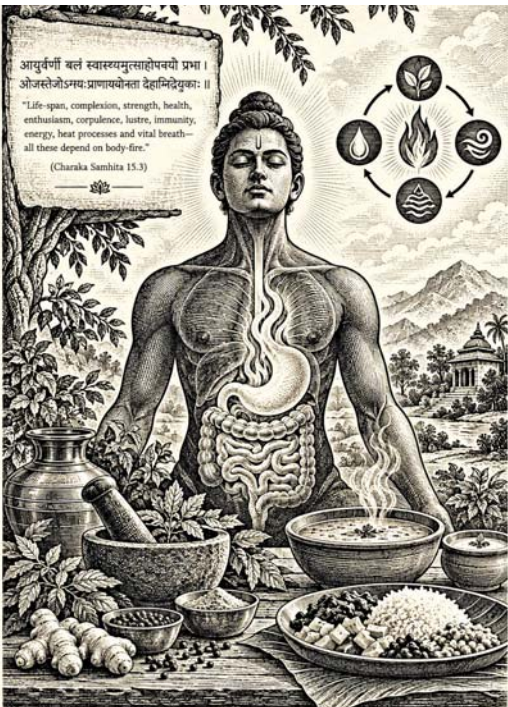
The *Charaka Samhita* describes a hierarchy of metabolic fires. At the centre is **Jatharagni**, the primary digestive fire located in the gastrointestinal tract. Classical texts regard it as the master fire because all subsequent metabolic processes



GOPAL KRISHNA
FORMER SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF PORTS,
SHIPPING & WATERWAYS



DR. SUCHI DAYAL
SENIOR RESEARCH
FELLOW, BHARAT
KI SOCH



depend upon it. According to Ayurveda, health begins to deteriorate when Agni becomes weak or disturbed. The result is the formation of **Ama**, often described as improperly digested or incompletely transformed material. It represents a state of incomplete transformation. The implications are profound. One may eat nutritious food and yet fail to derive nourishment from it if Agni is impaired.

This perspective shifts attention away from food alone and toward the body's capacity to process food.

The Four Functional States of Agni

Ayurveda identifies four conditions of digestive fire.

Sama Agni, the balanced fire, represents the ideal state. Digestion is regular, appetite is healthy, elimination is proper and vitality is maintained.

Manda Agni, the sluggish fire, digests food slowly and inefficiently. Heaviness, lethargy and loss of appetite are common features.

Tikshna Agni, the excessively sharp fire, digests too rapidly. Hunger becomes excessive and the body may become depleted despite frequent eating.

Vishama Agni, the irregular fire, fluctuates unpredictably. Sometimes digestion is strong; at other times it is weak. Appetite becomes erratic and digestive disturbances frequently arise.

These categories indicate the functional state of metabolism, the current state of health, and how well the body is processing food and emotions.

Folk Wisdom and the Social Life of Agni

One of the great strengths of Indian civilization was that knowledge of Agni was not confined to physicians. Concepts that originated in Ayurvedic texts gradually entered everyday culture through proverbs, household customs, seasonal foods and festival practices.

Traditional communities instinctively adjusted their diets according to climate and season. Summer drinks such as buttermilk preparations and *panakam* were not merely refreshments. They reflected an understanding that digestive power changes with the seasons. The same principle underlies *Dinacharya*, the Ayurvedic science of daily routine. According to modern medicine melatonin hormone regulates circadian rhythm which in turn controls sleep-wake cycle that is our biological clock. Modern readers often regard *Dinacharya* as a collection of traditional rules. In reality, its deeper purpose is the preservation of Agni. A particularly beautiful analogy compares health to a lamp. A lamp burns steadily only when supplied with proper fuel and protected from extinguishing forces such as wind and water. Agni functions in exactly the same way. Proper food, exercise and routine provide fuel. Irregular habits, excessive indulgence and neglect extinguish the flame. *Dinacharya* is therefore not a collection of arbitrary rules. It is the daily practice of tending the inner fire.

What Modern Life Has Forgotten

Many people now sleep late, wake tired, eat irregularly, snack constantly, and have their heaviest meals at night, often while distracted or stressed. In Ayurvedic terms, these habits disturb the natural rhythm essential for healthy digestion.

Interestingly, modern scientific research increasingly points in a similar direction. Circadian rhythms influence metabolism, hormone secretion and digestive function. Meal timing affects metabolic health. Sleep disruption affects numerous physiological systems. The *Charaka Samhita* repeatedly emphasises moderation:

"Neither fasting nor overeating sustains health; strength is preserved through regulated and moderate eating".

Rather than discussing circadian genes and metabolic pathways, Ayurveda spoke of the strengthening or weakening of Agni. Ayurveda reminds us that health depends not only upon what enters the body but also upon what the body is capable of transforming. The forgotten science of digestion is a reminder that life itself depends upon the delicate art of transformation. And perhaps that is the lesson most worth recovering today.

Fable with Moral

Daanveer Karna

(Mahabharata)

Karna stood in the morning light, his golden *Kavach* and *Kundal* gleaming as part of his very flesh. He had sworn a sacred vow never to turn away any seeker empty-handed during his morning worship.

Arjuna and Karna were destined to face each other in a deadly battle during the Kurukshetra War. Because Karna was born with a divine armor (*Kavach*) and earrings (*Kundal*) that made him completely invincible, Indra knew Arjuna could never defeat him. To tilt the odds in his son's favor, Indra took advantage of Karna's famous reputation for never refusing a beggar, tricking him into giving up his ultimate defense. Disguised as a poor Brahmin, Indra asked Karna for his divine armor and earrings.

Karna's father, Sun God Surya had already warned Karna in a dream about this divine deception. Karna knew the truth. He understood that parting with his natural protection meant losing his shield against death in the impending war. Yet, his commitment to *daan* (charity) and his sacred word outweighed his own life. A warrior could lose a battle, but breaking a promise meant loss of honor which was worse than death.

