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Sonia voter-roll row probe revived

The case returns to the magistrate after Sessions court faults earlier order for gaps in law and reasoning

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A Delhi Sessions court on Monday set aside a magistrate's order refusing to probe the allegation that the name of Congress leader Sonia Gandhi was included in the electoral roll three years before she acquired Indian citizenship in 1983. A complaint filed by advocate Vikas Tripathi alleges Sonia Gandhi was an Italian citizen when her name appeared and she voted in 1980 election. Special judge Vishal Gogne was hearing a revision plea against the magisterial court's order on Tripathi's complaint who is also the vice president of the Central Delhi Court Bar Association of the Rouse Avenue courts.

Pronouncing substantive portions of the order orally, the judge said, "An order of the court must maintain fidelity towards the law, and not flirt



Former vice president Hamid Ansari, former PM Dr. Manmohan Singh and Congress leader Sonia Gandhi at a memorial for former PM Indira Gandhi in New Delhi on October 31, 2009

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

with facts. This court finds itself unravelling the impugned order rendered by the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (ACJM) on this yardstick."

The judge said Tripathi's complaint was that Gandhi's name was unlawfully entered in the electoral roll of New Delhi Parliamentary Constituency in 1980, whereas she attained Indian citizenship only in 1983, and although the name was deleted in 1982, it was re-entered in 1983. "It alleged that even this re-entry was prior to the acquisition of citizenship by her on April 30, 1983," the judge noted.

He said the magistrate's order dismissed the complaint, saying that it was based on bald assertions, unaccompanied by essential particulars of cheating and forgery, and based on a photocopy of the photocopy of the uncertified electoral roll in 1980.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Chargesheet in Ram temple theft row by September 25



An Ayodhya Ram Temple donation theft case accused Avinash Shukla being escorted by police during the investigation in the case in Ayodhya on July 3, 2026

PTI

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi/Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh Government told the Supreme Court on Monday that investigators have identified 105 instances of unauthorised removal of currency from donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, all captured on CCTV.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the State, presented a status report of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) examining the alleged misappropriation of devotees' offerings before a Bench led by

Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant.

Mehta told the court that the investigation was largely complete. He mentioned that the SIT would submit the chargesheet to the jurisdictional Additional Sessions Judge by September 25.

Since the 90-day statutory period beginning with the first arrest ends on that date, the accused would be entitled to default bail if the chargesheet is not filed.

The Bench stated that the report examined the role of each person alleged to be involved.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

RAM TEMPLE CEO TAKES CHARGE

Ayodhya: Air Marshal Jeetendra Mishra (retired) on Monday formally took charge as the first chief executive officer (CEO) of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, which manages the Ram temple here. Mishra offered prayers at the Ram temple on Monday morning before reaching his newly constructed office on the temple premises to assume charge.

(PTI)

The Bystander



PIONEER IN SHORT

CONGRESS BLASTS ECI'S SIR PROCESS

The Congress has launched a scathing attack on the Election Commission of India's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, terming it a "Frankenstein monster" and a "Method Of Disenfranchising Indians." The outrage follows over 33 lakh notices issued in Delhi due to discrepancies, notably where details failed to match the 2002 electoral rolls. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leader Jairam Ramesh criticised SIR, highlighting that over 5.4 crore citizens nationwide face potential voter roll deletion. They emphasised that marginalised groups, including slum dwellers and women, bear the brunt, whereas the ECI's focus on "VIP electors" exposes a lack of transparency.

MEDIA OUTLETS SUE TRUMP GOVERNMENT

CNN, MS NOW, and Politico filed a joint lawsuit against President Donald Trump's administration on Monday after their reporters were barred from the White House and had their entry badges disabled over the weekend. The outlets termed the selective ban a "blatant violation" of the First Amendment and viewpoint discrimination, arguing that the administration targeted them solely over reporting the president labels "fake news." The legal challenge follows a weekend escalation in which reporters found themselves locked out and CNN was subsequently removed from its press pool duties. While the White House did not immediately comment, Trump defended the move on social media, asserting he supports a free press but is fighting against "corrupt" and "fake news." The White House Correspondents' Association and press freedom advocates condemned the ban.

XI, TRUMP SUMMIT FROM SEPTEMBER 23



Donald J Trump and Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on May 14

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PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit Washington from September 23 to 25 for summit talks with his US counterpart Donald Trump, marking their second meeting in four months, a development Beijing has described as a "milestone of historic significance". Xi will visit the US for three days at the invitation of Trump, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun announced at a media briefing here on Monday.

During his talks with Trump, Xi will discuss key issues concerning China-US relations, as well as world peace and development, Guo said.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

IIT-Bombay removes dean after student suicide triggers protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

The Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay (IIT-Bombay) on Monday removed Suryanarayana Doolla as the dean of Administrative Affairs following protests by students and political activists over the suicide of a 22-year-old student, which led to a case of abetment and caste discrimination registered against him by the Mumbai Police.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Demonstrators stage a candlelight protest at IIT Bombay to pay tribute to the suicide victims of the college on Monday

PTI

Natural farming, horticulture Rewa's strength: CM Yadav

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav on Monday said agriculture, particularly horticulture and natural farming, has emerged as a major strength of Rewa district, with farmers increasingly adopting crop diversification and modern cultivation practices.

Addressing farmers at the Balam Krishi Mahotsav in Rewa through video conferencing from



PIONEER PHOTO

the state secretariat, Yadav said agriculture remains the backbone of the dis-

trict's economy. He said farmers have recorded substantial production of paddy, wheat, gram, lentils, linseed and soybean, strengthening the local agricultural economy. The Balam Krishi Mahotsav is being organised across Madhya Pradesh as part of the state's 2026 Farmer Welfare Year, with an emphasis on modern technology, natural farming and diversification.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Viral video of Bihar minors' assault, groping triggers outrage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Patna

Bihar was on the boil on Monday after a video of assault and groping of two minors by a group of men in Bihar went viral online. The incident, which was recorded on video by one of the assaulters, reportedly happened on the evening of September 19, Saturday in Jamui district.

The video shows two minors — a boy and a girl — allegedly being harassed and groped by a group of people along the Jamui-Lakhisarai road, even as police said three of the alleged perpetrators had been arrested.

"Although the incident is two days old, no complaint was made before us by the boy or the girl till Sunday. Today, when the video went viral, we traced the victims with the help of the registration number of a vehicle visible in



Representative image

ISTOCK

the clip," said Jamui SP Bishwajeet Dayal. An FIR has been lodged under the POCSO Act and relevant sections of the BNS, and steps have been initiated for the "takedown of the video", he added.

The 15-year-olds were riding a scooter home after coaching classes, when they were confronted by a group of men who asked if their families

knew they were together. The men then slapped the boy and dragged him by his collar. The girl was assaulted, groped, lifted by her neck and near her private parts, and dragged along the road. The video shows the girl pleading with folded hands, promising they wouldn't return if they let her go.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Keep faith, drop cruelty: Delhi urges temples to swap live jumbos for mechanical ones

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Taking a cue from Telangana, Karnataka and Kerala to protect elephants and promote public safety, the Delhi Forest Department has advised religious institutions, temple committees and event organisers to use mechanical jumbos instead of live pachyderms during ceremonies and festivals.

"It is noticed that live captive elephants are sometimes brought from different regions for religious and cultural events under the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. However, public safety concerns, animal welfare, and logistical challenges associated with the use of live elephants in crowded urban settings like Delhi cannot be overstated. It is therefore

advised that religious institutions, temple committees, event organizers, and devotees consider the use of mechanical or robotic elephants during ceremonies and festivals instead of live captive elephants," Dr P Viswakannan, Chief Wild Life Warden said in the advisory. PETA India welcomed the advisory, calling it a step towards protecting elephants and devotees.

Mechanical elephants, made from rubber, fibre, metal, mesh, foam, and steel, are motor operated and mimic the movements of a real elephant, including head shake, lifting the trunk, ear and eye movement, tail swishing, and even spraying water. It can be easily operated for processions and rituals, providing a humane alternative for traditional ceremonies.



Ornate elephant walking in the hindu temple, man in ritual clothing and musical instruments walking in front of the animal in Kerala. Representative image

ISTOCK

Reacting to the advisory, Vikram Chandravanshi, senior policy and legal advisor at PETA India said the Delhi Forest Department's advisory is a compassionate and forward-thinking step that protects both elephants and devotees, and PETA India applauds it.

In June 2026, the Telangana Forest Department welcomed its own robotic elephant and recommended it for religious processions and film shoots.

Similarly, in Karnataka in September 2024, the Muzrai (endowments) Department welcomed the use of mechanical elephants in Government temples.

In 2007, following a report submitted by PETA, the Maharashtra Government announced that elephants would no longer be allowed in Mumbai over concerns

regarding cruelty to them, the threat to human life and property from distressed elephants, and the possible transmission of tuberculosis and anthrax to humans.

Shree Krishna temple in Thrissur, Pournamikaavu temple in Thiruvananthapuram have also starting using mechanical elephants.

Kerala Tourism has introduced a mechanical elephant safari at the Thamboomozhi Butterfly Park.

According to PETA, the use of elephants for tourist rides at Amer Fort has fallen around by 70 per cent over the past seven years. According to figures compiled by the Heritage Animal Task Force, captive elephants killed 526 people in Kerala in a 15-year period.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Atal Bihari Vajpayee remains an enduring symbol of democratic values: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav on Monday described former Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee as one of the most respected figures of Indian politics whose commitment to democracy, good governance, nationalism and public service continues to inspire generations.

The Chief Minister was addressing a gathering after unveiling a statue of Vajpayee at a private establishment in the Govindpura Industrial Area. He also inaugurated the establishment's monogram and later inspected digital printing machines installed on the premises.

Paying tribute to Vajpayee, Yadav said his political journey was marked by integrity, humility and an unwavering commitment to the nation. He said Vajpayee had demonstrated through his conduct how political leaders should discharge their responsibilities both while in government and in opposition.

"Governments come and go, but the nation and democracy must endure," Yadav said while recalling Vajpayee's approach to parliamentary democracy. He said the message remained relevant even today and offered important lessons to younger generations about political dignity, democratic values and adherence to principles.

The Chief Minister said Vajpayee devoted his entire



life to serving the country and its people, with public welfare and political integrity remaining central to his personality. He said integrity in politics, firmness in principles and humility in conduct were among the qualities that distinguished Vajpayee in public life.

Yadav also recalled Vajpayee's role during difficult phases in the country's political history. He said that during the Emergency, Vajpayee spent several months in prison while standing for democratic values.

The Chief Minister said India's political history had repeatedly shown that political parties could rise above ideological differences whenever the nation faced a major challenge. Referring to the Bangladesh Liberation War, he said Vajpayee had extended support to the government led

by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in matters concerning the country's interests.

Yadav said following Vajpayee's ideals of nationalism, good governance and democratic conduct would be the most meaningful tribute to him. He added that as India moves forward on the path of development under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, every citizen has a responsibility to imbibe the values associated with Vajpayee's public life.

The Chief Minister thanked establishment owner Triloki Agrawal for installing Vajpayee's statue and said such initiatives help connect society, particularly younger generations, with the lives and contributions of national leaders.

Former Governor Kaptan Singh Solanki, who was also present, said Vajpayee always

placed the nation above personal or political considerations. He said the statue should not be seen merely as a memorial but as a source of inspiration for citizens to fulfil their responsibilities towards the country.

Solanki also recalled infrastructure initiatives associated with Vajpayee's tenure, including the Golden Quadrilateral highway project and expansion of rural road connectivity. He said Vajpayee's emphasis on connectivity and development reflected his broader vision for national progress.

Madhya Pradesh Hindi Granth Akademi Chairman Ashok Kadel, former MLA Shishupal Singh Yadav, MSME Commissioner Kumar Purushottam, Ajay Kumar Soni and a large number of citizens were present at the programme.

Special bench to hear Neha Pachisia case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jabalpur

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has directed that the petition filed by suspended former Katni CSP Neha Pachisia seeking quashing of an FIR against her be placed before the appropriate bench dealing with cases under the Prevention of Corruption Act. The matter is now scheduled to be heard on September 22.

The petition was listed before Justice Himanshu Joshi on Monday. During the hearing, the state government sought transfer of the case to the appropriate roster bench, arguing that provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act had been included in the FIR and, therefore, the matter should be heard by the bench assigned such cases.

Pachisia's counsel opposed the request, contending that the provisions of the anti-corruption law had been added after an earlier hearing and that the petition should continue before the bench where it was already listed.

After hearing both sides and examining the case diary, the High Court decided to place the matter before the bench having the appropriate roster for Prevention of Corruption Act cases.

Pachisia has approached the High Court seeking quashing of the FIR and has also sought interim relief. Her lawyers have denied her alleged involvement in the offences and argued that there is no direct evidence establishing her role.



Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia inspects an under-construction elevated road phase-2 project, in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh on Monday. Pioneer photo

RTO inspector's body found in Bhopal house

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

A gruesome suspected murder-suicide has shocked Bhopal after the body of a 45-year-old RTO inspector from Datia was found inside a house in Lake Pearl Colony on Monday morning, with multiple injuries on her head and a blood-stained hammer lying nearby.

The deceased, identified as **Meenakshi Gokhale**, had arrived at the house around 7 pm on Sunday along with her caretaker Kritika and her three-year-old daughter. The house belonged to **Pawan Kumar Dwivedi, 48**, with whom, according to police, Meenakshi was in a relationship.

The case took a chilling turn when Pawan was also found dead, hanging from a tree barely 20 metres from the house.

According to Khajuri Sadak police, Kritika had slept in an inner room with Meenakshi's daughter during the night. When she woke up around 7 am on Monday, she allegedly found Meenakshi lying dead in the front room and immediately alerted police.

Investigators suspect that a dispute may have broken out between Meenakshi and Pawan late Sunday night. Police said preliminary information suggests that Pawan wanted to marry Meenakshi, while she was allegedly unwilling to do so. Investigators are examining whether the disagreement escalated into violence.

Police suspect Meenakshi was attacked with a hammer in the courtyard. Her body was then allegedly dragged into the first room of the house, after which the door was locked from outside. Pawan is suspected to have subsequently gone to a

nearby tree and died by suicide.

A blood-stained hammer recovered close to Meenakshi's body has been seized for forensic examination. Police also recovered a bank passbook from Pawan's pocket.

Additional DCP Sanjeev Pathak said preliminary investigation has revealed that Meenakshi had separated from her husband around two years ago.

Police said Pawan was originally from Sidhi district and had earlier run coaching classes in Indore. Investigators have learnt that he met Meenakshi in Indore when she was unmarried and preparing for competitive examinations. Meenakshi's father, Nandram Gokhale, told police that the family knew Pawan and wanted to speak to his family in connection with an inter-caste marriage.



Displaced families affected by the Ken-Betwa, Majhgawan and Runjh projects stage a symbolic 'Chita Andolan' demanding proper compensation and rehabilitation after their houses submerged due to rising water level of Majhgawan Dam in Ajaygarh Tehsil, Panna district Madhya Pradesh on Monday. Pioneer photo

Man arrested for shooting friend dead on moving bike

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Police have arrested a man accused of shooting his friend dead at point-blank range while riding pillion on a moving motorcycle in Housing Board Colony under Nishatpura police station limits.

The accused, identified as Aleem alias Allu, was arrested from the Gandhinagar area following a tip-off. Police also recovered the country-made pistol allegedly used in the murder.

According to police, the incident took place on Sunday morning when 24-year-old Ikhlash Tashi set out with Aleem and another friend to go fishing. The third youth was riding the motorcycle, Tashi was seated in the middle, while Aleem was sitting at the rear.

During the ride, Aleem allegedly pulled out a country-made pistol, pressed it against Tashi's temple and fired. Tashi died on the spot.

Police said that after the shooting, Aleem allegedly threatened the friend who was riding the motorcycle and travelled with him up to

Sindhi Colony before fleeing.

A murder case was subsequently registered and a search was launched for the accused.

Late on Monday night, police received information that Aleem was present in the Gandhinagar police station area. A team surrounded the location and arrested him.

DCP Zone-4 Aditya Kant Shukla said the weapon used in the crime had been recovered from the accused. During questioning, Aleem allegedly told police that he had purchased the pistol from Vidisha a few days before the incident.

Police are now questioning him to establish the motive behind the killing. Investigators said the accused has been giving misleading and inconsistent answers during interrogation.

The role of the third youth, who was riding the motorcycle at the time of the shooting, is also under scrutiny. Police are trying to ascertain whether he had any prior knowledge of the attack or played any role in the murder.

Agriculture officer suspended in Sehore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has ordered action against a Union Agriculture Ministry official following serious bribery allegations during an inspection in Sehore district.

Marketing officer Anurag has been suspended with immediate effect after complaints alleged that he demanded money from warehouse operators in return for releasing subsidy payments.

According to the complaint, the officer allegedly sought Rs 1 lakh from Shivay Warehouse and Rs 60,000 from Shri Krishna Warehouse. The matter was brought to the notice of the Union Agriculture Minister, who directed immediate action after taking cognisance of the allegations. Following the minister's instructions, the official was placed under suspension with immediate effect. Sources said further departmental action and a formal inquiry into the allegations may follow. The case relates to alleged demands for illegal gratification during official inspection and subsidy-related processing in Sehore district by the ministry concerned.