Without a trace of fear or hesitation, upon the beggar's request Karna took a sharp blade. He carved the divine armor and earrings straight from his own skin, enduring searing pain with steady hands as his wife looked on. He placed the armor into the trembling



hands of the beggar who was the disguised Indra.

Stunned by this peerless selflessness, Indra revealed his true celestial form. Filled with awe, the king of Gods healed Karna's ravaged body and granted him the infallible *Vasavi Shakti* weapon in return.

This legendary act cemented Karna's legacy. It proved that true greatness is measured not by the armor one wears to save oneself, but by the sacrifices one makes to honor a vow.

Moral of the fable- Always keep your word even if it comes at the cost of sacrifice.

Did you know?

North East India's traditional medicine relies on ethno-ichthyology—the therapeutic use of fish. Folk healers across the region utilize over 40 indigenous fish species to manage diverse health conditions, viewing them as vital dietary and medicinal resources.

For instance, *Channa punctatus* (Spotted Snakehead) is traditionally prepared to alleviate gastrointestinal issues and boost strength during convalescence. Similarly, *Monopterus albus* (Cuchia Eel), rich in essential amino acids and iron, is highly prescribed to treat anemia, chronic respiratory ailments



and fatigue.

Far from mere folklore, this indigenous practice represents a sophisticated system of zootherapy. It highlights how North East India's communities seamlessly blend aquatic biodiversity with preventive healthcare, using local riverine ecosystems to sustain community wellness for generations.

Wisdom Word Search

U A V U K Y F B F V P J P S
G I L A N A L H K F A L A A
A D S B V O I E U I T E N P
K R H A L P O S B I I H E P
D H O A H G J A L K J W I A
O E V G Y A N J K A A C Q Y
S R U I Y H S J G H G F A A
A U D H T A I A V A G Z G J
D A H R V E J J A R A D G O
H I L A N A U A R G N Y D X
I H P A S S A M B H A N A L
O V I T H A Y O Q U J W I S
J W D G A J R U P E K K H A

WORDS TO FIND

Agada, Arogya, Bhesajja, Gilana, Osadhi, Passambhana, Patijaggana, Sappaya, Upekkha, Vejja

AGADA: A medicinal preparation, especially one used as an antidote or healing drug.
AROGYA: Good health, freedom from disease, and overall physical well-being.
BHESAJJA: Medicine or a healing remedy used to treat illness and restore health.
GILANA: A sick or unwell person who requires medical care and attention.
OSADHI: A medicinal herb or natural plant used for healing and healthcare.
PASSAMBHANA: The calming or soothing of physical pain, emotional stress, and mental disturbance.
PATIJAGGANA: The careful nursing, care and support provided to someone who is ill.
SAPPAYA: Anything that is wholesome, beneficial and suitable for maintaining good health.
UPEKKHA: A balanced and peaceful state of mind that remains steady during life's challenges.
VEJJA: A physician or medical practitioner skilled in treating diseases.

Note: These terms come from Pali, one of India's ancient languages.

Marvels of India

ASHTANGA HRIDAYAM

A Marvel of Holistic Health

Composed by Vagbhata around the 7th century CE, the *Ashtanga Hridayam* ("Heart of the Eight Branches") stands as a cornerstone of classical Ayurveda, synthesising earlier medical knowledge into an accessible, systematic guide to health, nutrition and wellbeing.

Structural and Pedagogical Excellence

Its clarity, compactness and precise verse construction made it the most widely taught Ayurvedic text in Bharat for over 1,200 years, constituting, with *Charaka* and *Sushruta Samhitas*, the *brihat-trayi* ("great triad") of authoritative treatises on Ayurveda.

Nutrition and Daily Regimen

Vagbhata elaborates detailed dietary rules (*ahara vidhi*), emphasising food consumed at the proper time, when hunger is manifest and digestion keen; freshly prepared, warm, hygienic meals containing all six tastes; mindful, silent eating in solitude or good company and observance of bathing, cleanliness and gratitude before meals.

Preventive and Holistic Wellbeing

Beyond diet, it prescribes daily (*dinacharya*) and seasonal (*ritucharya*) regimens to maintain *agni* (digestive fire), balance the three *doshas* (*vata*, *pitta*, *kapha*) and nurture the seven bodily tissues (*dhatu*s). By integrating physical health with ethical conduct and mental clarity, it offers a comprehensive, evidence-informed framework for sustainable wellbeing.

QUIZ						Health, Nutrition & Well-Being					
Questions		Option A		Option B		Option C		Option D			
		Tulsi		Pudina		Ashwa-gandha		Ginger			
Which of these herbs aid in reducing anxiety and improving sleep quality?											
Which Ayurvedic inhalation practice involves instilling aromatic oils or herbal vapours directly into the nasal passages to clear head congestion and improve mental concentration?		Dhupana		Lepana		Nasya		Abhyanga			
In Siddha medicine, how do sweet citrus aromas (such as sweet lime or orange) influence our body?		Induce Deep Sleep		Reduce Metabolic Fire		Reduce Body Pain		Alleviate Mental Fatigue			
In which of the following states is body massage avoided in traditional Indian healing?		Dry winter skin conditions		High fever or indigestion		Post-workout muscle fatigue		Old age joint stiffness			
Answers: 1 - C, 2 - C, 3 - B, 4 - D											

neo-folktales

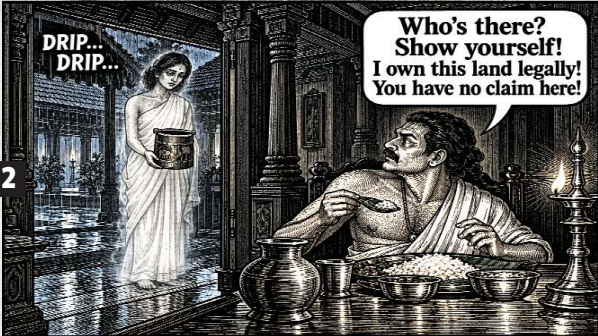
1



All this is mine. Every inch of it.