Civic body acts against illegal construction on fair land

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ujjain

The Municipal Corporation on Monday demolished an unauthorised construction on Simhashtha land along Lalpul Bridge Road as part of its ongoing drive to keep the designated fair area free from encroachments ahead of Simhashtha 2028.

According to civic officials, the illegal structure had been raised by Madhavanand Ashram without obtaining the required permission from the competent authority. After completing the prescribed inspection and procedural formalities, the corporation deployed two Poclain machines and JCBs to remove the construction.

Municipal Commissioner Abhilash Mishra said no unauthorised construction, encroachment or illegal use of land would be tolerated in the Simhashtha area. He said the land is crucial for arrangements related to the mega religious congregation and must remain protected from any form of encroachment.

The corporation is main-

taining strict surveillance across the Simhashtha zone and identifying illegal structures for action as per rules. Officials said permanent as well as temporary constructions raised without permission would face removal.

With a large number of devotees from across India and abroad expected to attend Simhashtha 2028, authorities require sufficient land for roads, ghats, parking facilities, traffic management and other essential infrastructure.

Civic officials said unauthorised construction could obstruct future development and crowd-management arrangements, making it necessary to keep the designated area clear well in advance.

The Municipal Corporation has reiterated that Simhashtha land is of major public importance and will not be allowed to be occupied illegally.

The demolition drive was carried out in the presence of Building Officer Rajkumar Rathore, Building Inspector Rajendra Rawat, members of the municipal removal squad and police personnel.

BMC seeks reply over lift breakdown

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The Bhopal Municipal Corporation has issued a notice to the lift engineer of Courtyard by Marriott after a hotel lift suddenly stopped and remained stuck for nearly 20 minutes on Sunday.

Municipal Commissioner Sanskriti Jain directed officials to inspect the lift and initiate action against those responsible. Acting on the directions, the civic body's electrical wing served a notice on lift engineer Anand Prakash Arora, seeking an explanation within one day.

According to the notice, the lift's Automatic Rescue Device failed to function during the incident. The lift had last been inspected by Arora on April 6, 2026, while the safety order report was issued on May 5. No subsequent inspection was found to have been conducted.

The corporation warned on Monday that Arora's licence could be cancelled if he fails to submit his explanation within the stipulated period.

Illegal gutka unit linked to over Rs 100 cr tax evasion

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The alleged tax evasion uncovered at an illegal tobacco and gutka manufacturing unit in Bhopal has crossed Rs 100 crore following a detailed assessment by the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI), officials said.

DGGI teams had conducted searches at the unit on Friday and Saturday. During the investigation, officials found that the operator had allegedly obtained permission for manual production of tobacco and gutka but later installed five machines to significantly increase output.

The factory was being operated from New Chouksey Nagar in the Navibagh area. Officials said its operator, Suresh Singh, allegedly admitted to tax evasion during questioning. He was subsequently arrested in connection with the case and sent to jail under non-bailable provisions.

During searches at the factory premises, investigators recovered around 65 to 70 sacks of areca nut, apart from a large quantity of raw

material and equipment allegedly used for manufacturing gutka and tobacco products.

Officials said action has been initiated under the applicable provisions governing tobacco products, which attract a high rate of central excise duty along with cess.

The DGGI had initially received information that the manufacturing unit was operating from Jagdishpur, formerly known as Islamnagar. Further verification, however, led investigators to New Chouksey Nagar in Navibagh, where the factory was eventually located. The premises were searched over two days and the alleged unauthorised manufacturing operation was detected. Officials also found deficiencies in documents relating to the unit's operations.

The factory allegedly manufactured and sold gutka and tobacco products under the brand name "Guru" and was being operated discreetly from the residential locality.

Initial estimates following the raids had pegged the alleged tax evasion at around Rs 30 crore.

Heavy rain likely across MP from September 24

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh is likely to witness another spell of heavy rain before the south-west monsoon begins its withdrawal, with the weather department issuing alerts for several districts from September 24.

The state has so far received an average of 33.9 inches of rainfall, which is around 91 per cent of its normal seasonal monsoon quota. Light to moderate showers are expected to continue at isolated places before rainfall activity intensifies later this week.

According to the weather department, a low-pressure area that was located over the North Andaman Sea and adjoining regions has

moved further ahead. The system is expected to strengthen over the central Bay of Bengal, first developing into a depression and subsequently into a deep depression.

The strengthening weather system is expected to influence conditions over Madhya Pradesh and trigger heavier rainfall from September 24.

Heavy rain warnings have been issued for Chhatarpur, Satna, Damoh, Dindori, Seoni, Chhindwara, P a n d h u r n a , Narmadapuram, Betul and Harda on September 24.

Meanwhile, several parts of Bhopal received heavy rain on Sunday night. Narmadapuram also witnessed strong winds followed by rainfall for nearly 45 minutes. At Phefartal, a tree fell on a 33-KV electric-

ity line, leading to a major power disruption. Around 40 per cent of the city reportedly remained without electricity for some time.

Strong winds and rain also damaged Ganesh pandals at Rasulia, Ashutosh Nagar and Maharana Pratap Market on Harda Road.

Despite widespread monsoon activity, rainfall distribution across Madhya Pradesh remains uneven. The eastern part of the state, including areas falling under Jabalpur, Rewa, Sagar and Shahdol divisions, has recorded a slight rainfall deficit. Districts including Balaghat, Chhindwara, Dindori, Damoh, Jabalpur, Katni, Narsinghpur, Pandhurna, Mandla, Rewa, Sagar and Seoni have received between 5 and 24 per cent less rainfall than

normal.

The deficit, however, has improved substantially over the past week and stood at around two per cent below normal by Sunday.

Several districts in western Madhya Pradesh have also received below-normal rainfall. These include Alirajpur, Ashoknagar, Betul, Dewas, Dhar, Harda, Indore, Jhabua, Khandwa, Mandasaur, Morena, Narmadapuram, Neemuch, Barwani, Raisen, Ratlam, Sehore, Shajapur, Ujjain and Vidisha.

On the other hand, districts including Anuppur, Chhatarpur, Maihar, Mauganj, Niwari, Panna, Satna, Shahdol, Sidhi, Singrauli, Tikamgarh, Umariya, Agar-Malwa, Bhind, Bhopal, Burhanpur, Datia, Guna, Gwalior, Khargone,

Rajgarh, Sheopur and Shivpuri have recorded rainfall above their respective normal levels.

September has historically brought intense rainfall spells to major cities of the state. Bhopal normally receives around seven inches of rain during the month, while Indore, Gwalior, Jabalpur and Ujjain have also witnessed exceptionally heavy September rainfall in previous years.

With another strong system developing over the Bay of Bengal, weather conditions are expected to remain active and rainfall may intensify across several parts of Madhya Pradesh from September 24.

The fresh spell could help further narrow rainfall deficits in districts that are still below their seasonal average.



Devotees offer three quintal laddoos as offerings to an idol of Lord Ganesha, popularly known as 'Bhopal Ke Raja' during Ganesh festival at Peepal Chowk in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo



Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel with the officials of the State Information Commission, led by Chief Information Commissioner Vijay Yadav during a meeting at Lok Bhavan in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

10 children hospitalised after eating toxic Ratanjot fruit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gwalior

At least 10 children from Sirsaud village in Murar block were hospitalised after allegedly consuming the toxic fruit of a Ratanjot plant on Sunday evening. Three more children from the village were also reportedly being brought to hospital for medical examination.

The children were returning home after attending a Bhagwat Katha and community feast when they spotted the plant near a field. Mistaking its fruit for dry fruit, they reportedly plucked it, shared it among themselves and ate it.

Soon after reaching home, the children began complaining of severe stomach pain, vomiting and diarrhoea, prompting their family members to rush them to the District Hospital in Murar.

They were subsequently referred to hospitals under the Jayarogya Hospital (JAH) group for specialised treatment. Eight children were admitted to the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) at Kamla Raja Hospital, while two, whose condition was stated to be more serious, were shifted to the ICU at the New JAH.

Those undergoing treatment in the PICU include Pooja, 11, Aarti, 9, Diksha, 12, Praveen, 10, Divya, 8, Sumit, 8, Gaurav, 5, and Tanu, 9. Hariom, 15, and Sejal, 14, were admitted to the ICU.

Senior paediatrician Prof

Dr Ghanshyam Das said Ratanjot fruit is poisonous and its consumption can cause toxicity, resulting in symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea and dehydration.

After receiving information about the incident, Dr Das reached Kamla Raja Hospital, reviewed the condition of the children and issued necessary instructions to the team treating them.

Family members, meanwhile, alleged that the children were referred from the Murar District Hospital without being provided adequate primary treatment. They claimed that immediate treatment before referral could have provided some relief to the children. No official response from the district hospital to the allegation was immediately available.

Doctors have advised parents, particularly in rural areas, to prevent children from consuming fruits or seeds from unidentified plants. They also urged families to seek immediate medical attention if a child develops symptoms after consuming any unknown plant product.

The incident has highlighted the risks posed by toxic wild plants growing near fields and village pathways, particularly when their fruits resemble edible nuts or seeds. Health experts say greater awareness among children and parents can help prevent similar accidental poisoning cases.

Sewa Sadan exceeds cataract surgery target

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Sewa Sadan Eye Hospital performed 113 free cataract surgeries to mark the 121st birth anniversary of Paramhans Sant Hirdaram Sahib ji, surpassing its annual target of at least 100 surgeries on the occasion.

Hospital officials said 16 of the beneficiaries were from Kalapipal, 13 from Narmadapuram, 22 from Begumganj and Gairatganj, 23 from Bina and Vidisha, and 39 from Shujalpur. The patients had earlier attended eye camps organised by Sewa Sadan, where they underwent examinations and were identified for cataract surgery wherever required.

Sant Siddh Bhau Ji, chairperson of the Sewa Sadan Eye Hospital Trust, and Trust Secretary Hero Gyanchandani said Paramhans Sant Hirdaram Sahib Ji had dedicated his life to the mission of

making society free from preventable blindness.

They said the hospital has been working towards this vision for the past 39 years by providing eye-care services, particularly to people from economically weaker sections.

Gyanchandani said patients from remote areas can visit Sewa Sadan's nearby Vision Centres for regular eye and vision examinations. Those requiring treatment can also avail themselves of free cataract surgery facilities.

Emphasising the importance of regular eye check-ups, he said weak eyesight can affect a person's ability to carry out routine activities. He also advised people who spend long hours using computers, laptops and other digital devices to pay particular attention to their eye health and undergo periodic examinations.



efforts to improve major city roads and ease traffic movement ahead of the religious congregation.

The stretch is among the city's important and busy connecting routes and is frequently used by local resi-

dents. With a substantial increase in the number of devotees and traffic expected during Simhashtha, civic authorities have considered widening of the road necessary to ensure smoother movement.

The proposed widening is expected to affect 272 buildings along the route. The Municipal Corporation has started measurement, survey and road-boundary marking work from Monday as part of the prescribed procedure.

On the directions of Municipal Commissioner Abhilash Mishra, Building Inspector Shivam Gupta and

Cleaner toilets planned at five railway stations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ujjain

Passengers at five railway stations under Western Railway's Ratlam Division will soon get cleaner and better-maintained toilet facilities, with Sulabh International entrusted with the operation and maintenance of pay-and-use toilets.

The facility will cover Nagda, Khachrod, Dewas, Ujjain and Vikram Nagar railway stations.

The initiative follows directions given by Railway Board Chairman and CEO Satish Kumar during his inspection of the Ratlam Division.

As part of the arrangement, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Hina V. Kevalramani and Honorary Controlling Officer Ranjit Kumar signed a memorandum of understanding with the Madhya Pradesh branch of Sulabh International Social Service Organisation, Bhopal.

Under the MoU, Sulabh International will be responsible for regular operation, upkeep and maintenance of the pay-and-use toilets at the five stations.

According to Ratlam Division PRO Mukesh Kumar, handing over the facilities to a specialised organisation is expected to

improve cleanliness, availability and maintenance standards.

Railway officials said well-maintained toilet facilities are an important passenger amenity, particularly for those waiting for trains or undertaking long-distance journeys.

The initiative is also expected to strengthen sanitation arrangements and improve overall cleanliness across the station premises.

The Ratlam Division said it continues to focus on upgrading passenger amenities, with cleanliness, convenience and better travel experience remaining key priorities.

BJP MLA's remarks on Garba entry stir debate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

BJP MLA from Huzur Rameshwar Sharma's remarks on the entry of Muslim youths into Garba events have triggered a political row in Madhya Pradesh, with Congress MLA Arif Masood and AIMIM leaders criticising his comments.

In a video that surfaced on Monday, Sharma said Muslim youths were welcome to attend Garba events but should not come alone and should bring women members of their families with them. He described Garba as an occasion for worship of Goddess Durga rather than merely an entertainment event and said those attending should respect its religious character.

Sharma also said those wishing to participate should be willing to adopt practices associated with the event, including applying a tilak and joining in Hindu religious observances. He urged Muslims who felt an affinity towards Sanatan traditions to embrace figures such as Ram and Krishna, while also referring to the shared Indian ancestry of different communities.

The BJP legislator further warned against attempts to misuse Garba events for what he described as "love jihad", saying young people would oppose such activities. "Love jihad" is a political term used by some Hindu groups and BJP leaders to allege that Muslim men enter relationships with Hindu women with the intention of religious conversion; the characterisation is contested and should not be treated as



an established description of individual interfaith relationships.

The remarks drew a sharp response from Bhopal Central Congress MLA Arif Masood, who described Sharma's language as objectionable and urged him to change the way he spoke. Masood accused the BJP MLA of disturbing the religious atmosphere by making divisive remarks.

AIMIM Madhya Pradesh president Mohsin Ali Khan also criticised Sharma's remarks, saying elected representatives should respect constitutional principles and arguing that such statements deepen divisions between communities. AIMIM's state unit identifies Khan as its Madhya Pradesh president.

The controversy comes amid a wider debate over participation in Garba and Dandiya celebrations ahead of Navratri. In Bhopal, the Hindu Utsav Samiti and Sanskriti Bachao Manch have separately urged organisers to preserve what they describe as the religious and traditional character of Garba events.

The organisations have called for the installation of Goddess Durga idols at venues, regular aarti and the playing of devotional music. They have also suggested measures including

Panchagavya consumption and worship of an image of Lord Vishnu's Varaha avatar before entry.

Hindu Utsav Samiti president Chandrashekhar Tiwari has maintained that Garba should not be treated merely as a commercial or entertainment programme and has sought stricter entry arrangements, including identity verification. The groups have also called for preventing incidents they describe as attempts at "love jihad".

Similar debates over Muslim participation, identity checks and religious requirements at Garba events have emerged in other states ahead of Navratri, including Maharashtra, where the VHP and some BJP leaders have advocated restrictions or conditions for entry. Others, including political leaders opposed to such restrictions, have argued that participation should not be determined solely on the basis of religion.

Sharma's remarks have now added a fresh political dimension to the debate in Madhya Pradesh as Navratri celebrations approach.

The controversy has also revived the wider debate over entry and security rules at Garba venues in Bhopal. During Navratri last year, the district administration had directed organisers to verify identity documents of visitors and ensure CCTV surveillance, fire-safety arrangements and other security measures at event venues.

Those directions were framed as administrative and safety requirements rather than religion-based entry conditions.

WCR GM inspects Sagar, Damoh stations and rail section

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jabalpur

West Central Railway General Manager Dilip Kumar Singh on Monday inspected Sagar and Damoh railway stations and carried out a rear-window inspection of the Katni Mudwara-Sagar railway section to review rail infrastructure, safety and operational arrangements.

Travelling in a special inspection coach, Singh examined the condition of railway tracks, signalling systems, bridges and culverts, overhead electrical equipment and other key safety-related infrastructure along the section.

During the inspection, he reviewed the progress of

maintenance and infrastructure works and directed officials to ensure strict compliance with prescribed safety standards. He also stressed that all ongoing works should maintain high quality and be completed within the stipulated timelines.

At Sagar railway station, the General Manager reviewed passenger amenities, cleanliness, operational arrangements and safety measures. He sought details from the officials concerned regarding various facilities available at the station and instructed them to accord the highest priority to passenger convenience.

Singh also met Sagar MP Lata Wankhede during the inspection and discussed issues related to station development, passenger

facilities and the railway requirements of the region.

The MP shared several suggestions concerning rail infrastructure and passenger amenities. She also accompanied the General Manager during a joint inspection of the station and various maintenance and infrastructure works being undertaken on the railway section.

Singh directed the officials concerned to examine the suggestions and take necessary action wherever required.

As part of the inspection, the General Manager also visited the road overbridge located between Sagar and Nariawali and reviewed the safety arrangements available at the site. He instructed railway officials to ensure

complete compliance with prescribed safety norms and operational guidelines.

The General Manager subsequently inspected Damoh railway station, where he reviewed the progress of development and construction works being carried out under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme.

He examined the ongoing works at the station and directed officials to ensure that the projects are executed with proper quality and safety standards and completed within the prescribed timeframe.

The inspection focused on strengthening passenger facilities, improving station infrastructure and ensuring that development works are carried out without compromising safety or opera-

tional efficiency.