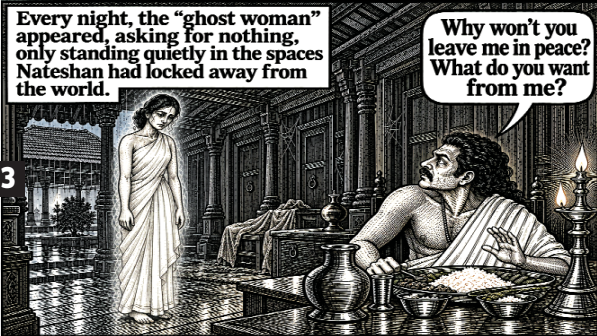
Nateshan inherited a vast estate by cutting off his struggling relatives years ago. He lived in absolute solitude, haunted by a persistent rumor that the house was visited by a quiet, lingering spirit.

2



Who's there? Show yourself! I own this land legally! You have no claim here!

3



Every night, the "ghost woman" appeared, asking for nothing. Only standing quietly in the spaces Nateshan had locked away from the world.

Why won't you leave me in peace? What do you want from me?

4



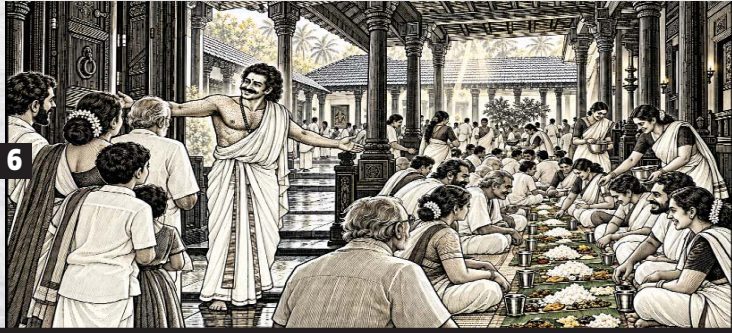
Wait... it's not an intruder... it's just the shadow of my own isolation.

5



I locked everyone out to keep everything for myself... and ended up locking myself inside a tomb.

6



By morning, the mansion no longer echoed with silence. Its doors stood open, and along the cool, rain-washed corridors, family and neighbours gathered over a sadya, filling the old house once more with light, laughter, and life.

MORAL OF THE STORY:

The most haunting ghosts are the ones we create ourselves through isolation; the only way to banish them is through openness and shared humanity

Brazil's presidential vote pits Trump ally against incumbent Lula

MAURICIO SAVARESE
■ Sao Paulo

Brazilians began voting Sunday in a high-stakes presidential election pitting incumbent Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva against Sen. Flavio Bolsonaro, ideological opposites who are each seen as having a shot at an outright victory.

If no candidate gets more than 50 per cent of the vote, the top two vote-getters will head to a runoff on Oct. 25 in Latin America's economic powerhouse. Ten other candidates are expected to garner much smaller numbers of votes on Sunday.

Bolsonaro, 45, is the son of far-right former President Jair Bolsonaro and an ally of US President Donald Trump. Lula, who, at 80, is one of the world's oldest heads of state,

is running in his seventh presidential election and has strengthened Brazil's ties with Beijing. Trump allies have found support in recent years in some Latin American countries, including Argentina, Colombia and Peru.

Almost 159 million Brazilians are eligible to vote in this tense political showdown. Where Bolsonaro has leaned into his ideological alliance with Trump, Lula has criticised Washington.

Incumbent president has often spoken about risks of US intervention in the Brazilian elections after the Trump administration imposed high tariffs against Brazilian exports, revoked the visa of the country's ambassador in Washington and sanctioned a Supreme Court justice who chaired the investigation that ended up resulting in the



President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva who is running for reelection greets supporters during a campaign rally in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

sentencing of Jair Bolsonaro, Lula's predecessor.

Lula told journalists after voting Sunday that he needs "to do double of what we

have done" if reelected, and expressed confidence he would win in the first round.

Flavio Bolsonaro has touted his proximity to the White

House, although he denies his campaign received help from the US government. He has insisted that Brazil needs to strike better deals with the

Trump administration, including the rare minerals economy. Brazil estimates that its deposits hold up to 21 million tons, second only to China. Bolsonaro has also campaigned on releasing his father from his 27-year prison sentence for attempting a coup, and bringing him back to politics.

"Brazil needs change. Brazil can't stand so much suffering," he told reporters at the Rio de Janeiro voting centre, where he cast his vote Sunday. Brazilians will also elect 27 state governors, members of state legislatures, all 513 federal members of the lower house of Congress and 54 of the country's 81 senators in Sunday's vote.

Rosane Wink, 67, a retired engineer, is a lifelong conservative voter who supports the former president's son

and his promise to classify criminal groups as terrorist organisations.

"It's a kind of terrorism that they're doing with us," said Wink as she voted in Rio de Janeiro. Last month she had a gun held to her stomach as a criminal bit her hand and removed her wedding ring, she said.

Maria Ribeiro, a 50-year-old cell phone vendor from Brasilia, said she voted for Bolsonaro because she wants freedom to express her Evangelical religion. She hopes he follows in his father's footsteps.

"I voted for his father, and I don't regret it," she said.

Rosangela Resende da Rocha, a 69-year-old who was previously a stay-at-home mom, said she supported Lula's social policies that help the "less fortunate" and that

he stands up to Trump.