Senior railway officers accompanied the General Manager during the inspection. These included the Principal Chief Operations Manager (PCOM), Chief Administrative Officer (Construction) (CAO/C), Chief Administrative Officer (Construction) (RSP) (CAO/C/RSP), Chief Bridge Engineer (CBE), Divisional Railway Manager, Jabalpur (DRM/JBP), and officials from other departments concerned.

Railway officials said the inspection was aimed at reviewing existing infrastructure and ongoing development works while ensuring that safety, maintenance and passenger convenience remain key priorities across the section.

Battle for symbol: SC sets urgent hearing on TMC row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi



The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to list for urgent hearing a plea by former West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee challenging the Election Commission of India's decision to freeze the Trinamool Congress' (TMC) name and party symbol amid a dispute between two rival factions of the TMC.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal mentioned the matter seeking urgent hearing before a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana.

"They issue a notification and in the middle of notification, they freeze the symbol. What is going on? We want urgent listing," Sibal submitted.

The ECI on Friday had allot-

ted separate names and symbols to the two rival factions following its interim decision a day earlier.

On Thursday, the ECI barred both groups from using the 'All India Trinamool Congress' name and reserved its symbol pending a substantive determination of the dispute.

In its interim order issued on Thursday night, the poll panel, after hearing leaders of the two factions led by Banerjee and Arup Roy, said

the matter requires substantive determination by the poll body under provisions of the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order 1968.

In her plea filed in the apex court, Banerjee has made the ECI and Ritabrata Banerjee, Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, as party respondents.

On September 18, Banerjee attacked the ECI over its decision to freeze the TMC's name and *Jora Ghash Phul* (twin flowers on grass) symbol, likening the loss of the party's identity to the pain of a mother losing her child and calling it a "black day" in the country's democratic history.

Banerjee had said she would not accept the interim arrangement as a settlement and vowed to fight till the end to reclaim the party's original identity and its flowers-and-grass symbol politically, democratically and legally.

Her statements came hours after the poll panel allotted her faction the name 'Mamata All India Trinamool Congress' and the 'Football Player' symbol for the October 6 bypolls to Nandigram and Rejinagar.

The rival faction led by Roy was allotted the name 'Democratic Trinamool Congress' and the 'Envelope' symbol.

Assembly bypolls to Nandigram in East Medinipur district and Rejinagar in Murshidabad district are scheduled for October 6, with vote counting on October 9.

The bypolls in West Bengal were necessitated as Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari won from both Nandigram and Bhabanipur, and chose to vacate Nandigram, while AJUP leader Humayun Kabir won from both Naoda and Rejinagar, and decided to give up the Rejinagar seat.

Delhi lawyers strike against 50% pre-deposit challan rule

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Lawyers on Monday abstained from work in all seven district courts in the national capital to protest amendments to the traffic challan system, particularly the requirement to deposit 50 per cent of the challan amount before approaching a court. The day-long strike followed a call given by the Coordination Committee of all district court Bar Associations, which had flagged concerns over the amended Rule 167 of the Central Motor Vehicle Rules, 1989.

During their protest, lawyers gathered in all district courts and raised slogans demanding that the Delhi "revoke the amendment.

Under the amended mechanism, a person issued a challan is required to either accept and pay it, or contest it through the prescribed portal before an authority specified by the state ". The challenge has to be filed within 45 days.

Lawyers have objected to the provision under which, if the challenge is rejected by the designated authority, the person can approach the competent court only after depositing 50 per cent of the challan amount. They have also questioned the role assigned to the Executive in deciding

a person's challenge before the matter can reach a court, contending that such determination involves a judicial function.

The lawyers said the mandatory pre-deposit could effectively burden a person who disputes the alleged traffic violation and may discourage them from seeking judicial redress.

They also raised concerns over the under which a challan would be treated as "deemed to have been accepted" if it is not contested before the specified authority within the prescribed period.



BJP WILL NOT ALLOW DIVIDE AND RULE IN UP: NABIN



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Meerut

BJP president Nitin Nabin on Monday accused the Congress and the Samajwadi Party of adopting "divide and rule" and said his party will not allow it to be implemented again in Uttar Pradesh "under any circumstances".

Addressing a conference of BJP's Shakti Kendra coordinators here, Nabin also described Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's 'Students Ki Goonj' programme as an "echo of lies", saying that "lies do not have a long life".

Sonia voter-roll row probe revived

"The sanctity of the electoral roll is an article of faith for every citizen in a parliamentary democracy. The mightiest in the land may only be a voter or citizen at par with others less powerful," the judge said.

"Any allegation of tampering with the electoral rolls, fraudulent inclusion of the name of a voter, inclusion of the name of a non-citizen, and possible use of false declarations or documents merits a reasoned order to determine whether allegations relating to cheating and forgery have been disclosed," he said.

He said the ACJM's order recorded no discussion on the sequence in which Gandhi's name was included, deleted, and again included in the electoral roll in 1980, 1982 and 1983 respectively.

Rather than finding whether these allegations constituted a cognisable offence, the impugned order simply branded the complaint as lacking essential particulars, the judge said, adding that the extract of the electoral roll was casually dismissed as being "a photocopy of the photocopy of the alleged extract of the uncertified roll of 1980."

He said, "The limited prayer before the ACJM was to consider the extract of the electoral roll and other allegations as being adequate, or otherwise to direct investigation for the allegedly fraudulent entry of the name of Sonia Gandhi."

In effect, it is a non-speaking order on the question of disclosure of a cognisable offence, the judge said.

"The order suffers from a manifest error in law on account of non-compliance with Section 175(3) of the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), inter alia, not hearing the submissions of the concerned police officer and non-calling of a status report from the concerned police station," the judge said.

Section 175(3) empowers a magistrate to order police investigation into a cognisable offence.

The judge said the magistrate failed to consider the twin options permissible in law: one, directing the registration of an FIR; two, the conduct of proceedings under Section 223 of the BNSS (which governs the magistrate examining the complainant and witnesses after taking cognisance of an offence).

Regarding the issue of citizenship, the judge said the ACJM had only to decide whether the allegations disclosed a cognisable offence and whether it called for a police investigation. However, he conflated this with the jurisdiction of the Central government and digressed towards the issue of citizenship.

The court said it was unable to fathom why the ACJM considered the Election Commission's powers to include or exclude persons from electoral rolls to be a bar on the police to prove fraudulent inclusion of names in electoral rolls or the use of false documents.

The judge said the magisterial court did not perform its "core function" of discerning the disclosure of a cognisable offence.

"The court finds the four pillars of reasoning adopted in the impugned order to be perverse and improper, as well as an incorrect appreciation of law and allegations. In fact, the impugned order is liable to be set aside," the judge said.

He remanded the matter back to the magisterial court to "pass a speaking order in light of the specific requirements of 175(3) of the BNSS" and directed fresh hearing of the complainant's arguments. The matter has been posted for further hearing on September 29.

Chargesheet in Ram temple theft row..

It instructed the magistrate to act on the chargesheet in accordance with the law and requested that the State also send a copy of the chargesheet to the SC. The court refused to provide the petitioners with a copy of the sealed status report, on the ground that the judicial order summarised its contents.

The case started in June 2026 when officials noticed that the cash collected from donation boxes did not match the amount deposited in the banks. The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust requested an investigation.

On June 13, the State formed a three-member SIT led by Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant, with Kiran S as Range Inspector General and Neel Ratan Kumar as Special Secretary (Finance).

Following the Supreme Court's July directions, the team was reconstituted, and a forensic auditor was added. A preliminary SIT report, submitted on June 23, reviewed CCTV footage from April 27 to June 5 and identified about 70 suspected cases of theft or pilferage.

The staff were seen hiding bundles of notes and loose cash in their clothing, pockets, and shoes. Some employees were said to have blocked the camera view, while others took the notes. Later on, hidden cameras placed by members of the trust recorded the same kind of activity.

It was discovered that standard operating procedures had been ignored: security guards were not posted during the count, personnel were not searched on entry and exit, and footage was kept for only 45 days rather than the recommended 180 days.

Police filed an FIR that named eight people involved in counting cash and valuables: Avinash Shukla, Anukalp Mishra, Lavkush Mishra, Manish Kumar Yadav, Karunesh Pandey, Ramashankar Mishra, Subhash Srivastava, and Ram Shankar Yadav, also known as Tinnu, along with others whose names are not known. Police arrested all eight in late June.

Investigators recovered almost 780 lakh in cash from several of the accused. Bank records and witness statements suggest the practice may have started before the available footage. Two senior trust officials, one of them the general secretary, Champat Rai, resigned as a result of the controversy. The most recent status report has increased the number of recorded CCTV incidents from 70 to 105. The offences under review include criminal breach of trust and violations of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The court has said further investigation may still occur. The SIT has reviewed CCTV footage, collected evidence, conducted forensic tests, and examined financial records. The chargesheet, expected this week, will determine the prosecution's next step in the Sessions Court. The Supreme Court is still monitoring the case.

Viral video of Bihar minors' assault...

The group forced the students to apologise before letting them go.

The Bihar police has formed a Special Investigation Team led by SDPO Deepti Monali to lead the investigation. So far, seven suspects from the footage have been identified, the police claim. Three suspects have been arrested, and police are still searching for the others, including the man seen sexually assaulting the girl.

State Women's Commission Chairperson Apsara Mishra said a detailed report had been sought from the district administration on the incident, which has triggered criticism of the BJP-led Government over the safety of women and girls in the state.

The episode triggered a political slugfest, with criticisms coming from several opposition leaders, including Rahul Gandhi.

Gandhi, who is Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, came out with an angry post on X, describing the incident as "deeply disturbing".

"This is not culture, it is patriarchy," the Congress leader said, alleging that "andhbhaktis" were responsible for such attitudes being "normalised".

The Rae Bareilly MP demanded that the persons identified in the video be "prosecuted under POCSO" and asked the BJP-led government in the state "why a girl is not safe on a public road".

The Aam Aadmi Party also shared the video clip on its X handle, reminding Prime Minister Narendra Modi of his "beti bachao" slogan and alleging "in your BJP-ruled state of Bihar, a daughter's dignity is being torn to shreds".

RJD working president Tejashwi Yadav, who is the Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly, blamed the incident on Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary without naming him and referred to him as "nausikhiya" (inept).

Yadav also held Modi "solely responsible" for the "anarchy in Bihar", and alleged that JD(U) president Nitish Kumar, the former chief minister, was "made to pack his bags within four months of getting a fresh mandate by offering doles to the state's women".

The Trinamool Congress also condemned the incident. "What gives anyone the right to put their hands on a woman's body, WITHOUT HER CONSENT? Who gave these hooligans the authority to moral-police a young woman and a young man, humiliate them and violate their dignity?", the party said in a post on X.

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"The Jamui incident is deeply disturbing. The trauma inflicted on that young woman - and on the young man who was subjected to such humiliation - will not disappear anytime soon. Every person responsible in the incident must face due process and the strongest punishment permitted by law, without delay or political interference," it said. In Kolkata, Union Panchayat Raj and Fisheries Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh asserted that law and order in Bihar is totally secure.

The Munger MP asserted that women are now free to step out of their homes at any time of the day in the state.

"Law and order in the state is totally secure," Singh said on the sidelines of a review meeting on development of fisheries in West Bengal.

IIT-Bombay removes dean after student suicide...

The IIT-Bombay also issued a public apology for its earlier communication that characterised the events preceding the death of the student, Sahil Wakode, before a detailed inquiry was completed.

Wakode, a second-year B.Tech student in the Department of Energy Science and Engineering hailing from Maharashtra's Yavatmal district, was found hanging in his hostel room on the Powai campus on Friday evening, hours after he was allegedly caught using a mobile phone to access ChatGPT during a mid-semester examination.

The Mumbai Police have booked Doolla under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and Section 108 (abetment of suicide) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, following a complaint lodged by Sahil's family.

In an email to students, IIT Bombay Director Shireesh Kedare confirmed the removal of Doolla, who previously served as the Dean of Student Affairs, from the current post.

Doolla, who is a professor, continues to remain in the faculty.

"In view of the ongoing investigation, it was inappropriate to have set out or characterised details relating to the events preceding Sahil's demise before they had been duly established through the appropriate investigative process," the institute said in its statement on Monday, retracting its earlier assertion that Sahil was caught cheating but faced no disciplinary action.

However, student groups expressed dissatisfaction with the move, demanding his suspension as a faculty member.

On Monday evening, the faculty members held a march in the institute's campus to support Doolla. The Faculty Forum said that he followed "Senate-approved exam procedure" when he reported the student for alleged phone use on September 18.

Sahil's family alleged that he was subjected to systematic institutional harassment and caste-based discrimination.

"He was our only son. We reached this stage after immense struggle and now they have finished him. The staff harassed him using casteism. I want justice," said his father, Ravindra Wakode, demanding a comprehensive probe into the administration's role.

Sahil's father Ravindra Wakode claimed that his son was mocked, tortured and discriminated on caste lines and demanded probe into the role of the IIT Bombay administration in his son's death.

The student protesters at IIT-Bombay claimed that Sahil faced severe pressure and threats of academic suspension.

Kedare told protesters late Sunday night that he will resign on Monday, but noted he must follow the process. The institute said he has not resigned.

Police detained Youth Congress workers protesting outside the IIT Bombay gate over the student's suicide.

Security in and around the campus was beefed up after protests by students and Youth Congress workers.

Many local residents and alumni attempted to visit the campus. However, as a precautionary measure, entry was restricted. Only current students and authorised staff can enter, an official said.

Members of political and social organisations gathered outside the main gate of IIT Bombay to protest against the administration.

"A few protesters from outside organisations

gathered at the main gate. They were promptly removed from the spot and taken into preventive custody," a police official said.

A student said he stayed in the room next to Sahil's and they used to hang out regularly. "Students face immense academic pressure here, which the management needs to address. However, I personally never witnessed casteism on campus," he said.

"On the day of the incident, a professor took Sahil out of the classroom after he was allegedly caught cheating. Something serious must have triggered him to take such an extreme step," the student said.

Student groups and alumni alleged systemic issues within the administration.

Pranav Jeevan, an alumnus, criticised the institute's handling of student affairs and mental health.

"The administration frequently punishes students with arbitrary threats of hostel eviction, suspension, and heavy financial penalties, even fining students up to Rs 1.5 lakh for organising a play," he said.

"Despite past tragedies, the campus lacks effective caste sensitisation, adequate mental health support, and an empowered SC/ST Cell to address discrimination," he alleged.

Jeevan claimed that official statements released prior to a detailed investigation aimed to protect faculty members, adding that non-compliance with faculty reservation norms remains an unaddressed root issue.

Security has been stepped up around the institute in view of the protests.

Around 50 police personnel, including inspectors, sub-inspectors, and women officers, have been deployed around the campus, while multiple police vans have been stationed at the main gates, an official said.

Mumbai Police Crime Branch is probing the circumstances surrounding the student's death. A police official said the investigation is expected to shed light on reasons which prompted Sahil to take the extreme step.

Keep faith, drop cruelty: Delhi urges temples...

PETA India has also called for a nationwide ban on elephant rides, bathing experiences, selfies and other close-contact tourist activities involving captive elephants, following several incidents involving elephants and humans.

The organisation also urged the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to encourage states to adopt robotic elephants in temples and for other activities, including film and photo shoots, weddings and tourist rides. PETA India noted that captive elephants used in processions, rides and other events are often subjected to harsh training methods, including beating and chaining. It claimed that many elephants kept in temples and other facilities suffer from foot problems and leg wounds, inadequate veterinary care and a lack of natural living conditions.

Natural farming, horticulture Rewa...

The Chief Minister said work on the Sleemanabad Tunnel was nearing completion and, once operational, Narmada water would help expand irrigation facilities in the region. He said completion of irrigation projects at Teonthar, Lonhi, Sirmour and Semaria would provide irrigation facilities to around 1.32 lakh hectares of land.

Yadav also said the state government would provide permanent registration free of cost to eligible landholders who possess pattas but do not have registered ownership documents. According to him, the government would bear registration charges for around 50 lakh such pattas, involving an estimated expenditure of nearly Rs 4,000 crore.

During the programme, the Chief Minister interacted with public representatives and four progressive farmers to learn about their experience in shifting from conventional agriculture to innovative farming practices. Farmers highlighted the benefits of mechanisation, improved agricultural equipment, organic inputs and natural farming.

Yadav urged farmers to take up natural farming, horticulture, millets, animal husbandry and crop diversification to create additional sources of income. Natural farming has been a key focus of the state's agricultural programmes, with farmer clusters and training ini-

tiatives being expanded across Madhya Pradesh.

He said a 1,000-hectare area in Rewa is being developed as a natural farming cluster. He also referred to the Basaman Mama Gau Abhyaranya as an important centre for cattle conservation, rural self-reliance and natural farming. The area has previously been developed as a model for natural farming and related agricultural activities.

The Chief Minister said farmers in Rewa were also expanding cultivation of guava, amla, jackfruit and millets. Under the State Millet Mission, cultivation of crops such as kodo and kutki is being encouraged to diversify agriculture and strengthen both farm incomes and nutritional security.

Xi, Trump summit from September 23

"The reciprocal visits by the two heads of state within a span of six months will mark a milestone of historic significance," he said.

The two leaders last met in Beijing in May during Trump's China visit, when they held talks aimed at improving ties between the world's two largest economies.

"China will work with the US to enrich the dimensions of the China-US constructive relationship of strategic stability, strengthen dialogue and cooperation and properly manage differences so as to deliver greater benefits to our two peoples and to further contribute to world peace, stability and prosperity," Guo said.

Trump plans to accord a rare airport reception to Xi by personally receiving him on the tarmac at Joint Base Andrews, according to the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post.

From trade tariffs and technology to AI, military-to-military ties, the conflict in West Asia, the Russia-Ukraine war, the space arms race and US arms sales to Taiwan, a range of issues are expected to figure in the meeting between the two world leaders.

Ahead of Xi's visit, Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer held "candid, in-depth and constructive" talks on economic and trade issues, including AI, on Sunday in New York.

In his talks with He, Bessent said the US had proposed a new notification mechanism for artificial intelligence incidents that could affect national security.

"We want a shared vision of common goals and common threats," Bessent told the media in New York. "We think that just like any cross-border activity, that moving from opaque to more transparency between the No. 1 and the No. 2 AI powers in the world is very important."

"Guided by the important consensus reached by the heads of state of the two countries, He and Bessent engaged in exchanges on important economic and trade issues of common concern, as well as the implementation of consensus reached in previous talks, while upholding the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The Xi-Trump talks assume significance against the backdrop of Trump signing a new sanctions law that authorises him to impose tariffs of up to 100 per cent on countries buying Russian oil and gas, including China and India. Trump last week signed the Lindsey O Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026, which authorises expanded sanctions and gives the president powers to impose tariffs on countries that buy Russian energy.

China has rejected US attempts to impose tariffs over its purchases of Russian oil and gas, saying normal trade cooperation between countries should not be subject to interference by third parties. China engages in normal economic and trade cooperation with other countries based on equality and mutual benefit, Guo jiakun told reporters on September 17.

China opposes long-arm jurisdiction and unilateral sanctions that have no basis in international law and lack a UN Security Council mandate, he said. Despite the tariff threat, Washington and Beijing are also negotiating a reciprocal tariff reduction framework covering products worth \$30 billion from each side, China's commerce ministry said.

The consultations aim to reach a reciprocal tariff reduction arrangement at the earliest possible date, ministry spokesperson Huang Ling said.

BJP slams Congress over ex-VP Ansari’s remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The BJP on Monday criticised the Congress over former vice president Hamid Ansari's remarks citing former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru's views on "Hindu right-wing communalism", alleging that they expose the Opposition party's "Muslim League, Maoist" character.

The ruling party also attacked Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi over his "Chhatron Ki Goonj" event in Indore, saying he had demeaned his constitutional post with "clownish caricature".

Ansari, while speaking at an event commemorating late constitutional expert and author AG Noorani in New Delhi on Friday, referred to Nehru's view that "the real danger to India was not communism, but Hindu right-wing communalism"—cited in Noorani's 2019 book 'The RSS: A Menace to India'.

Addressing a press conference on Monday, BJP MP and national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said Ansari's remarks have "thoroughly exposed that



BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi

Congress has become Muslim League Maoist Congress in totality". He said the former vice president's comment also suggests that Nehru considered communism a threat, while the Congress has now shifted towards "ultra-left".

"Today, the Congress has gone ultra-left. It has taken a dive into communism, which Nehru considered a threat," he said.

He further said Congress leaders should think before citing Nehru, claiming they may not have read what the former prime minister had written in his books. Trivedi said Ansari has not just "dug up buried ghosts of history", but "breathed life into them".

He alleged that the Muslim leaders endorsed by the

Congress have "League-like sentiments", ideas which have now become exceedingly prevalent within the grand old party.

Responding to a query regarding alleged anti-women remarks by Kerala Islamic scholar Kanthapuram AP Aboobacker Musliyar, Trivedi asserted that the Congress must oppose such sentiments, alleging that the party has been an "obedient follower" of the cleric despite claiming to be flag-bearers of "Smash the Patriarchy".

Musliyar, the Grand Mufti of India, sparked widespread controversy in August after allegedly stating that women should remain confined to their homes and stay out of the public sphere.

Responding to a query

about Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's "Chhatron Ki Goonj" event in Indore, Trivedi attacked the leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, saying whether he is qualified to remain in the constitutional post is a "yaksha prashna" (crucial question).

"He has demeaned the post of leader of Opposition, compromising grace and gravitas for clownish caricature. In simple Hindi, he has descended to 'jokarai' (buffoonery)," he said. "When there is a lack of creativity, downfall is inevitable — his events have gone from humorous poetry sessions to laughter shows, and from laughter shows to stand-up comedy, and in stand-up comedy, vulgarity has crept in. The Congress has descended into utter obscenity," Trivedi said.

He said the Congress should consider if it still represents the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak, Rajendra Prasad, C Rajagopalachari, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sardar Patel and Pranab Mukherjee. "Such lows were never witnessed during the times of Jawaharlal Nehru or Indira ji. This is the lowest the Congress has stooped to in its 140 years," he said.

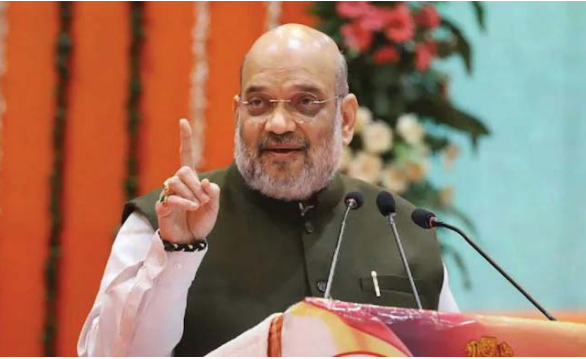
Shah to inaugurate national conference of ANTFs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will open the third National Conference of the Heads of Anti-Narcotics Task Forces (ANTFs) in New Delhi on Tuesday. The two-day event, arranged by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), will bring together the chiefs of ANTFs from all 36 States and union territories. Shah is expected to launch anti-drug television advertisements, lay the foundation stones for new NCB regional complexes in Lucknow and Dehradun, present an award to the most successful ANTF, and launch a renewed NCB website.

The conference theme, 'United Resolve, Shared Responsibility', is based on the Vision Document for Narcotics Control (2026–29). This plan is built upon four pillars: enforcement, intelligence and operations; control of precursor and synthetic drugs; demand and harm reduction; and capacity building and coordination. The technical sessions will address cartel networks, rehabilitation, clandestine laboratories, illicit cultivation, and investigations into the Darknet and Cryptocurrency.

The Government's primary evidence of progress comes from seizure and case data. In 2025, the various agencies recorded 1,48,063 trafficking cases and made 1,83,675 arrests, compared with 96,930 cases and 1,22,224 arrests in 2024. They seized 1,240.9 tonnes of drugs worth approximately ₹18,227 crore; ganja made up the largest portion of this, amounting to 628.19 tonnes, an increase from 533.9 tonnes the year before. Hashish decreased to 5.11 tonnes from 6.48 tonnes the previous year.



The total weight of heroin seized was 3,567 kg, of which Punjab accounted for 2,085.55 kg, or 58 per cent of the national total. Cocaine seizures amounted to 226 kg, with Maharashtra leading the way at 108.06 kg and Delhi at 55.49 kg. From 2021 to 2025, the total amount seized was over 6,800 tonnes, valued at about Rs 1.08 lakh crore. Annual

figures were 1,609.6 tonnes in 2021, 1,253.6 tonnes in 2022, 1,389.7 tonnes in 2023, 1,330.6 tonnes in 2024, and 1,240.9 tonnes in 2025.

The NCB said that in 2025 it seized about 1.33 lakh kg of narcotics valued at nearly ₹2,000 crore, made 994 arrests, destroyed 77,773 kg of narcotics, and achieved a conviction rate of about 67 per cent. New routes have been developed. The number of cases relating to drones increased from three incidents and 10 kg in 2021 to 305 incidents and 468 kg in 2025; Punjab accounted for 298 of those 305 drops. Thirty clandestine synthetic-drug laboratories were closed down in 2025. There were 1,356 financial investigations, as a result of which assets worth ₹836 crore were frozen or seized.

The State of Punjab also had 8,95,508 bottles of codeine-based cough syrup

seized. In 2025, the amount of illegal poppy destroyed reached 42,282 acres, up from 22,512 acres in 2024 and about 10,000 acres in 2020. A separate drug disposal drive, which was launched in June 2026, focused on the destruction of 2,09,500 kg of seized drugs with a value exceeding ₹6,000 crore. These same figures show certain limitations, since the total tonnage and value of drugs seized decreased in 2025 even though the number of cases and arrests went up, a situation consistent with smaller, more scattered consignments.

Demand is still high: official estimates suggest that the number of people using opioids is around 2.1 per cent, that is about 22.6 million, and cannabis use is even higher. A survey carried out by AIIMS among school students in ten cities found that the rate of substance use over their lifetime was about 15 per cent, with the average age of first use being near 13.

The ANTFs were set up as a result of a directive issued in 2021, and it will be up to making them full-time and well-equipped units to combine interdiction with credible treatment, whether or not the roadmap for the period 2026 to 2029 alters the availability and use of drugs, not just the size of the following seizure table.

Row over Vande Mataram in Karnataka Assembly

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

BJP legislators recited the full version of Vande Mataram at the beginning of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly and Council proceedings on Monday, when the recording that was officially played in both the Houses ended after two stanzas.

A three-day special session of the Karnataka legislature, convened to discuss the drought situation in the State and the Kasturirangan report on Western Ghats ecologically sensitive areas, began here at Vidhan Soudha. The session at the Legislative Assembly started with the playing of the recorded Vande Mataram song, but it ended after rendering two stanzas.

Soon after that, Speaker GS Patil read out obituary refer-



Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar during the State special Assembly Session in Bengaluru

ences for the prominent people who passed away recently. However, BJP MLAs continued reciting the full version of the national song and concluded it by raising Vande Mataram slogans. Subsequently, Chief Minister DK Shivakumar started his intervention regarding the obituary references by paying

tribute to former MLA RB Shiryannavar, who died on August 27. Similarly, at the Legislative Council, BJP members continued reciting the remaining stanzas of the national song, even as Council Chairman Saleem Ahmed started reading the preamble of the Constitution, as per the practice.

J&K Assembly adjourned amid uproar on first day

MOHIT KANDHARI
■ Jammu

On day one of the Autumn Session of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, members from the Opposition and treasury benches resorted to slogan-shouting soon after the obituary references were over.

The Speaker of the House was seen struggling to restore order during the question hour amid repeated disruptions. As the chaos prevailed, the Speaker decided to adjourn the day's proceedings. The House will reconvene on Tuesday.

Before the House was adjourned, the BJP legislators, who had come prepared to corner the Omar Abdullah-led Government, raised slogans of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" and "Vande Mataram", prompting reactions from members of the treasury benches. Meanwhile, NC and other MLAs raised slogans



BJP MLAs being stopped during a protest on people's issues at Autumn Session of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in Srinagar on Monday

demanding restoration of Statehood in response.

Speaker Abdul Rahim Rather was seen trying to pacify unruly members to allow the House proceedings. The BJP members, protesting in the well, were directed by the Speaker to go back to their seats. "Don't force me to take action against you," the Speaker warned them. The BJP members continued shouting slogans against the Government throughout the Question Hour, which the Speaker conducted amidst the din.

As the house witnessed pandemonium, National Conference MLA from Gurez, Nazir Ahmad Gurezi, urged the Speaker to continue with Question Hour, accusing the BJP members of deliberately trying to waste the time of the House. "None of you will be in the House after the next election. You ruined this State," Gurezi told the protesting BJP legislators.

The situation worsened after CPI(M) MLA Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami asked the BJP members to raise another slogan, "Statehood ko restore karo," following

which BJP legislators objected and entered into a heated exchange with him. The commotion also involved Langate MLA Sheikh Khursheed, while senior National Conference leader and Khanyar MLA Ali Mohammad Sagar stood up and raised slogans against the BJP members. Outside the Assembly, Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma accused the Omar Abdullah Government of wanting to evade the BJP's questions on the people's issues in the Union territory.

Speaking to reporters after the Assembly was adjourned for the day, Sharma said the BJP was playing its role as an effective Opposition by raising questions regarding the NHM employees, ASHA workers, anganwadi workers, CAMPA workers, GRS and technical assistants. "People are depressed due to outsourcing, and they demand answers. The Bharatiya Janata Party, acting as the voice for

these victimised sections, demanded answers from the Government today. Omar Abdullah wants to run away; the Government wants to run away from people's issues," Sharma said. PDP leader Waheed Para, who moved an adjournment motion to discuss the rationalisation of reservations in Jammu and Kashmir, emphasised that the youth remain the most important issue in the Union territory.

"Unemployment is at its peak, with nearly a 32 per cent unemployment rate. And the biggest issue concerns merit. Whether meritorious students pursue education or seek jobs, merit is not a qualification in Jammu and Kashmir. For the first time in India's history, the meritorious population is being punished. You give 30 per cent opportunities to nearly 70 per cent of the population, and you give 70 per cent opportunities to 30 per cent of the population," Para stated.

SSC has no data on candidates affected in 13 phase exams

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The Staff Selection Commission (SSC) has no specific data on the number of candidates affected by examination centre changes, cancellations and technical failures during the 2025 SSC Selection Post Phase 13 exam, even as 76,153 candidates were given re-examinations following disruptions, according to its response to the Central Information Commission (CIC).

The examination had triggered widespread protests by SSC aspirants and teachers over alleged mismanagement of the recruitment examination, with demonstrators converging at Delhi's Jantar Mantar under a "Delhi Chalo" call demanding

accountability and reforms in the examination process.

The examination, which began on July 24, 2025 and was scheduled to conclude on August 1, was marred by complaints of abrupt cancellations, server crashes, unresponsive systems and remote examination centres.

Some candidates had also alleged that they were allotted examination centres hundreds of kilometres from their homes.

In an RTI application, the appellant sought the number of candidates whose centres were changed less than 24 hours before their examination, along with a city- and state-wise breakup and details of any special arrangements made for them.

In its written submission



before the CIC, the SSC said, "Since EC-2 has no role in changing the examination centres of candidates, no data is available in this regard."

The applicant had also sought the total number of candidates affected by centre changes, cancellations and technical or logistical failures, besides copies of inter-

nal reports prepared on these issues.

Responding to this, the SSC said: "No data is available with us, as EC-2 has a limited role in such activities."

It said the section monitors the examination during its conduct.

The SSC further disclosed that the examination was originally scheduled from

July 24 to August 1, 2025, during which re-examinations were also conducted for multiple affected candidates.

"However, re-examinations were conducted on 02.08.2025 and 29.08.2025 for 76,153 affected candidates," the commission said.

At the same time, it said the "specific data relating to such candidates is not available in EC Section."

The RTI application also sought information on complaints received by the SSC or its partners regarding alleged mistreatment of students at examination centres, including incidents of physical abuse or aggression, medical emergencies and the reported case of a student fainting and bleeding from the mouth.

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Kolkata

The West Bengal Police on Monday arrested three persons, including two influential Trinamool Congress leaders of Magrahat in South 24 Parganas, for their involvement in the December 2020 attack on the convoy of the BJP national president JP Nadda, who was visiting the area to hold a public meeting.

Officials of the Diamond Harbour Police district named the accused TMC leaders as Ripon Sheikh and Sanjib Mondal, who were allegedly close to the arrested local don and former TMC MLA Jahangir, sources said.

Diamond Harbour Superintendent of Police Chandrashekhar Bardhan said that though they were



picked up in a different case, "subsequent interrogations have revealed that they were involved in the attack on BJP leader JP Nadda's convoy in which several people were injured." The police recovered revolvers and cartridges from the arrested persons, officials said.

The TMC leaders were arrested following a complaint made by a local resident who had allegedly received death threats from them. "He received the threats before the Assembly

elections but could not lodge a complaint out of fear... But after the elections he lodged the complaint, and the two were picked up by the police ... Subsequent interrogations revealed their active involvement in the attack on the BJP procession on December 10, 2020," an official of the Usthi Police Station, which falls under Diamond Harbour police district, said.

When contacted, State BJP leader and MLA Sajal Ghosh said that "no one will be spared ... We said that criminals deserve a place in jail and they will go to jail during the BJP rule."

In the attack six years ago, several BJP workers were injured, and many vehicles, including the one that Nadda was travelling in, were damaged, sources said.

NIA tightens grip on Saharanpur PNB fake-currency conspiracy as arrests rise to four

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested two prime suspects in a counterfeit-currency plot after seizing fake Indian notes worth ₹17.29 crore from the Punjab National Bank currency chest in Civil Lines, Saharanpur.

On September 20, 2026, NIA arrested Mukesh Kumar, son of Som Prakash, of Hasanpur Kadeem village under the Manoharpur police station, and Rajendra Kumar, son of Pyare Lal, of Kalyanpur village under the Sarsawa police station.

The investigators said both men are close associates of

Adesh Choudhary, who was previously arrested, and that they are seen as key participants in the scheme to introduce and distribute high-quality forgeries through an official bank's cash-handling facility. This brings the total number of arrests in the NIA case RC-02/2026/NIA/LKW to four.