"That crazy guy wants to come in here to buy our country, so that our country will be like it is over there," she said at a voting centre in Brasilia. "He won't succeed if Lula wins."

Even for those outside the country, Lula's social programs drove him to continue supporting him.

"Thank God I do not need (the help of) social programs, but I vote for those that need them: health, education, basic sanitation, housing, food," said Catia Oliveira, a 61-year-old Brazilian who cast her vote from Portugal.

Thomas Traumann, a political consultant based in Rio de Janeiro, says last-minute mistakes by either candidate or by their allies could make all the difference for undecided voters. (AP)

Merz in Kyiv as Russia pounds Ukraine

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Kyiv

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz arrived in Kyiv Sunday in a show of support as Russia escalated its attacks on Ukrainian cities.

The aerial war has intensified, with Moscow menacing cities across Ukraine with hard-to-intercept ballistic missiles and jet-powered drones, while Kyiv has been striking Russia's oil industry and businesses.

Merz said he travelled to the Ukrainian capital on his second trip as chancellor to demonstrate his country's solidarity with Ukraine. Germany is Ukraine's largest donor, sending Kyiv more than euros 43.3 billion (USD 48.8 billion) since the war began, along with equipment and weapons.

"If Russia is not stopped, its war machine will sooner or later turn against us," he said in a statement Sunday, adding that he told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy: "You can continue to count on our help."

Merz said the partnership between the two countries was "not a one-way street," pointing to German and Ukrainian companies jointly developing technologies that benefit both sides. "This makes us safer and stronger," he said. In a post on X, Zelenskyy thanked Germany and said the two countries would make "important agreements" during the visit



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz

to strengthen Ukraine's defences and those of the rest of Europe. "Russia must be stopped together," he wrote. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said the agenda would focus on "strengthening Ukraine, our defence and resilience, and our shared European security."

Russia's Foreign Ministry said Saturday it would continue to carry out "mass retaliatory strikes" on Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities, urging foreign nationals and diplomats to leave the country. It previously issued a similar warning in May.

The German and Russian foreign ministers met on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly's annual gathering of world leaders last month in what was believed to be the first such face-to-

face meeting since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Russia's Sergey Lavrov rejected German calls to ease off its "dangerous path of escalation" toward the country, and instead accused Germany of being Ukraine's main sponsor and seeking to be a leading military power in Europe.

Ties between Russia and Germany have soured even more in recent weeks, following an attempted drone attack in early September at Leipzig airport. Germany has blamed Russia for the incident and announced the closure of the German consulate in St Petersburg, the latest in a cycle of tit-for-tat moves.

Meanwhile, Merz's power inside Germany has taken a blow after a string of state election defeats last month,

including losses to the anti-migration and Russia-friendly Alternative for Germany party. However, he said he intends to remain chancellor. On Sunday morning, Russian attacks continued with a drone hitting Kyiv's Northern Bridge over the Dnipro River again, Zelenskyy said.

Video circulating on social media showed the drone flying into the bridge and the explosion as vehicles crossed. There was no immediate word on casualties.

The latest strike came after Russian assaults forced the full or partial closure of three of Kyiv's six road bridges over the Dnipro River earlier this week, suspending traffic and causing tailbacks in Moscow's latest effort to disrupt life in the Ukrainian capital. Previously, Russia has hit apartment blocks, supermarket warehouses, gas stations and data centres, among other targets.

Seven people were wounded Sunday in a Russian aerial bomb attack on the Ukrainian city of Sumy, local officials said.

Russia invaded its neighbour more than 4½ years ago, and there are no concrete signs that a peace settlement might be possible. Fighting along the roughly 1,250-kilometre (780-mile) front line snaking through northern, eastern and southern Ukraine has been virtually deadlocked in recent months.

PTI begins march to Islamabad after talks fail

SAJJAD HUSSAIN
■ Islamabad

Pakistan on Sunday braced for a protest by supporters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and his political party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf after it decided to proceed with a long march following the failure of negotiations with the Government.

The talks focused on key demands of Khan's party, including an immediate meeting with its jailed founder and his transfer to a hospital where his personal doctors could examine and treat him.

The first round of talks was held on Friday, with the two sides exchanging their positions and agreeing to continue negotiations, but without reaching an agreement. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf sought Khan's transfer to a hospital, while the government wanted the party to call off its October 4 protest.

The second round of talks between government negotiators and Khan's party leaders began shortly before 5 pm on Saturday and continued for several hours before ending in a deadlock early Sunday.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had announced plans for a long march to Islamabad on September 27, but later postponed it to October 4 amid government measures to prevent the



Commuters driving past shipping containers placed by authorities to block access to the Red Zone area in Islamabad on October 4, 2026, ahead of a protest by opposition party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) demanding the release of their leader and former Prime Minister Imran Khan. FILE

protest. The 73-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician has been incarcerated since 2023 and faces more than 100 cases, including corruption and charges related to inciting violence. He is lodged at Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi.

Khan's party has also demanded the release of his sisters and supporters arrested ahead of the protest, a proper medical check-up for Khan's wife Bushra Bibi, and that their cases be heard without interference.

On August 18, Pakistan's Supreme Court ordered that Khan be shifted to a private hospital in Islamabad for medical examination and treatment following concerns over his health, particularly his eyesight.

The Government challenged the order and later filed a review petition.

Meanwhile, preparations were made to take Khan to Shifa International Hospital, but when he was moved from Adiala jail during the night of August 20-21, he was instead taken to the government-run Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS). The government said the change was made on security grounds.

Khan was examined at PIMS and the government said he was medically fit before he was returned to jail early on August 21. His sister was present during the examination, while his personal physician, who had been waiting at Shifa, was not allowed to participate. Khan's family and party colleagues objected, arguing that the government had failed to implement the Supreme Court's order, and subsequently sought contempt proceed-

ings against senior officials.

On September 16, however, the Supreme Court deferred the proceedings for three weeks after the Federal Constitutional Court summoned the records of cases concerning Khan's transfer to Shifa International Hospital, leading to a dispute over the two courts' respective jurisdiction. The unresolved dispute over the implementation of the Supreme Court's order has remained central to Khan's supporters' demand that he be treated at a private hospital by his own doctor.

Pakistan's Minister of State for Interior Tallal Chaudhry, who was part of the federal government delegation that held discussions with Khan's party members, said on Sunday that the talks failed primarily because the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government could not assure the Centre that it would cooperate in the fight against terrorism in the province.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a northwestern province, is governed by Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, and the party's planned long march is scheduled to begin from there. The province has long faced militant violence, particularly from the Pakistani Taliban, with militants operating across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and carrying out attacks.

Indian fishermen arrested by Sri Lankan navy for alleged poaching

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Colombo

The Sri Lanka Navy has arrested nine Indian fishermen and seized their trawler for allegedly poaching in its territorial waters, according to an official statement.

The fishermen were arrested on Saturday for having crossed the International Maritime Boundary Line in Sri Lankan waters south of Delft Island, Jaffna, the island nation's navy said in a statement. "During the operation, one Indian fishing trawler was seized, while nine Indian fishermen on board were taken into custody by SLNS Samudura," it said.

Those apprehended were



Representative image

taken to Kankesanthurai Harbour and will be handed to the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources for further legal proceedings.

The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel

even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering Sri Lankan territorial waters. The Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka, is a rich fishing ground for fishermen from both countries.

1,500 Myanmar nationals repatriated from Malaysia

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Yangon

Nearly 1,500 Myanmar nationals who were sent back from Malaysia arrived in the country's largest city on Sunday, despite warnings from the United Nations refugee agency and rights groups that conditions for return remain unsafe.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi on Feb. 1, 2021, triggering widespread opposition and plunging large parts of the country into conflict. The returnees, including 86 women, have been convicted of staying illegally and other immigra-

tion violations in Malaysia, according to reports from Myanmar state media. They were transported from Malaysia aboard two navy warships and a hospital ship last Tuesday. They arrived in southern Yangon early Sunday, Nay Lin Tun, a regional government minister, said.

The returnees are among 5,000 Myanmar nationals who will be repatriated in stages from Malaysia, where 10,388 others were being held at immigration detention centres, according to Malaysia's Home Ministry.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees and rights groups have criticised the repatriation, saying security.

KCS Foundation honours 27 young achievers at YES Awards 2026 in Dubai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Dubai

The KCS Foundation, a Bihar-based organization working in education, youth empowerment and social development, celebrated International Literacy Day in Dubai by hosting the YES Awards 2026, honouring 27 outstanding students for their achievements and contributions to their communities.

Held on Sunday the event reflected UNESCO's 2026 theme, "Literacy for people, the planet and prosperity," and highlighted the role of education and literacy in developing responsible leaders and inclusive, knowledge-driven societies.

The 27 awardees, representing different countries and regions, were selected from a large number of international nominations following an evaluation by a distinguished jury. They were recognized for academic excellence, leadership, innovation, extracurricular achievements and sustained community impact. The event was organized under



the leadership of Dr. Pankaj Jha, Dr. Gautam Kumar, Dr. Menaka Shekhar and Dr. Sanjeet Jha, reaffirming the foundation's focus on education, literacy, youth empowerment and community service.

Among the distinguished guests were Prabhat Kumar Jha, Executive Director (Central Zone), National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC), and Pabitra Kumar Majumder, Consul (Education), Consulate General of India in Dubai. Speakers included Porush Jhunjhunwala of Banke International; Bhupesh Kaura and Anishaa Jaisinghani of Deloitte; Anil Jha of Maanawta Foundation; Siddhant Jhurani of Altrea Global; and motivational speaker Amar Choudhary.

Who are mystery men who stepped in to keep FlyDubai plane from crashing

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Jerusalem

Who are the mystery pilots who stepped in to stabilize the FlyDubai flight as it hurtled toward disaster?

As of Saturday, three days after the uniformed crew members rushed to the cockpit to steady the Israel-bound plane carrying 182 people after a sickening plummet, they still haven't been publicly identified. FlyDubai has called them only on-duty crew members traveling on the plane. It's not clear why the airline hasn't said more.

One passenger at the front of the plane, though,

described the men's actions in an interview with The Associated Press, giving one of the most detailed accounts of the yet-unsung heroes.

"This is one of the miracles," said Daniel Schlichter, who was seated in the second row. "That not in every flight they bring two extra pilots. In this case, they brought them because they should have brought the plane back from Tel Aviv to Dubai, and this is the only reason they were there." The practice is called deadheading.

The two men responded after screaming passengers discovered what was unfolding in the cockpit. They said

the copilot was attacking the captain over and over, and blood was everywhere. The captain, while badly wounded, managed to unlock the cockpit door.

After a passenger grabbed the copilot and pulled him out, and others grappled with the man to subdue him, Schlichter said that one of the traveling pilots practically hurdled the scrum to enter the cockpit and seize the controls.

"He was actually kind of jumping above the guys that were handling the terrorist, and he reached out to the pilot area and started to take over," Schlichter said. "And then the other guy, the other



pilot, joined in and they closed the door because they didn't want anybody else to be there." Schlichter, like others, wasn't sure where the two men had come from. But whoever the first one was, he moved very quickly.

"He acted really like a hero, taking over the plane and reacted like he understood exactly what is going on, and I think we owe him our lives not less than the other heroes that went on the flight," Schlichter said.