The first arrest took place on September 7 when the agency detained Amit Kumar, a PNB official who had been acting as joint custodian and manager for the currency-chest operations and had been at large before being found in Chandigarh; eight days later, on September 15, the investigators arrested Adesh Choudhary, a contrac-

tual driver associated with the same Saharanpur chest.

NIA officials said one of the main areas of focus in the current investigation is Choudhary's involvement in handling and transporting cash consignments. The scandal came to light on August 29, 2026 when police at Sadar Bazar received specific information that fake notes were kept inside the PNB chest. That day they filed a First Information Report (FIR) under Section 178 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

On September 3, the NIA took over the case and re-registered it after discovering a discrepancy during a regular remittance. A shipment of about ₹11.5 crore,



sent from the Saharanpur branch to the Reserve Bank of India office in Jaipur, was found to be short by ₹4.36 lakh. This difference led to a surprise audit by a joint team of 21 members from the RBI and PNB, which began in early August.

The auditors initially identified 148 bundles, each consisting of one thousand counterfeit ₹500 notes, amounting to ₹7.40 crore. Further investigation into the chest's holdings raised the total value of the suspected fake currency to ₹17.29 crore, almost all of which was in ₹500 notes. At the same time, investigators are also working to reconstruct a larger consignment worth

₹111 crore that was sent on July 6 and included 1,900 bundles of ₹500 notes and 800 bundles of ₹200 notes.

They are reviewing packing records, handling logs, and dispatch documents to determine exactly where the fake notes entered the official cash stream. CCTV footage retrieved from inside the chest showed that the part-time housekeeper, Vishal Kumar, removed notes from the genuine bundles; he has since been dismissed.

A preliminary investigation named three PNB employees: Amit Kumar, Ravi Kumar Kanse, senior divisional manager, and Sofia Market currency-chest manager Sushil Kumar. All of

them were suspended, and so far only Amit Kumar has been arrested among the bank's officials. Authorities issued notices because officials feared some of the accused might try to leave the country.

The NIA is currently examining the seized electronic devices, bank records, and financial trails to determine whether any counterfeit notes reached branches or ATMs and to identify where the forgeries came from. The agency has made it clear that the investigation is ongoing and that it expects further arrests of other accused and suspects as it establishes the full scope of the conspiracy.

■ States Focus ■

ED charges EaseMyTrip co-founder in betting scam



PM MODI CONDOLES DEATH OF DUBAI RULER'S BROTHER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday condoled the death of Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the brother of the Dubai ruler, and said his efforts to serve society will be cherished by generations to come.

Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum was the younger brother of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and ruler of Dubai. "Deeply saddened by the passing of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. His efforts to serve society will be cherished by generations to come. "I convey heartfelt condolences to the Royal Family and the people of Dubai. May his soul rest in eternal peace," Modi said in a social media post. (PNS)



DRUG MENACE ROSE SHARPLY IN PUNJAB UNDER AAP: SAINI

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Monday accused the Aam Aadmi Party Government in Punjab of not fulfilling the promises it made to the people, including eradicating the drug problem, which he claimed increased sharply under the AAP rule.

Saini said the AAP made tall promises to the people of Punjab before coming to power, including eradicating the drug menace, employing the youth and procuring farmers' produce at MSP, but even after nearly five years, these promises remained unfulfilled.

He also accused the AAP of betraying the women, farmers and the poor.

Addressing events at Sito and Jalalabad in Punjab's Fazilka district as part of the BJP's 13-day 'Nasha Mukta Punjab Yatra', Saini claimed it was unfortunate that the AAP made the promises just to secure votes.

He also claimed that the drug menace in Punjab increased fourfold, just as the State's debt did, during the AAP's tenure. (PTI)

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has charged EaseMyTrip co-founder Nishant Pitti in the Mahadev online betting app money laundering case. He is accused of moving illegal betting money into India's stock market by disguising it as foreign portfolio investments.

The ED also froze Pitti's Demat shares worth ₹59.60 crore with a provisional order under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. This happened when the agency filed the chargesheet on September 10 in a special court in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. Pitti, who is chairman and managing director of Easy Trip Planners Ltd, has been named in the fifth supplementary chargesheet.

The complaint names 42 people and companies, including EBIX Group chairman Vikas Garg. The ED has

asked the court for permission to seize the attached shares, saying they are proceeds of crime. Investigators allege that Pitti directly helped move money from Skyexchange, an overseas betting platform tied to the Mahadev syndicate, into Indian stocks.

The chargesheet says Pitti made a deal to manipulate stock prices on behalf of Easy Trip Planners promoters, working with an associate of operator Hari Shankar Tibrewal. The goal was to raise the company's share price and market value.

The ED also said that Pitti actively helped Tibrewal hide and move illegal money, and that he knowingly used those funds. The Mahadev investigation is one of the biggest probes into illegal online betting in India. Agencies say the syndicate, led by Sourabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal from abroad, ran a network of betting



panels across the country. They collected funds through mule accounts and sent them abroad via hawala channels, cryptocurrency, and complex company structures. The money was then brought back to India through seemingly legal channels, such as foreign portfolio investments. Interpol has issued notices against the main promoters, and agencies have frozen or

the money even though he knew about Tibrewal's role in illegal betting. The Directorate had earlier searched places linked to Pitti and recorded his statements several times.

Previous investigation documents reported that Easy Trip Planners paid companies known as entry providers. Investigators also found cash during searches and digital records that they say connect Pitti to SkyExchange activities. Officials think these transactions were part of a larger scheme to hide betting money in listed Indian companies and then use changes in share prices to make the money appear legal.

EasyMyTrip has denied any connection between Pitti and the betting network, calling the reports baseless and saying he was not involved in illegal betting. The company also says it follows corporate governance standards and is working with investiga-

tors. At the same time, authorities are still looking into how money from off-shore betting platforms may have moved through Indian capital markets, possibly using pre-arranged trades, shell companies, and foreign investment structures.

Investigators say the case shows listed companies were used as the final step in a money-laundering process that began with illegal betting and ended with owning shares and raising market value.

The ED may initiate legal action against other people and companies as it searches for remaining assets and examines more market deals connected to the group. The charges against Pitti show that the case has grown from focusing on betting operators and panel managers to now including listed-company promoters accused of helping turn illegal money into stock-market holdings.

Delhi building collapse: Student's kin meet Rahul

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The family of Arpit Jaj, a student from Dewas who lost his life in a building accident in Delhi, met Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during the 'Students Ki Goonj' programme in Indore and shared the pain they have endured since the tragedy.

Arpit's grandfather, Makhanlal Jaj, his father, Bhupendra Jaj, and his sister, Priyanshi Jaj, met Rahul Gandhi on the stage of the event. The family spoke about the difficulties they faced following Arpit's death and alleged that they had received neither financial assistance nor a visit from any government representative.

Questioning the arrangements for students living in Delhi, the family said that if proper and safe accommodation had been provided, the tragedy might perhaps have been avoided.

The family also expressed gratitude to former minister Sajjan Singh Verma and



Congress leader Manoj Rajani, saying that their support gave them an opportunity to share their concerns directly with Rahul Gandhi.

Rahul Gandhi listened to the family and offered them support, telling them, "I am with you."

According to Arpit's family, they rushed from Dewas to Delhi as soon as they received news of the accident. They searched for Arpit for hours, holding on to the hope that he might still be found safe.

That hope, however, was eventually shattered when Arpit's body was recovered.

NHAI releases guidelines for highways

RAJESH KUMAR
■ New Delhi

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on Monday released comprehensive guidelines for planning and designing four- and six-lane access-controlled National Highways, which include one-metre-high walls to keep stray cattle off the road, warnings before exits and highway widths based on traffic.

According to the guidelines, High-speed corridors will have a one-metre-high boundary wall along their outer edge. The walls are meant to keep stray cattle from entering the highway and also restrict encroachments and unauthorised access. The guidelines are meant to bring uniformity to the way upcoming high-speed National Highways are planned and designed.

Access-controlled highways allow vehicles to enter or leave only at designated points instead of having direct access from adjoining



roads or properties. Drivers will get warnings before upcoming entry and exit points. The warning is meant to give motorists more time to prepare before entering or leaving a high-speed corridor. The provision is among the additional safety measures prescribed for roads carrying high-speed traffic.

The width and number of lanes will depend on how much traffic a highway is expected to carry. Corridors handling up to 15,000 vehicles will have four lanes and four-lane structures, with a width of 60 metres.

For traffic between 15,000 and 25,000 vehicles, the highway will have four lanes and six-lane structures, with a width of 70 metres. Highways handling between 25,000 and 40,000 vehicles will have six lanes and six-lane structures, also within a width of 70 metres. The configuration will be decided on the basis of a detailed traffic assessment.

The Road Transport Ministry said there were no separate design standards for such high-speed National Highways, leading to variations in DPRs (Detailed Project Reports), until now. The rules will apply to upcoming greenfield and brownfield projects. Expressways are not covered by these guidelines.

Ramp-based interchanges will be provided where high-speed highways cross Expressways, National Highways, State Highways and important arterial roads carrying substantial traffic. These will provide designated entry and exit points while allowing traffic on the main high-speed corridor to keep moving.

TN row: Ministers accuse DMK of cover-up in POCSO case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chennai

A political row erupted in Tamil Nadu on Monday over a POCSO case against granite baron R Veeramani who allegedly sexually abused several minor girls, with ministers accusing the previous DMK "of a "cover-up" and interference in the functioning of the police department.

The main Opposition DMK warned of legal action if the allegation was not substantiated by evidence and Public Works Minister Aadhav Arjuna asserted that Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay had ordered tough action on crimes against women and children. Launching a scathing attack on the previous DMK, Law Minister R Nirmal Kumar demanded answers from the DMK for "not acting against Veeramani" during its regime, especially when a complaint had been lodged.

Addressing an event, Kumar questioned why the investigation was halted despite the existence of video evidence showing the sexual assault by Veeramani.

On October 6, 2025, a child rights activist submitted a pen drive to the Chennai Police's Central Crime Branch's Anti-Vice Squad which contained footage of the alleged assault. Noting that DMK chief MK Stalin held the Home portfolio at that time, the



Granite baron R Veeramani

minister asked, "who ordered the probe to be dropped," alleging that the DMK hushed up such a big crime and let the prominent industrialist go scot-free. Minister Aadhav Arjuna, speaking to reporters, asserted that the chief minister had ordered swift action on crimes against women and children and said, "there will be no answers from the DMK to the questions raised by the law minister."

He accused the previous DMK "of operating a "compromised police force that applied different laws" to protect favoured industrialists, party members, and the then "ruling family."

"Generally, there was one law for the DMK district secretaries. There was one law for industrialists known to the DMK. There was one law for DMK party cadres. And there was one law for DMK family members. Because the Tamil Nadu police force was run by the DMK family, not the DGP.

That is why they did not even appoint a regular DGP," Arjuna alleged. Minister for Information, Rajmohan, referring to the case against Veeramani, described the alleged abuse of minor girls as horrendous. He further alleged that the abuse was "covered up" during the DMK regime and asked whether the Left parties, which criticise the TVK "over several issues, condemned the "cover-up" or not.

He, however, said that criticising the "was well within the rights of the Left parties, who support the "from outside. CPI (M) State Secretary P Shanmugam, in his reaction, underlined that it was the Marxist party and its affiliates who had put up a tough fight all along to secure justice for women and children and demanded a detailed investigation into the case against the industrialist. He said complaints against Veeramani had surfaced multiple times over the decades. Complaints had been made as far back as 2013 when AIADMK supremo, late J Jayalalithaa, was the chief minister.

A complaint was lodged during the DMK regime when M K Stalin was the chief minister, he said, adding such complaints had been repeatedly buried, allowing a "serial offender" to evade the law for years.

Speaking to reporters, DMK law wing secretary N R Elango firmly refuted the allegations of the ministers and said that under the DMK, police had submitted to the court that the probe against Veeramani had been deferred till gathering sufficient evidence.

"Probe was not dropped during the DMK regime," Elango, a senior advocate added. If police officers had been bribed, and if the " had evidence against such officials, action may be taken against them, he said, adding that Minister Nirmal Kumar must substantiate his allegation of "cover-up" against the DMK with evidence.

"If he cannot substantiate it, he must tender a public apology, otherwise, we will initiate appropriate legal proceedings against him," Elango added. Veeramani, aged over 80, was arrested alongside two of his accomplices, Shanthi (60) and her husband Mahendra Simhan (63) last month. The ongoing probe against the industrialist, who is the chairman of Gem group, led to the identification of multiple survivors who were allegedly sexually assaulted by him over the past several years.

MP CM Mohan Yadav pushes for AI, tech jobs, telecom zone

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Monday said the Madhya Pradesh Government is committed to creating employment opportunities for youth in emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, information technology, deeptech and advanced technology, while also promoting industrial growth in telecom manufacturing.

Speaking to the media persons at a private establishment in the Govindpura Industrial Area, Yadav said establishing a Telecom Manufacturing Zone (TMZ) in Gwalior was a priority for both the Union Government and the State Government.

He said investor outreach programmes had already been organised in New Delhi and Mumbai to showcase investment opportunities and the advantages of the proposed zone. A third investor interaction is scheduled to be held in Bengaluru on Tuesday.



The Chief Minister said entrepreneurs and investors from southern India had earlier shown interest in other sectors in Madhya Pradesh and expressed confidence that they would also respond positively to opportunities in the proposed telecom manufacturing zone.

According to Yadav, the response received so far for investment in the TMZ has been encouraging. He said the Gwalior-Chambal region had significant potential for further industrial expansion and could emerge as an important centre for manu-

facturing and employment generation.

The Chief Minister said the Government's industrial development strategy was not limited to one region. Industrial and commercial activities were being encouraged around Indore, Ujjain and Bhopal, while similar expansion was being promoted in and around Jabalpur.

He said the Government wanted industrial development to reach cities of different sizes across the state. Large industries, small industries, micro, small and medium enterprises and cottage industries would all play a role in generating employment opportunities for local residents.

Yadav said technology-driven industries were being given special attention because sectors such as AI, IT, deeptech and telecom manufacturing could create new opportunities for skilled youth and help strengthen the State's industrial ecosystem.

Drought relief measures initiated in Maharashtra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Amid the Opposition's demand to declare a drought in Maharashtra, the State Government said it will assess the situation through a three-stage process, with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday emphasising that "drought relief" measures have been initiated.

Highlighting the difference between formally declaring a drought and implementing relief measures, Fadnavis said under the NDRF framework, certain steps should be completed before a drought can be formally declared and assistance sought from the Union



Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis

Government. He said the Government would not wait for Central assistance to help farmers facing distress due to inadequate rainfall.

"A formal crop-loss assessment would be carried out after October 5 as required under the rules, following which the State would seek assistance from the Centre,"

he told reporters. Relief and Rehabilitation Minister Makarand Jadhav Patil said the procedure for declaring drought was revised by the state Revenue and Forest Departments through a government resolution issued on October 7, 2017, and has been in force since the 2017 kharif season.

CM Satheesan backs implementation of Labour Code in Kerala

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Keralam Chief Minister VD Satheesan on Monday said the State would implement the Centre's new labour codes without compromising workers' rights, drawing a sharp response from Leader of the Opposition Pinarayi Vijayan, who accused the government of announcing the move to appease vested interests and said the codes were against workers' interests.

Addressing a leadership meeting of the Congress-affiliated Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) here, Satheesan said Labour Code could not be left unimplemented in the state, as these



were laws passed by Parliament.

His remarks came at a time when the Congress national leadership is opposing the Labour Codes.

In November last year, the BJP-led NDA Government in the Centre announced the implementation of the four Labour Codes, consolidating

29 existing labour laws, with immediate effect.

The move was criticised by the Congress as well as Left parties, which described the new codes as being against the interests of workers.

Satheesan said the Labour Codes could not be left unimplemented as they were laws passed by Parliament, but

their implementation should not harm workers.

"If the Labour Code is not implemented, a situation will arise where there are neither the existing labour laws nor the new Labour Code. So, it must be implemented in a manner that does not adversely affect Kerala's labour sector or workers' rights," he said.

"It cannot be left unimplemented-it is a law passed by Parliament. Otherwise, there will be no labour laws at all right now, because this Labour Code was brought in by replacing the previous labour laws," he explained.

Satheesan said the Government would take into consideration the suggestions made by INTUC

while implementing the Labour Code.

"Therefore, while doing so, it must be implemented without harming the labour sector. To implement it, the Government will seriously consider the valuable suggestions provided by the INTUC," he said. He also said that if the Labour Code was not implemented, workers could be left without legal protection.

Meanwhile, the Leader of Opposition in Keralam Assembly Pinarayi Vijayan said that Satheesan's sudden announcement that the Labour Codes would be implemented in the State is aimed at pleasing certain interests and alleged that the move was against the interests of workers.

Mamata faction unveils new logo with football symbol

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kolkata

The Mamata Banerjee-led faction of the TMC on Monday unveiled a new logo featuring its interim election symbol — a football player — and asked its leaders and elected representatives to publicise it, as the party races to build a new electoral identity after losing, for now, its familiar name and flowers-and-grass symbol.