Once the two entered the cockpit and closed the door, Schlichter wasn't sure who did what inside. It took "quite a lot of minutes," maybe 10 or more, to stabilize the plane

after a descent so extreme that part of its rudder was torn away.

A mayday call was made as the men frantically sought a place to land. Meanwhile, some of the frightened and wary passengers wondered about them and whether they could be trusted. "After they managed to stabilize the airplane, actually they did not have any communication with us, and I have to tell you, I was worried about this," Schlichter said.

He worried about an even worse situation - that the men might be "hijacking the plane into maybe Iran, or I don't know where, because we're actually not too far."

India stays fourth as Asian Games offer lessons on road to 2036

AJAI MASAND ■ Nagoya

India's sporting ambitions took a sobering reality check at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games, where a campaign that promised another leap forward ended with a significant dip from the record-breaking haul in Hangzhou. India retained the fourth place in the overall standings but finished with 85 medals — 21 gold, 27 silver and 37 bronze — 21 medals and seven gold fewer than the 106-medal haul, achieved in the last edition. For a country chasing top-10 status by 2036 and a top-five ranking by 2047, the numbers are a reminder that sustaining progress will be far harder than producing a spectacular Games.

At the top, China remained untouchable, finishing with 341 medals, including 169 gold. Japan was second with 83 gold and 269 medals, while South Korea took third with 39 gold and 150 medals.

India's fourth-place finish still keeps it among Asia's leading sporting nations. That distinction matters. A fourth-

place finish means India remains firmly within the continent's leading sporting pack, but the gap at the top is still enormous. If it was not for a sensational gold rush in the last two days — when India won 11 gold medals — a top-five place was not possible. The biggest reason for the shortfall was the under-performance of two traditional medal pillars — shooting and athletics. Both arrived with high expectations but left India with fewer medals than in Hangzhou, exposing vulnerabilities in consistency, pressure management and preparation. Shooting suffered a sharp fall.

After producing a stunning seven gold, nine silver and six bronze medals last time, India's 30-member team returned from Japan with 15 medals — three gold, eight silver and four bronze.

The campaign began with missed opportunities and faltering favourites. Double Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker endured a disappointing Games as India's women drew a blank in the 10m air



Athletes from India march into the arena during the closing ceremony for the Asian Games in Nagoya, Japan on Sunday

pistol. The men's 10m air pistol team of Kamaljeet, Aakash Bhardwaj and Kedarling Uchaganve also failed to make an impact, deepening concerns in an event in which India has traditionally been a strong medal contender.

The breakthrough finally came in the 10m air pistol mixed team event, where

Suruchi Singh and Kamaljeet won gold. But the shooter who transformed the mood in the camp was Neeru Dhandu. The 27-year-old became the first Indian woman to win an individual Asian Games gold in trap shooting. She added a silver in the women's team event and another gold in the mixed team competition with Kynan Chenai.

Yet Neeru's brilliance could not mask the broader concerns. Several Indian shooters faltered after promising starts, particularly against China and South Korea, surrendering winning positions at crucial moments.

The pattern underlined the need for greater mental conditioning and an ability to close out high-pressure com-

petitions. Athletics provided another major disappointment. India lost one of its biggest gold-medal prospects even before the competition began when javelin ace Neeraj Chopra withdrew with injury. The problems extended beyond the javelin.

Tajinderpal Singh Toor could not complete a hat-trick of Asian Games golds, while long jumper Murali Sreeshankar and high jumper Sarvesh Kushare also settled for silver. Their performances showed India was competitive, but once again the gap between being in contention and finishing on top proved costly. Injuries added to the setbacks as Jyothi Yarraji withdrew from the women's 100m hurdles before her opening heat after experiencing knee pain and discomfort during warm-up. Avinash Sable, returning from a serious knee injury, finished fourth in the men's 3000m steeplechase.

The women's 4x400m relay quartet of Kiran Pahal, M Poovamma, Prachi Choudhary and Vithya Ramraj supplied athletics' lone gold,

but the discipline remained well short of its Hangzhou output, where India had won six gold. The disappointments were made more frustrating by uneven preparations.

Accommodation issues, the absence of a dedicated Games village and persistent transport problems disrupted routines. Long journeys to venues, delayed buses and reduced recovery time added to the burden. They do not fully explain the medal shortfall, but they exposed an athlete-support system here.

And yet Aichi-Nagoya also offered something equally important: evidence that India's sporting base is broadening. Archery provided one of the clearest breakthroughs. Teenager Kumkum Mohod became the first Indian to win the individual recurve gold, capping a landmark campaign in a discipline where India has historically struggled to match its success in compound archery.

India returned with five gold, two silver and two bronze medals in archery, matching its overall medal

tally from Hangzhou.

More significantly, recurve archers won medals in all five events — two gold, two silver and a bronze — signalling a serious challenge to South Korea's long-standing dominance.

Wrestling provided six medals, including two golds. What was heartening that India wrestlers competed without fear, and did not care for reputations as Sujet Kalkal and Aman Sehrawat defeated Olympic and World Champions on their way to gold. Greco Roman style exponents Nitesh Siwach and Sunil Kumar also delivered, adding to wrestling's overall tremendous show. Tennis was a huge disappointment as Indian players returned empty-handed for first time in 40 years. Golf, though, delivered a first. Pranavi Urs became the first Indian woman to win an individual Asian Games gold, while women's team of Pranavi, Aditi Ashok and Diksha Dagar won silver, giving India its first women's team golf medal at Games. (PTI)

Target was to win gold and qualify Olympics: Harmanpreet Singh

PHILEM DIPAK SINGH ■ Kakamigahara (Japan)

India's men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh says his players had the confidence to shrug off the World Cup disappointment and win the Asian Games title and qualify for the 2028 Olympics as they "always dominate in Asia".

Harmanpreet struck a brace as India thrashed Malaysia 5-1 in the final on Saturday to clinch the men's hockey gold for the second time in a row.

"The final match was a big opportunity for everybody. There are some players who are representing (India) for the first time in Asian Games, and some guys representing four times, three times, two times. "We knew we are here for the gold and to qualify for the Olympics. The target was gold," Harmanpreet said.

The build-up to the Asian Games was not the best one, with the team finishing a disappointing ninth in the World Cup in Belgium and the Netherlands in August.

"The whole year was actu-



ally very, very tough for us because we had so many tournaments. The World Cup wasn't that good for us, but we know that we always dominate in Asia. We are here to defend the title."

Harmanpreet gave India the lead in the 11th minute from a penalty corner and also scored the last goal in the 57th minute, that too from a penalty corner.

"That's a responsibility. When you get the opportunity you just need to finish it with the goal. And that is in my mind during the match," said Harmanpreet who became the first Indian to lead the

team in the back-to-back Asian Games gold.

"Overall we played well. We got so many opportunities. Especially defence-wise. We played very well that's why we got the result."

Asked how he started playing hockey, Harmanpreet said, "It was not a plan. When I was in school, there were plenty of sports to choose from. I didn't want to play hockey, but hockey chose me. And that's how my journey started."

Goalkeeper Mohith Shashikumar said the team will prepare for the 2028 Games with all its might.

"It's a dream of every athlete to play in the Olympics. Now the preparation will start, and we will prepare with all our might. We hope we get a medal in LA," he said.

"There were up and downs in the tournament. We were focussing on winning the gold medal. In spite of the ups and downs, we gave our 100 per cent in every match."

He watched India winning a bronze medal in the 2024 Paris Olympics on television, and was motivated to make it to the senior team.

"We were there in our training camp in Bangalore. It was a very great moment for us we got motivation. That motivation helped me to be part of the main team," said the 24-year-old.

On being one of the youngest players in the team, he said, "Playing with my idols, I have no words to explain it. They have played so many games, and there are so many medals. "Playing with them is a great privilege for me. I was so excited to play amongst them." (PTI)

Anahat admits defeat took time to get over, eyes Olympic

HIMANK NEGI ■ New Delhi

Anahat Singh knew winning the Asian Games gold wasn't "very realistic" but coming within one victory of it left the Indian squash star both disappointed and encouraged as she sets her sights on qualifying for the 2028 Olympics.

Anahat became the first Indian woman to reach the final of the individual event at the Asian Games. However, she lost to World No. 5 Malaysian Sivasangari Subramaniam to settle for a historic silver.

A victory would also have earned the 18-year-old direct qualification for the 2028 Olympics, but she is now looking to climb the PSA rankings and secure her place at the Los Angeles Games.

"I was definitely quite disappointed. It took me a few days to get happy again or slightly get higher up. It doesn't feel great to lose out in the final, especially when you come so close after you win a big match," Anahat told PTI on her return from.

"I'm just going to try to look at the positive and try to see it as a fact that there's a lot for me to learn. And if I'm able to do this against the top players, there's a lot of good things out of it as well." Anahat had gone into the Games with the goal of winning gold but knew that was



Asian Games 2026 medallist squash player Anahat Singh poses for photographers upon her arrival at IGI Airport in New Delhi on Sunday

a difficult proposition given the quality of the field. "My first step was possibly trying to win the Asian Games gold. I knew that wasn't very realistic, but of course I wanted to give it my all."

"I had to have a backup plan, which meant trying to make it through the rankings, which is what I'm going to try to do now. I'm going to spend the next 18 months trying to play as many tournaments as I can and do well in them so I can make my way up the rankings and secure myself a spot for the Olympics."

With direct qualification slipping away, Anahat has now turned her atten-

tion to the PSA rankings.

"I had to have a backup plan, which meant trying to make it through the rankings, which is what I'm going to try to do now. I'm going to spend the next 18 months trying to play as many tournaments as I can and do well in them so I can make my way up the rankings and secure myself a spot for the Olympics."

The Asian Games campaign also tested Anahat physically and mentally as she competed in both the individual and team events over two weeks.

"Playing such tough matches continuously over and over for two weeks is not easy. Team events are a lot more pressure than playing in an individual. The whole nation, your whole team, coaches, everyone wanting you to win and you're playing not just for yourself."

"I've never ever played continuous squash for this long. I'm just going to try to recover and have a tournament in less than a week. So I'm just going to focus on that," she said.

Anahat and Abhay Singh won silver medals in the individual events, while the Indian women's and men's teams returned with bronze medals.

Indian women's squash team coach Surbhi Misra was pleased with the campaign but felt the team events could have produced better results. (PTI)

India-Pakistan cricket game and hockey matches most viewed: OCA



PHILEM DIPAK SINGH ■ Nagoya

The men's cricket final and hockey semifinal between India and Pakistan were the most viewed matches in the Asian Games history, the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) said on Sunday and cited 212 records as proof that athletes were provided "best environment" in the Aichi-Nagoya edition.

India beat Pakistan 4-3 in the men's hockey semifinal at the Gifu Prefectural Green Stadium at Kakamigahara. India went on to win the gold medal after beating Malaysia in the final.

India also beat Pakistan by 19 runs in the men's cricket final.

"The broadcast had the biggest viewership ever for the Games. Thanks to two big matches: yesterday, the Pakistan-India cricket match was the most-viewed match, and the day before (on Thursday), the Pakistan-India hockey match was the most-viewed match ever in the Games' history," OCA Coordination Committee President Tayyab Ikram said at a press conference.

He did not give figures regarding the viewership. He also did not specify which between the two matches had more viewership.

"For the very first time, the OCA demonstrated a safeguarding principle in these Games. From all aspects it was a safe Games — for athletes, for Asian federations and for the National Olympic Committees."