The logo places the football player at its centre, surrounded by the words 'Mamata All India Trinamool Congress' in white against a blue background. Saffron, white and green have also been incorporated into the design.

The exercise comes days after the Election Commission froze the use of the 'All India Trinamool Congress' name and its reserved flowers-and-grass symbol amid an escalating internal dispute over control of the party.

The poll panel subsequently allotted separate interim identities to the two groups for the October 6 bypolls, with the

Mamata faction getting 'Mamata All India Trinamool Congress' and the 'football player' symbol, while the rival faction led by Arup Roy was allotted 'Democratic Trinamool Congress' and the 'envelope' symbol.

With only a fortnight left for the Nandigram and Rejinagar bypolls, the Mamata camp is seeking to ensure that voters can connect the new symbol with the political identity they have traditionally associated with the Trinamool Congress.

Party sources said all office-bearers, leaders, workers and elected representatives have been asked to use their respective platforms to circulate the logo and familiarise voters with the new symbol.

The leaders from the Mamata camp began posting the logo on social media from Monday afternoon. On September 17, the poll panel, while hearing the rival claims over the Trinamool Congress, ordered that neither faction would be permitted to use



the party's existing name and symbol pending a substantive determination of the dispute.

The decision came on the last day of nominations for the bypolls, prompting the EC to ask the factions to suggest alternative names and free symbols so that the electoral process could proceed.

A day later, the Commission gave the two groups their temporary identities, effectively turning the party's internal battle over

The timing leaves little room for a slow transition. The new identities will face their first direct electoral test in Rejinagar, where the two rival Trinamool factions remain in the fray. Nandigram, however, has taken a markedly different course.

Mamata Banerjee's nominee Sanchita Pradhan Dey withdrew from the contest after meeting Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, following which Banerjee extended support to Congress candidate Milan Pradhan.

Pradhan was subsequently arrested in connection with cases dating back to the 2007 Nandigram land acquisition movement.

The contrasting developments have given the bypolls an unusual political texture: Rejinagar will see the rival Trinamool camps carry their newly assigned names and symbols into a direct contest, while in Nandigram, the Mamata camp is effectively out of the electoral race and threw its weight behind a Congress candidate.

The dispute has also acquired a

legal dimension, with Banerjee challenging the Commission's freeze before the Supreme Court. The apex court on Monday agreed to urgently list her plea, with the rival side also set to get an opportunity to make its submissions.

That legal battle could ultimately determine what happens to the original party name and symbol. But the political campaign cannot wait for that resolution.

The Mamata camp's immediate task is consequently to make the football player familiar enough for voters to recognise it on October 6. The challenge is particularly significant for a party whose symbol has been one of the most recognisable visual markers of Bengal politics for years.

The new logo seeks to compress that transition into a single image — Mamata's name, the words Trinamool Congress and an unfamiliar football player — as the faction heads into an election in which its traditional electoral identity has, at least temporarily, been put on hold.

BJP-Congress clash during campaign for Nagaon bypoll in Assam



Gaurav Gogoi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Nagaon

BJP and Congress workers clashed during campaigning for the Nagaon Lok Sabha by-election in Assam on Monday, police said.

The incident happened around 4 pm in the Samaguri assembly segment when a Congress procession, led by the party's State president Gaurav Gogoi, was on the way to a public meeting at Larimukh.

Dhurbri MP Rakibul Hussain, former Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel and the party's bypoll candidate Sibamoni Bora were also present in the procession.

Police said BJP supporters had gathered at Barama Bazar to show black flags to the Congress leaders.

"As around 30 to 40 Congress workers on motorcycles passed the area, slogans like 'Gaurav Gogoi Go Back, Congress Go Back, Rakibul Go Back' were raised, leading to tension," an officer said. When the Congress convoy returned through the same route after the meeting, suspected BJP supporters pelted stones at the opposition party's vehicles, he said.

"Some Congress workers were also allegedly beaten up by BJP supporters, while CRPF personnel deployed in the area lathi-charged the attackers to control the situation," he added.

Police said Congress workers then returned to the spot with sticks, further escalating the situation, with both sides hurling stones at each other. The glass of two Congress vehicles was broken. Some journalists also sustained minor injuries in the stone-pelting, they said.

ED raids Jaisalmer sites over Belgian entity fund

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday said it undertook searches in a case of alleged misuse of foreign donations received from a non-FCRA registered Belgian entity for undertaking proselytisation activities among the locals in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer along the India-Pakistan international border.

The action covered two premises under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), the agency said in a statement.

It said the ED acted on the basis of specific intelligence indicating that Jaisalmer resident Deu Ram was "illegally" receiving funds from Belgium-based entities "for proselytisation and conversion activities" among vulnerable sections of society in Jaisalmer. The agency added that Ram and his associate Gyan Chand received funds worth ₹5.10 crore without registration under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), mainly by showing the purpose as educational services, cultural and recreational activities,



and inward remittances from non-resident Indians towards family maintenance and savings.

"Most of these funds were received from Amar ASBL, which claims to be a non-profit organisation based in Brussels, Belgium," it said.

Amar ASBL was set up in Brussels in 2011 and is managed by two Belgian nationals — Jose Goffinet and his son Salian Goffinet.

The ED said the duo visits Jaisalmer every year for 2-3 weeks and meets the parents and relatives of local children, organises meetings and religious gatherings "to promote their cultural and religious beliefs and practices".

Campus security beefed up after IIT student protests

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

Security in and around the IIT campus was beefed up after protests by students and Congress workers, officials said. Police on Monday detained Youth Congress workers protesting outside the IIT Bombay gate over the suicide of a 22-year-old student, they said.

Sahil Ravindra Wakode, a second-year B.Tech student in the Department of Energy Science and Engineering, was found hanging from the ceiling fan in his hotel room on the IIT Bombay's Powai campus on Friday evening, hours after he was allegedly caught using a mobile phone during a mid-semester examination, according to officials.

The protesters claimed that Wakode faced severe pressure and threats of academic suspension.

Some students also raised concerns over academic stress and institutional practices. Several local residents and alumni attempted to visit the campus. However, as a precautionary measure, entry was strictly restricted. Only current students and authorised staff can enter, an official said.

Members of political and social organisations gathered outside the main gate of IIT Bombay to protest against the administration.

"A few protesters from outside organisations gathered at the main gate. They were promptly removed from the spot and taken into pre-



Demonstrators stage a candlelight protest to pay tribute to the suicide victims of IIT Bombay in Mumbai

ventive custody," a police official said. A student on condition of anonymity said he stayed in the room next to Wakode's and they used to hang out regularly.

"Students face immense academic pressure here, which the management needs to address. However, I personally never witnessed casteism on campus.

On the day of the incident, a professor reportedly took Sahil out of the classroom after he was allegedly caught cheating. Something serious must have triggered him to take such an extreme step," the student said. Student groups and alumni alleged systemic issues within the administration. Pranav Jeevan, an alumnus, criticised the institute's handling of student affairs

and mental health. "The administration frequently punishes students with arbitrary threats of hostel eviction, suspension, and heavy financial penalties, even fining students up to ₹1.5 lakh for organising a play.

Despite past tragedies, the campus lacks effective caste sensitisation, adequate mental health support, and an empowered SC/ST Cell to address discrimination," he alleged.

Jeevan further claimed that official statements released prior to a detailed investigation aimed to protect faculty members, adding that non-compliance with faculty reservation norms remains an undressed root issue. Security has been stepped up around the institute in view of the protests.

FACULTY HOLD MARCH IN DOOLLA'S SUPPORT

Mumbai: Faculty members of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT-Bombay) on Monday held a march in the institute's campus in Mumbai to support Suryanarayana Doolla, who was removed as Dean of Administrative Affairs amid protests by students over the suicide of a 22-year-old student.

Police have booked Doolla under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, and on abetment to suicide charge.

The Faculty Forum said he followed "Senate-approved exam procedure when he reported second year B Tech student Sahil Wakode for alleged phone use on September 18.

Sahil, a second-year B Tech student in the Department of Energy Science and Engineering, was found hanging from the ceiling fan in his hotel room on the IIT Bombay's Powai campus on Friday evening, hours after he was allegedly caught using a mobile phone during a mid-semester examination, according to officials. His family alleged that Sahil, a native of Maharashtra's Yavatmal district, was subjected to institutional harassment and caste-based discrimination before he took the extreme step, which triggered a protest by students on the campus. (PNS)

BJP hits out at Rahul Gandhi over mimicry act, Raut defends him

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Raipur/Panji/Mumbai

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Monday slammed Rahul Gandhi over a mimicry act at his 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' event in Indore, saying the Leader of Opposition is "being exposed before the entire country" through his conduct.

Talking to reporters at Swami Vivekanand Airport, Sai stated that accommodating such acts did not befit a leader of Gandhi's stature.

A controversy erupted after stand-up comedian Pulkit Mani mimicked PM Modi while performing a skit with Gandhi during his 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' youth outreach programme in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city on Saturday. The Congress, which shared the video on social media, has defended it as satire/mimicry.

Several BJP leaders have criticised Mani's skit, alleging



Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai

that it hurt sentiments associated with respect for mothers and motherhood.

"Rahul Gandhi is the Leader of Opposition, and such conduct does not befit a leader of such stature. He is being exposed before the entire country through his conduct and behaviour. This is certainly not appropriate for him," Sai said.

Earlier in the day, the chief minister shared a video on social media highlighting

the importance of a mother and her place in Indian culture. The video featured a well-known poem about a mother by late poet Om Vyas, highlighting a mother's sacrifice, affection and nurturing role in a child's life, the BJP said in a statement.

Without naming any political leader, Sai, in his post, emphasised respect for mothers and dignity towards them, it said. Meanwhile, senior Congress leader

Bhupesh Baghel hit back at the BJP's criticism, saying everyone's mother deserves respect. Talking to reporters on Sunday, the chief minister questioned why similar concerns were not raised when remarks were allegedly made against the mothers of Rahul Gandhi and other political leaders.

He further alleged that the BJP and RSS had also started making remarks concerning mothers, and therefore, they have no right to speak on the issue. Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Monday criticised Rahul Gandhi over a mimicry act at the Congress MP's recent event in Indore, alleging that remarks linked to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's late mother amounted to an insult to Indian culture.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant also hit out at Gandhi over the issue, saying political opposition should not descend into personal

attacks on parents or elders.

A controversy erupted after stand-up comedian Pulkit Mani mimicked PM Modi while performing a skit with Gandhi during his 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' youth outreach programme in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city on Saturday. The Congress, which shared the video on social media, has defended it as satire/mimicry.

Speaking to reporters in South Goa, Meghwal said Indian culture teaches people to respect their mothers and elders.

"What does Indian culture teach us? To respect mothers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother is no longer in this world. Rahul Gandhi, through 'Chhatron Ki Goonj', insulted Indian culture by speaking lies," the BJP leader said.

Goa CM Sawant, in a post on X, dubbed the act as "shameful and deeply disturbing". Rahul Gandhi and

Defence Ministry signs ₹586 crore deal for T-72, T-90 tanks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The defence ministry on Monday signed a ₹586-crore contract with a group to procure auxiliary power units (APUs) for T-72 and T-90 tanks to bolster the operational readiness and reliability of the Indian Army's mechanised formations, officials said. The contract was signed with Accurate Industrial Controls Private Limited in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh in Delhi.

The APU is an alternate source for the generation of electric power for the fire control system, firing circuit, gun stabilisation system and other ancillaries of the tank, the ministry said.

"The induction of indigenously developed APUs will further strengthen the operational readiness, reliability and sustainability of the



Indian Army's mechanised formations," it said in a statement. The procurement, it said, is a "significant step" towards indigenisation of critical sub-systems of armoured platforms and demonstrates industry-led research and development ('Make-II').

Officials said the deal also shows the effectiveness of the mechanism in translating indigenous innovation into production and induction.

Assam CM Himanta lays foundation stone for ISRO's advanced radar research centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Guwahati

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said the State will soon emerge as a focal point in India's efforts to track space debris.

After laying the foundation stone of the ISRO's Advanced Radar Research Centre at Chandrapur near here, Sarma said the facility will enable the space agency to track debris and help protect the country's critical space assets.

"This facility will make Assam an important player in the national space ecosystem and adds to a list of industries across various verticals that are setting up their base in our state — semiconductor, food manufacturing, healthcare,

hospitality, coach overhauling, among others," Sarma said.

He said the State Government was not just bringing in industries but also creating an ecosystem where our youth have an opportunity to be part of this transformation. Sarma said two decades ago, Assam was a completely different state, characterised by agitations, dharnas, bandhs, and the activities of militant outfits like ULFA and NDFB.

During the last 10 years, due to the untiring efforts of the Assam's people, the state has completely transformed with many institutions of national importance, including AIIMS, IIT and IIM, along with central universities being set up.

The State, however, had been lacking in the area of space



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma with Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) V Narayanan and others during the foundation stone laying ceremony of ISRO Telemetry Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC) Advanced Radar Research Facility at Chandrapur in Kamrup District

science, with no space-related organisation having been set up, he said.

"A Small Space Centre is being developed with IIT to provide a platform to students and promote scientific temperament across colleges," Sarma said.

"Assam's tryst with space has just begun. With the ASSAMSAT project progressing steadily, we are taking a giant leap in this direction, which will help us map weather, rainfall, forests and other factors for better resource planning," he said.

"In a few years, you will witness how the space setup in Chandrapur will get the same place as ISRO in Bengaluru due to its immense contribution towards research and development, which will go a long way in disseminat-

ing knowledge in space technology," the CM said.

"We hope that Assam will soon emerge as a big name in space research," he said.

He expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and ISRO for choosing Assam as the destination for this Advanced Radar Research Centre, which will firmly place the state in space research domain.

Earlier in the day, the chief minister, in a social media post, said the setting up of the centre was a "landmark moment for Assam" and that it was deeply satisfying that the state is set to become a home to such cutting-edge national infrastructure.

"A landmark moment for Assam. Today, we will lay the foundation stone of the Indian Space

Research Organisation (ISRO)'s Advanced Radar Research Centre at Chandrapur, Assam," Sarma said in a post on X on Monday.

As part of Project NETRA, this facility will strengthen India's ability to track objects in space and protect the country's vital space assets, he said.

"For a state once considered far from India's major centres of technology, it is deeply satisfying to see Assam today becoming home to such cutting-edge national infrastructure," he said.

"My deepest gratitude to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji for considering Assam for this strategic project," Sarma said.

The Assam Government has allotted around 6.61 acres for the project.



Editor's
TAKE

UN: Trust is running out, reforms cannot wait

Created to uphold peace, the United Nations is constrained by an outdated power structure. It must reform before losing relevance

When world leaders take the podium in New York on Tuesday for the 81st General Debate, the theme, "Restoring trust, managing transformation: a United Nations that delivers for all", will read less like an aspiration than an admission. General Assembly President Khalilur Rahman of Bangladesh said as much when he gavelled the session open on September 8: trust is in deficit. The evidence is everywhere. The Gulf has swung between truce and strikes since the US-Israeli attacks on Iran in February, with the Strait of Hormuz, and the world economy, held hostage. Ukraine remains unresolved, and Gaza's peace plan awaits full implementation. Secretary-General António Guterres says de-escalation in the Middle East must be "priority one, priority two and priority three". The Security Council, constrained by the vetoes of its five permanent members, has too often been a spectator.

The house is also short of money. In January, Guterres warned of "imminent financial collapse" as arrears hit a record \$1.57 billion. The 2026 budget was cut by about 7 per cent to \$3.45 billion. Washington, which funds 22 per cent of the regular budget, paid \$827 million this month, yet still owes roughly \$4.2 billion. An organisation counting the days to payroll cannot credibly preach delivery.

Has the UN lived up to its promise? Partly. It has helped the world avoid a third world war, eradicated smallpox, phased out ozone-eating chemicals through the Montreal Protocol, and fed and sheltered millions through the WFP and UNHCR. But Rwanda and Srebrenica remain stains it has never washed out, and today's paralysis feeds the perception that international law binds only the weak. Reform is therefore overdue, and it must go beyond cost-cutting. The UN80 initiative, launched in 2025, has trimmed budgets and posts. That was necessary, but efficiency is not legitimacy. The real reform is political. A Council whose permanent membership froze in 1945, and which was enlarged only once, in 1965, and only by non-permanent seats, cannot claim to speak for 193 states. Africa has no permanent seat. India, the most populous nation and a leading troop contributor to peacekeeping, has none either.

Negotiations have run since 2009 without an agreed text. India's ambassador, Parvathaneni Harish, was right in June to demand text-based talks. The way forward has four planks. First, a negotiating text with a deadline, so Council reform stops being a talking shop. Second, voluntary veto restraint in mass-atrocity cases, as the French-Mexican initiative proposes; the P5 will not surrender the veto, but they can be pressed to use it less.

Third, financial reform: end the antiquated return of unspent credits and make dues payable on time. Fourth, a credible succession. Three straw polls among eight candidates have produced no clear frontrunner.

The P5 must not trade the job for convenience, and a first woman Secretary-General would signal renewal. The UN was built in 1945 around the victors of a war. It will endure only if it is rebuilt for the many. Speeches alone will not restore trust. Reforms will.

The UN needs peace, not endless speeches

As the UN General Assembly opened its 81st session on the International Day of Peace, the world faced a familiar spectacle of speeches on war, conflict and humanity's crises. But diplomacy cannot end at the podium. The credibility of the UN will increasingly depend on what follows the speeches: negotiation, implementation and action



SANTHOSH
MATHEW

September 21 is the International Day of Peace. This year, the message deserves to be heard inside the United Nations itself: the world needs action, not endless speeches. As the 81st session of the UN General Assembly begins in New York, leaders and diplomats will once again take turns at the world's most famous international podium. They will speak about war and peace, security and development, terrorism and climate change, poverty and human rights. The speeches will be important. The question is what happens after the microphones are switched off.

The United Nations was born from the terrible experience of two world wars. Its founding vision was clear: disputes between nations should be addressed through dialogue rather than destruction. Speaking is therefore not a problem at the UN. Dialogue is essential to diplomacy. The problem begins when dialogue turns into repetition, delay and obstruction. When words prevent action, diplomacy loses its purpose.

This is where the idea of filibustering becomes relevant. The word "filibuster" is most closely associated with the United States Senate. It developed from the Senate's tradition of allowing senators considerable freedom to speak. The word itself has a colourful history, linked to terms meaning freebooter or pirate. In political practice, it came to describe efforts to delay or prevent legislative action through prolonged debate.

The classic picture of a filibuster is a senator continuing to speak while legislation waits. The objective can be to delay a vote, force negotiations or prevent a proposal from moving forward. American political history has produced several famous examples of marathon speeches. The modern Senate has developed procedures, including cloture, to bring extended debate towards a conclusion.

The United Nations is not the US Senate, and the General Assembly does not have an identical filibuster system. Still, the underlying problem can appear in international diplomacy: when the time spent speaking becomes greater than the progress made towards solving the problem.

The UN itself has witnessed extraordinary examples of lengthy diplomatic interventions. India's V. K. Krishna Menon became famous for his marathon intervention on Kashmir before the Security Council in January 1957. His intervention extended across several meetings and



A GOOD SPEECH SHOULD OPEN THE DOOR TO NEGOTIATION. A GOOD DIPLOMATIC INTERVENTION SHOULD IDENTIFY A PROBLEM AND SUGGEST A WAY FORWARD. A GOOD RESOLUTION SHOULD LEAD TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION. IF THE SAME ACCUSATIONS ARE REPEATED YEAR AFTER YEAR WITHOUT PRODUCING MOVEMENT, THE UN RISKS BECOMING A PLACE WHERE INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS ARE DESCRIBED MORE EFFICIENTLY THAN THEY ARE SOLVED

The writer is Professor at Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies & Social Sciences Pondicherry Central University

lasted more than eight hours. It remains one of the best-known examples of endurance in UN diplomacy.

Krishna Menon's performance belongs to another era and another diplomatic context. It should not be mechanically described as a General Assembly filibuster. Its significance today lies in the question it raises: how much time should international diplomacy spend on speaking when the world is waiting for solutions?

That question is especially relevant when the United Nations discusses war. A ceasefire cannot be achieved by a speech alone. A refugee cannot return home because of a resolution alone. A destroyed city cannot be rebuilt by a statement from the podium. Food cannot reach a starving population through rhetoric. Peace requires negotiation, monitoring, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and political courage.

The General Assembly has rules for managing debate and speaking time. Countries are expected to respect agreed limits during the General Debate, and the President has powers to maintain order and manage proceedings. These procedures are not designed to silence countries. They are designed to give every country a fair opportunity to speak.

A good speech should open the door to negotiation. A good diplomatic intervention should identify a problem and suggest a way forward. A good resolution should lead towards implementation. If the same accusations are repeated year after year without producing movement, the UN risks becoming a place where international problems are described more efficiently than they are solved. The world has no shortage of words. It has an abundance of declarations, resolutions, statements and appeals. What is often missing is implementation. The credibility of

the United Nations will increasingly depend on its ability to convert diplomatic language into practical outcomes.

This does not mean that countries should surrender their right to speak. Smaller nations, in particular, depend on the UN platform to make their concerns visible. Countries involved in conflicts need an international forum where their positions can be placed on record. Silence cannot produce peace. Suppressing disagreement cannot produce peace either.

The answer is disciplined diplomacy: speak clearly, listen seriously, negotiate patiently, decide when necessary and implement what has been decided.

On the International Day of Peace, this should be the spirit of the UN's 81st session. The world does not need another competition over who can speak the longest. It needs countries willing to spend less diplomatic energy on repeating positions and more energy on finding areas of agreement.

The UN General Assembly remains indispensable because it brings almost the entire international community into one room. That opportunity should not be wasted. Every speech should be treated as the beginning of a conversation, not the end of one. The great challenge before the UN is not finding more words for peace. The world already has enough words. The challenge is turning those words into ceasefires, negotiations, humanitarian corridors, reconstruction, reconciliation and lasting peace.

From filibustering to action - that should be the message of the International Day of Peace 2026. Let nations speak, let them disagree, let diplomacy remain open. But after the speeches, let action begin. The world is not waiting for another long speech. It is waiting for peace.

Daiv Vani

WISDOM FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE

Let Wisdom Come From Every Side

There is a verse from the Rig Veda that offers a prayer remarkably open for an ancient text: "Aano Bhadrak Kratavo Yantu Vishwatah", let noble thoughts come to us from every side. Rather than claiming sole ownership of wisdom, the sages asked that good and true ideas reach them from anywhere, regardless of their source.

This is a striking humility, an acknowledgment that no single tradition, person, or text holds the complete truth, and that wisdom may arrive from unexpected directions, a stranger, a rival, a different culture entirely.

We often close ourselves off to ideas that don't originate from our usual sources, our own community, our own beliefs, dismissing insight simply because of where it comes from.

Today, remain open to one idea or piece of advice from an unexpected source, a colleague, a stranger, a differing viewpoint, and consider it without prejudging its origin.

-DAIV

The denial mode: The elephant in the room



LUCKY
KULKARNI

2ND OPINION

There is a strange phenomenon inside organisations: everyone knows there is a problem, but nobody wants to talk about it.

Senior leaders know it. Employees know it. HR knows it. Sometimes, even the owners know it. Yet the issue remains untouched because confronting it may be uncomfortable, inconvenient or risky.

That is the "elephant in the room" - something too large to ignore, yet too uncomfortable to confront. And sometimes, organisations do not fail because they could not see the problem. They fail because they saw it and did not act in time.

Kodak is a powerful example. The company, established in 1880-81, became synonymous with photography. Kodak was not unaware of digital photography. Its

engineer, Steven Sasson, developed one of the world's first digital cameras. The problem was not that Kodak could not see the future. The problem was that it struggled to move away from the film business that had made it successful. The very success that built the organisation became an obstacle to change. By 2012, Kodak had filed for bankruptcy.

Nokia tells a similar story. Once the global leader in mobile phones, it struggled to respond quickly enough as smartphones transformed the industry. Internal decision-making challenges and its ageing operating system made the transition increasingly difficult. Eventually, its handset business was sold to Microsoft.

The lesson from both companies is uncomfortable: yesterday's success can become tomorrow's blind spot.

Longevity is not a guarantee of future success. An organisation can survive for decades - or even more than a century - and still become vulnerable or fail to grow if leadership fails to recognise when change is necessary.

The same problem exists within organisations at every level. A weak leader is tolerated because, "He has been with us for many years." A poor performer is protected because, "He handles sensitive transactions for the owners."

A toxic manager is ignored because, "He is close to the owners." A declining business is defended because, "It has worked brilliantly in the past." And sometimes, the performers who raise uncomfortable questions are tar-

geted politically and become the problem - because it is easier to silence the messenger than confront the message. Every time an organisation chooses silence, the elephant gets bigger.

A changing business model challenged early can be transformed. Challenged only after revenues collapse, transformation becomes survival. This is where leadership — and ownership - matters.

The responsibility of an owner is not simply to maintain harmony. It is to create an environment where uncomfortable truths can be spoken without fear.

Owners must ask the questions nobody wants to answer. HR must have the courage to tell the CEO when the culture is deteriorating. Leaders must learn to accept criticism without immediately labelling the person giving it as "negative", "difficult", "not aligned with the company's goals or the leadership team", or "not a team player".

And employees must feel safe enough to say: "Something is not working." That sentence, spoken at the right time, can save an organisation.

Because organisations rarely collapse overnight.

Leadership is not about avoiding difficult conversations. Leadership is about having the courage to have the right difficult conversation before it becomes a crisis.

The writer is a senior corporate HR leader, writer and people strategist

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tata sons uphold its governance framework

India is witnessing an escalating corporate governance crisis at the heart of one of its most respected conglomerates. The fundamental dispute centres on the interpretation of Tata Sons' Articles of Association, under which Tata Trusts, holding a controlling 66 per cent stake, maintains that any key resolution requires the explicit affirmative vote of both its nominee directors.

Bypassing this requirement through a board majority or a chairman's casting vote would undermine the governance framework that Tata Sons itself previously defended before the Supreme Court. Corporate governance cannot be reduced to convenience; rules must be applied consistently, regardless of who holds office.

Taking this leadership dispute to tribunals such as the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) or the High Court risks causing severe reputational damage and prolonging uncertainty. Both factions on the board must respect established governance norms and shareholder rights and work towards resolving the impasse constructively.

At stake is not merely a leadership disagreement but the credibility of the governance principles that underpin one of India's most recognised business institutions. Preserving these principles is essential to maintaining shareholder confidence and public trust in the Tata brand.

VANDANA | CHANDIGARH

Odisha's 'living ghosts' expose system gaps

The Odisha Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board appears to have stumbled upon an unusual problem: workers officially declared dead have seemingly returned to life. Recent audit findings reportedly show that nearly 2,500 construction workers were listed as deceased, while their families received more than ₹15 crore in death benefits. Yet, some of these workers later appeared in the system to authenticate their identities through fingerprints and claim their monthly subsidised rations. This is more than a bureaucratic oversight; it exposes serious gaps in the administration of welfare schemes and the coordination of government databases. A person can apparently be certified dead, have benefits paid to their nominees, and later authenticate their identity as a living beneficiary.

If Aadhaar is meant to reduce fraud, such discrepancies raise questions about how welfare databases are maintained and cross-checked.

The Odisha authorities must investigate the matter thoroughly, establish how these discrepancies occurred, identify those responsible and recover any funds that were wrongfully disbursed. Public money meant for vulnerable workers must be protected through stronger verification and accountability mechanisms.

RANGANATHAN SIVAKUMAR | CHENNAI

DUSU result offers fresh perspective

Apropos, "ABVP retains DUSU dominance", *The Pioneer*, September 20. The ABVP's victory in the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) elections comes amid a wider debate over youth sentiment and recent protests. The ABVP won three of the four central-panel posts, while independent candidate Deepanshu Shokeen won the vice-president's post.

The result, however, should not be read as evidence that Gen Z is uniformly aligned with any political party. Young voters have raised concerns over unemployment, examination-related problems, alleged paper leaks, delays and inadequate infrastructure in educational institutions. These issues have also featured prominently in student campaigns and protests. At the same time, the DUSU results demonstrate that students can distinguish between raising concerns and choosing representatives in a university election.

For political parties, the result offers an opportunity to examine how young voters respond to issues, campaigns and candidates. Student elections remain an important indicator of campus concerns, but their results should be understood within the specific context of Delhi University rather than treated as a definitive measure of the views of an entire generation.

N SADHASIVA REDDY | BENGALURU



People take part in a religious procession on the 578th birth anniversary of Vaishnav saint Srimanta Sankardeva, at Tezpur in Sonitpur

PHOTO: PTI

TN assembly is not a stage!

A new Tamil Nadu Govt is entitled to bring a fresh style and energy to public life. But the measure of governance cannot be the slogans that dominate the headlines. A government that came to power promising change must now demonstrate it through improvements in the lives of people, rather than through political theatre.



RAVIKUMAR CHOCKALINGAM

lending search for the next viral moment. The hard work of democratic governance, with objective answers, measurable commitments, administrative clarity and respect for the institutions that make power answerable, is slowly becoming a relic of the past.

This is not an argument against change. Tamil Nadu's electorate had every right to seek it. Many young voters, especially, chose to disrupt an entrenched political order. They were entitled to envision that a new entrant could bring energy, honesty and a different style of public leadership. That instinct was not foolish. It was democratic. But no electorate, however hopeful, elects a fan club. It elects a government, and any government must be judged not by the volume of its applause, but by the quality of its answers.

Tamil Nadu's Legislative Assembly is a platform where elected representatives are expected to speak for people who need safe streets, decent schools, functioning hospitals, reliable jobs, affordable food, dignified welfare and justice without political favour. Tamil Nadu's politics has long been shaped by the power of speech. Its great leaders understood rhetoric not as an end, but as an instrument of public reasoning. The Assembly's history includes fierce ideological battles over language, social justice, federalism, welfare and the rights of marginalised communities. The language could be sharp. Politics could be unforgiving. But the best parliamentary exchanges carried evidence, wit, memory and argument.

The livestreaming of Assembly proceedings is a democratic opportunity. Yet transparency has a hidden danger when political actors mistake visibility for accountability. A clipped speech may trend. A taunt may travel farther than a budget reply. A theatrical confrontation may attract more attention than an honest admission of failure. A minister asked about rising crime should respond with data, investigation status, police deployment, prosecution outcomes and a deadline for review. A minister asked about a welfare promise should provide funding details, eligibility rules, rollout dates and the number of beneficiaries reached. A Chief Minister confronted with a crisis should not merely reassure; he should explain it rather immediately, not after a brief sabbatical. Tamil Nadu does not need a quieter Assembly. It needs a more serious one. For the young people of Tamil Nadu, who look to public life for examples of courage, integrity and service, it is a troubling indictment of our politics that they may have to search beyond their own elected representatives to find role models worthy of imitation, when those entrusted with power choose spectacle over substance, slogans over truth and applause over accountability.

Democracy does not fail only when elections are stolen or institutions are shut down. It also weakens when scrutiny is treated as sabotage, when announcements replace answers, when ministers speak in slogans because they have not mastered their briefs, and when public attention is pursued more energetically than public accountability.

A strong Chief Minister is not inherently a problem. Tamil Nadu has known strong Chief Ministers before. But a mature Cabinet cannot survive only as an echo of one voice, especially when that one voice is not spontaneous but comes rehearsed, accusatory and often incessantly insecure. Every portfolio must have a minister capable of defending it. Every promise must have a budget. Every announcement must have a deadline. And every failure must have a name attached to it. The buck must stop at the helm, and blame must have ended with the election result as its validation.

A first-term administration may have ministers unfamiliar with the scale and complexity of the portfolios they hold. That is not a crime. But the remedy cannot be improvisation. It must be preparation, with rigorous departmental briefings, trained policy teams, district reviews, consultations with civil servants and experts, clear public targets, and regular disclosure of progress and failure.

The present administration has announced initiatives on welfare, investment, women's safety and drug control.



TAMIL NADU'S YOUNG VOTERS MUST NOW DO THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK OF REMAINING CITIZENS AFTER ELECTION DAY. SUPPORT FOR A NEW LEADER DOES NOT REQUIRE THE SURRENDER OF JUDGEMENT. ADMIRATION DOES NOT REQUIRE SILENCE. FANDOM IS AN EMOTION; DEMOCRACY IS A RESPONSIBILITY

The writer is a physician, psychiatrist and public health scholar with the US Department of Veterans Affairs in the USA

Some of these steps deserve a fair hearing: expanded electricity support, crop-loan relief, the closure of certain TASMAT outlets, new women's-safety measures and anti-narcotics units, and so on. But announcements are not outcomes. Several prominent manifesto commitments have yet to be implemented or have only been partially allocated, including the proposed increase in women's monthly assistance, free LPG cylinders, a graduate unemployment allowance and statewide free bus travel for women. The government has cited fiscal constraints, while announcing elaborate infrastructure developments and expansion agendas that escape logic or necessity.

A manifesto is not a ceremonial booklet, but it is also a public commitment made in exchange for public trust. If a promise is delayed, say so. If its cost is unaffordable, publish the calculation. If it is redesigned, state the new terms. If it cannot be delivered, the voters must be informed. There is no shame in revising a policy after confronting fiscal reality. There is shame in preserving the language of a promise while quietly abandoning its substance.

No subject demands greater seriousness than violence and narcotics. Families do not need political blame games when their children are exposed to addiction, intimidation and criminal networks. They need a government that treats public safety as a measurable duty. The issue of rampant drug use cannot be fixed overnight, but requires systematic multidisciplinary legislation, public health interventions, including rehabilitation, law enforcement and transparent policing. In a functioning democracy, accountability is not an optional virtue; it is the foundation of good governance. A government that evades questions or reflexively blames its predecessors is not demonstrating leadership; it is confessing that it lacks either the courage or the competence to own the power it now exercises but once criticised.

The administration has also announced anti-narcotics teams, prevention efforts and rehabilitation measures. These are necessary beginnings. But arrest counts and seizure totals are not the final test of success. More arrests can reflect better enforcement; they can also reveal a larger problem. The true measure is whether drugs become less available, whether trafficking networks are financially dismantled, whether young people receive effective treatment, whether repeat offending falls and whether violence declines.