Logistical chaos due to the cost-cutting decision to scrap a traditional Athletes' Village, cramped lodgings and transport hassles marred the Games, inviting sharp criticism. (PTI)

India played good game: Ancelotti hails Blue Tigers after Brazil win

TAPAN MOHANTA ■ Kolkata

Brazil head coach Carlo Ancelotti appreciated India's organised efforts in defence and counter-attack, saying the Blue Tigers gave his side some difficult moments despite going down 0-4 in the historic friendly at the Salt Lake Stadium. India held their own against a star-filled Brazilian side for the first 25 minutes before the five-time world champions found their footing to motor away.

"They tried to play their game. They defended, they were organised, they tried to play counter-attack. I think they played a good game," the 67-year-old celebrated coach said after the match.

"We had difficulty opening the score, but the moment we opened the score with Estevao, we had more opportunities to



better control the game.

"It was a good experience. We gave a minute to the players that maybe was good for them to have a test. I think it was a good game, entertaining, with good intensity. India did its part to try to defend, play counter-attack," he added. The wide gulf between the teams was evident as Brazil enjoyed 65.8 per cent

of possession against India's 34.2 per cent of ball time.

The South Americans had 20 attempts to score against India's nine, and registered seven on target while India managed three. The visitors also had edge in attacking touches inside box, 29-12, and completed 156 successful passes in final third compared to India's 29. (PTI)

India series gave clues to team's ability: WI coach

HARDIK SHARMA ■ Mullanpur

Head coach Daren Sammy said the West Indies will take valuable learnings from the ODI series against India, from which he has gathered enough clues about his team's ability to measure up against the top teams in the circuit. Riding on Shai Hope's blistering 162 not out, Windies completed the record chase of 352, denying India of a series sweep here on Saturday. India won the series 2-1. "We came here knowing the quality that India has, and to measure ourselves against a quality team like that. We've shown that when we do things consistently well for long enough, we could match the number one team in the world. So, we'll take a lot of learning from this belief as well," Sammy said in the post-match press conference.

Sammy praised skipper Shai Hope for his astounding



Shai Hope

FILE PHOTO

hundred, which came after keeping wickets for the entire Indian innings.

"Shai Hope played an amazing innings today, and a well-deserved victory. The skipper is a bit tired. He was in the field for 98.2 overs, so I had to fill in for him (for press meet). But what a player, you know, literally took the team on his back today with the bat like he's done so many times before," Sammy said.

"Jewel Andrew suffered some pain in his finger, and the skipper stepped up. Not

anything new to him, but just to keep for 50 overs and then put on your pads and go and play an innings like that, that was special. He is a class player. "I don't think he gets enough credit for what he's done for the West Indies, how he's played, and the commitment he's given to us. He leads by his performance," he added.

Sammy acknowledged that the severe physical and tactical demands were placed on his bowling attack throughout the three matches

because the pitches offered hardly any assistance. "To be fair, it's hard to judge the bowlers in this series. It's been hard work for them. The pitches had absolutely nothing to offer. The margin for error was well, actually, they had no margin for error," Sammy noted.

But Sammy was delighted to see the bowlers keeping India to a par score despite the unhelpful conditions and pitch. "We did see areas where Jayden Seales bowled today, creating chances, and that's what you have to do as a bowling unit. No matter what the surface brings or allows you to do, you try to put more balls in the right areas. "I thought in the powerplay, Jayden Seales and Matthew Forde, backed up by Alzarri were really good. It put enough pressure on India to help us restrict them to a par score on that surface," he explained. (PTI)

More we play, better it's for us: Coach Jamil seeks more high-profile matches

TAPAN MOHANTA ■ Kolkata

Despite the lopsided defeat, head coach Khalid Jamil saw enough positives in India's performance against five-time world champions Brazil and hoped his side will feature in many such high-profile games in future so that the team can get better.

Brazil, currently sixth in the FIFA Men's World Ranking, trounced India, 138th in list, 4-0 here on Saturday. "Definitely, their quality is very high. Their coach is also good and they have players who have played at different clubs," Jamil said at the post-match interaction. "To manage them is very difficult, not an easy job. It doesn't happen in a day; it takes time. Pressure is everywhere. But the more we play, the better.

"The next game is also very good for us, so we have to continue with that," he said, looking



ahead to Tuesday's clash against two-time former world champions Uruguay.

The Selecao are also the highest-ranked opponents India have faced since the official rankings were introduced in August 1993, surpassing ninth-ranked Russia in 1995 and Japan in 1998.

Therefore Jamil was impressed by the performance, but admitted that India needed to be stronger defensively.

Want to play our WC 11 from next series: Gill

HARDIK SHARMA ■ Mullanpur

Wary of not being able to field a settled eleven because of injuries and tight scheduling, India skipper Shubman Gill wanted to give regular opportunities to the players who will potentially make it to the ICC World Cup 2027 in the upcoming ODI matches.

India fielded largely second string players against the West Indies in the just-concluded three-match series, which India won 2-1.

But in the absence of regulars like Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, who were away at the Asian Games, Indian bowling lacked the desired sting.

Additionally, pacer Prasidh Krishna joined the growing injury list during the second ODI at Guwahati.

"I honestly think there is not that much time to experiment, the combination that we want to play, hopefully, we get all the players that are available from the next series, and the combination that we would like to play in the



World Cup, we want to start playing with that combination," Gill said in the post-match press conference, after his side went down by five wickets.

Gill found the rather frequent absence of frontline bowlers from the first eleven frustrating, considering the limited number of ODIs ahead of the ICC showpiece. "I would say it's been unfortunate, you know, with the injuries and with the scheduling with the other matches being around, it's been a little bit unfortunate that we have been not able to play the bowling lineup that we would like to," he said. (PTI)