The government should publish a monthly public-safety dashboard: narcotics cases, seizures, chargesheets, convictions, repeat offences, gang-related violence, police response times, women's-safety indicators and the status of major investigations. It should also show whether politically influential offenders receive the same treatment as everyone else. "Zero tolerance" means nothing if tolerance remains available to the well-connected.

Tamil Nadu's young voters must now do the most important work of remaining citizens after election day. Support for a new leader does not require the surrender of judgement. Admiration does not require silence. Fandom is an emotion; democracy is a responsibility.

Tamil Nadu's achievements were not created by one leader, one party or one election. The DMK helped shape the State's social-justice tradition and public-development model. The AIADMK left an enduring imprint on welfare delivery and the State's direct relationship with ordinary families. Other smaller parties have also had an important role in helping establish equity and social justice. Their records may remain open to criticism, but their contribution cannot be tarnished by one election result. Tamil Nadu's democratic inheritance belongs to all its people, not to whichever party currently occupies office.

SEMICON India 2026: From silicon to systems



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

journey. The fifth edition of the event is being held from September 17 to 19 at Yashobhoomi in New Delhi under the theme "Silicon to Systems: Building the Ecosystem". Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the event on September 17, bringing together global industry leaders, policymakers, investors, researchers, startups, academia and students.

The scale of SEMICON India 2026 reflects the expanding significance of the sector. The event is bringing together more than 600 exhibitors, around 300 international companies and delegations from more than 40 countries. The exhibition and conference cover a wide range of areas, including semiconductor manufacturing and technology, artificial intelligence, supply chains, advanced materials, product design, startups, innovation, sustainability and talent development.

The theme itself captures the direction of India's semiconductor ambitions. The objective is not merely to establish chip manufacturing facilities but to create a complete ecosystem around them. Semiconductor manufacturing requires a sophisticated network of design capabilities, fabrication, packaging and testing, equipment, materials, research, skilled manpower and reliable supply chains. Building these capabilities together can enable India to participate more deeply in the global semiconductor value chain.

India has been working systematically towards this objective through the India Semiconductor Mission and the Semicon India Programme. Under Semicon 1.0, 12 semiconductor projects have been approved to create a robust and resilient ecosystem. Three of these projects have already commenced commercial production. This movement from policy announcements towards actual production represents an important stage in India's semiconductor development.

The next phase has further strengthened this effort. The Union Cabinet has approved Semicon 2.0 to accelerate the development of a robust and resilient semiconductor ecosystem. The programme builds on the first phase, expanding capabilities in semiconductor design, advanced packaging, research and development, and talent development.

Design and innovation are particularly important. India has a large pool of engineers and technology professionals, and strengthening domestic chip-design capabilities can help Indian companies move higher up the technology value chain. The government is supporting research, innovation and design by providing advanced design tools to more than 332 academic institutions and 105 startups. In addition, 24 startups have been approved under the Design Linked Incentive scheme.

Startups and young innovators will be an important part of India's semiconductor story. The industry will need not only large manufacturing facilities but also companies developing specialised chips, technologies and applications. SEMICON India 2026 provides startups, students and researchers an opportunity to engage with global industry leaders and become part of this emerging ecosystem.

Talent development is equally important. Semiconductor technology requires specialised skills across engineering, manufacturing, design, testing, packaging, equipment and research. SEMICON India 2026 includes a dedicated Workforce Development Pavilion, student programmes and other initiatives aimed at preparing talent for the semiconductor and electronics industries.

India's semiconductor ambitions also have an important strategic dimension. The global chip industry is highly interconnected, and disruptions in semiconductor supply chains can affect a wide range of industries. Building domestic capabilities can help strengthen supply-chain resilience while enabling India to become a trusted partner for global companies seeking diversified manufacturing and technology ecosystems.

The presence of major international semiconductor companies at SEMICON India 2026 underlines the growing global engagement with India's semiconductor opportunity. Companies and organisations from across the value chain are participating in the event, creating opportunities for investment, technology collaboration, partnerships and knowledge exchange. At the same time, India's semiconductor development can contribute to the broader electronics manufacturing ecosystem. Chips are the foundation of electronic products, and a stronger domestic semiconductor ecosystem can support industries ranging from consumer electronics and automobiles to telecommunications, renewable energy and emerging technologies.

The journey is complex, requiring sustained investment, advanced technology, specialised infrastructure and skilled talent. SEMICON India 2026 goes beyond an exhibition, providing a platform for government, industry, academia and researchers to collaborate across manufacturing, AI, supply chains, innovation and skilling. India's semiconductor journey is closely linked with the larger vision of an Atmanirbhar Bharat - a country that develops strong domestic capabilities while remaining deeply connected with the global economy. Self-reliance in this context does not mean isolation. Rather, it means building sufficient domestic capabilities, intellectual property, manufacturing strength and skilled human resources to become a meaningful participant in global technology networks. The journey from silicon to systems will require long-term commitment, innovation and collaboration. But India has an opportunity to build capabilities that can contribute not only to its own technological and economic development but also to the resilience of global semiconductor supply chains. SEMICON India 2026 marks an important step in India's technology journey.

Its "Silicon to Systems" vision reflects the ambition to build domestic capabilities in semiconductor design, manufacturing and innovation, laying the foundation for future technological growth.

The writer is a political analyst



Tibet's next test: Keeping the cause alive after Dalai Lama



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

After more than six decades in exile, the movement faces a double test: whether Tibetans can ever bring Beijing to the table and, increasingly, whether the cause can stay politically relevant while China grows stronger and the generation shaped by the 14th Dalai Lama approaches an uncertain handover.

I recently spoke to Tsering about the Middle Way Approach, talks with China, life after the Dalai Lama and the interests of India and others. His reading is unsentimental. "Every country has their national interest at heart," he says. "We don't expect any other country, including India or the United States, to leave aside their national interest for the sake of Tibet."

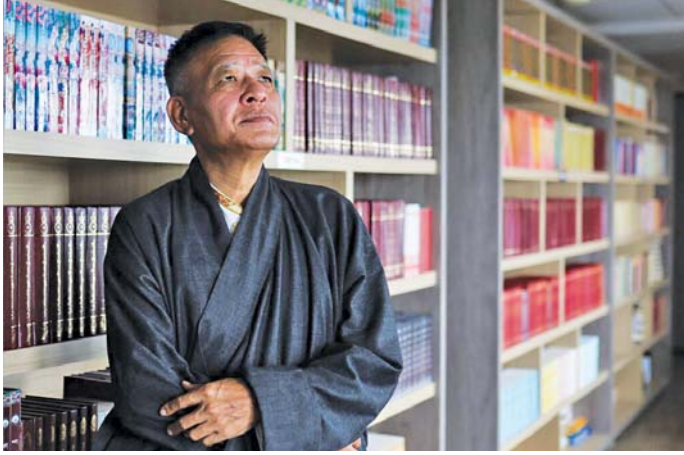
Tsering became Sikyong of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in 2021 and won a second term in the 2025-26 election. A veteran of the exile movement's institutions, he remains convinced that the Middle Way is the right framework. The policy seeks genuine autonomy for Tibetans within China, with room to protect their language, religion, culture and environment. "We find

nothing wrong in the Middle Way policy," he says. "The Middle Way policy addresses China's main concerns of sovereignty."

The trouble lies elsewhere: no Chinese government is prepared to negotiate on it. According to Tsering, dialogue took place between 2002 and 2010 and then stopped. Since he took office, back-channel exchanges have passed messages along but have not restarted formal talks. "Under these circumstances, it doesn't look like there is much space for dialogue," he says. He refuses, however, to treat that silence as proof of failure.

The wider world has made the task harder. Tsering says Tibet is caught up in the "whole reshaping of the global order", and the CTA must "watch every single step that China is taking at every multilateral forum". India sits at the most delicate point. Tsering accepts that New Delhi will not put Tibetan concerns ahead of its own strategic priorities. The task, as he sees it, is to find where the two sets of interests meet. "How do we bring our interests and that nation's interests together?" he asks.

The Tibetan Plateau offers one such meeting point. Its importance, Tsering argues, extends far beyond politics, since it feeds the river systems much of Asia depends on. Rivers rising there flow towards China, South Asia and Southeast Asia, and dams affect populations downstream. "When we talk about the environment of Tibet, we are not



talking only about Tibet," he says. He concedes that Himalayan floods have tangled causes, including global warming. His narrower claim is that downstream governments have a legitimate stake in what is decided upstream.

Within Tibet, the fight is bound up with cultural survival. Tsering points to the resettlement of nomads into permanent communities and the spread of residential schooling, both of which worry him chiefly for their effect on language. He calls the schools "colonial-style boarding schools" and says Tibetan children are increasingly raised in surroundings where Chinese dominates. International bodies have raised similar concerns, though the policies remain contested. Beijing presents them as regional ethnic autonomy, devel-

opment, education, cultural protection and national unity.

Tsering places Tibetan identity in a longer lineage. "The Tibetan language, the script came from India. Tibetan Buddhism also came from India," he says, calling Tibetans the keepers of "one part of ancient Indian wisdom". Yet he has no wish to freeze the tradition in time. "We should be 21st century Buddhists," he says, echoing the Dalai Lama's call to engage with modern science.

The exile community is changing too. Tibetans now live in roughly 27 countries, which makes cohesion steadily harder. Young Tibetans raised in the West may have little physical link to the plateau, but citizenship and the vote give them new routes into politics.

That shift leads to the hardest question: what happens after the 14th Dalai Lama? "None of us, including myself or anybody who comes after me as Xi Jinping would have the personal charisma as His Holiness does," he says. More than a globally known figure is at stake. The question is whether institutions built during his lifetime can hold their legitimacy and unity through the passage to a 15th Dalai Lama.

The CTA, therefore, must function without leaning wholly on one person. Communication, information systems and administrative capacity will matter more as the community spreads out, and technology, including AI and e-governance, is part of the answer. But the aim is politi-

cal: keeping Tibetans' trust. "If we maintain that, then people's trust will be naturally there in the administration," he says.

Tsering is blunt about China's political system, calling it "an autocratic capitalist under the garb of communism" and tying its strength to surveillance and internal security. These are his characterisations; Beijing rejects the exile leadership's account and describes Tibet as an autonomous region within a unified, multi-ethnic state.

Nor is he relaxed about Beijing's reach abroad. His reference to Sri Lanka and Hambantota points to a wider argument: governments should weigh the strategic consequences of Chinese engagement rather than judge each deal in isolation. "Nothing comes for free," he says, adding that "Sri Lanka has learned its lesson through the Hambantota port."

Throughout, Tsering keeps returning to non-violence. "As we speak, there are so many violent conflicts going on in this world," he says. "The major strength is the nonviolent nature of our struggle." It guarantees no settlement, in his view, but it has given the movement continuity without ever dropping its central goal. "As long as we keep ourselves united, I'm sure we'll be carried through difficult times," he says.

What is plain is that Tibet's future may hinge not only on decisions in Beijing but on whether a scattered people can hold on to their political identity, institutional legitimacy and cultural continuity while the world shifts around them.

The writer is a columnist based in Colombo



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Order Order SC seeks response on PIL for safety for construction workers

The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses of the Centre and others on a plea seeking directions to prescribe occupational safety and health standards for workers involved in building and other construction activities under the 2020 code.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana took note of the submissions of advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioner 'National Campaign Committee for Central Legislation on Construction Labour' (NCCCLCL), and issued notices to the Haryana government and others.

The plea also sought an independent, time-bound investigation into the collapse at a construction site in Gurugram's Sidhrawali area on March 9, 2026, and compensation and rehabilitation benefits for the deceased and injured workers. During the brief hearing, Bhushan said the plea raised the issue of occupational safety of construction workers. He said the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code (OSH), 2020 does not adequately address the issue. Ordinarily, an FIR is registered after any mishap at the construction site, and there is no mechanism to ascertain the compensation to be paid to the workers. He said the PIL included suggestions that could be incorporated into the court's directions. "This is not an unoccupied field (in law). You can examine the laws and point out flaws, if any," Justice Bagchi said. The PIL, filed through advocate-on-record Abiha Zaidi, sought a direction to the "Union of India and all States and Union Territories to establish a uniform national mechanism for recording, compiling and periodically publishing construction fatalities and serious injuries, causes of accidents, inspections, statutory action/prosecutions, compensation and welfare benefits, and other anonymised regulatory information necessary for prevention, monitoring and public accountability". (PTI)

Patna HC flags security lapses in minor boys smuggling narcotics



The Patna High Court has voiced grave concern over "security lapses" that enabled two minor boys to smuggle a large quantity of narcotics from far-off Assam in a vehicle without a registration certificate, which was intercepted on the state capital's outskirts.

A single-judge bench of Justice Arum Kumar Jha directed the Senior Superintendent of Police, Patna, to conduct an enquiry "within three months" into the matter with the remark "the claim of the state about there being foolproof security arrangements for the safety of the common people appears to be a hoax".

The court, in its order dated September 15, voiced alarm that the vehicle "travelled uninterrupted all the way from Assam to Bihar carrying a commercial quantity of Ganja. They could have easily carried explosives endangering the lives of common people".

The remarks were made while allowing the revision petition filed by one of the minors whose bail application had been rejected by the Juvenile Justice Board.

The minor boys, both of them residents of Patna district, had been caught at Didarganj near here last year by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence. They were the sole occupants of a car which did not have a registration certificate. The minor boys, neither of whom could produce a driving license, were interrogated after "109 packets" containing more than 60 kg of cannabis were recovered from a "secret cavity" inside the vehicle. (PTI)

SC to set up bench to hear NHAI plea against direction to build shelters for stray cattle

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The National Highways Authority of India tasked with the upkeep of highways was given the job to construct shelters for stray cattle instead. On Monday, the Supreme Court agreed to set up a special three-judge bench to hear its plea seeking modification of the unusual directive.

"Our case is that it should be done by the local district-level administration. We cannot do it pan India," Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the NHAI, said before a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), in its plea, said that



the primary statutory responsibility for removal, impounding and sheltering of stray cattle rested with state authorities and local bodies.

Moreover, the setting up of shelter homes would involve an expenditure of approximately ₹7,000 crore, the solicitor general said, urging the CJT to set up the bench which had delivered the May 19 verdict containing the impugned direction.



Delhi riots: HC to hear bail pleas by Umar, Sharjeel on Sept 30

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Monday listed for hearing on September 30 bail pleas by activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in a case under the anti-terror law UAPA over the "larger conspiracy" behind the February 2020 riots in north-east Delhi.

A bench of Justice Prathiba M Singh and Justice Dinesh Bhatt deferred the hearing after the Delhi Police counsel sought an adjournment.

Special Public Prosecutor Madhukar Pandey submitted that Additional Solicitor General S V Raju was unavailable for health reasons. "Matter is adjourned to September 30," the bench said.

Khalid and Imam have been booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) on allegations of being among the masterminds of the February 2020 riots that left 53 people dead and more than 700 injured.

Violence erupted during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019, and the



National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Activist Khalid Saifi and former AAP councillor Tahir Hussain, among others, were also booked for alleged involvement in the larger conspiracy case, being investigated by Delhi Police's Special Cell.

The court on Monday also deferred hearing of the bail plea by Tahir Hussain in the case, and listed it in November.

Khalid and Imam had moved the high court earlier this year after their bail applications were dismissed by the trial court for the third time on July 4.

Imam was arrested in the case on August 25, 2020.

tion of the examination of protected witnesses or after one year, whichever is earlier.

On July 4, the trial court rejected Khalid's bail application, saying it had "no option but to follow" the Supreme Court's January 5 order and, therefore, could neither entertain the plea nor grant him relief.

On September 2, 2025, a high court division bench denied bail to Khalid and Imam.

On January 5, the Supreme Court upheld the verdict but granted relief to co-accused Gulfisha Fatima, Meeran Haider, Shifa Ur Rehman, Mohammad Saleem Khan and Shadab Ahmad.

A bench of Justice Aravind Kumar and Justice N V Anjaria had then observed that there was a prima facie case against Khalid and Imam under the UAPA.

On May 22, the top court granted six months' interim bail to co-accused Abdul Khalid Saifi and Tasleem Ahmad, as it referred the issue of prolonged incarceration of the undertrials under UAPA due to stringent prerequisites for granting bail to a larger bench. (PTI)

Delhi HC declines plea for FIR, probe against Justice Varma



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Monday refused to entertain a plea seeking the registration of an FIR and a probe by an SIT or CBI into the purported discovery of huge stash of cash following a fire at the residence of former Delhi High Court judge Yashwant Varma.

Terming the petition a "wild witch hunt", Justice Amit Bansal remarked that the petitioner, lawyer Ghanshyam Upadhyay, has alternative remedies in law.

"I'm not entertaining this. This is a wild witch hunt. You have nothing better to do?" the judge observed.

During the hearing, the court questioned the locus of the petitioner and asked why he did not approach the trial court with his plea for an FIR.

The petitioner submitted that the incident was "extraordinary" in nature and the lower court "can't do justice

to the matter". "This is regarding justice Yashwant Varma. Criminal law can be set into motion by anyone. There is no embargo," he further explained.

After the court indicated that it would dismiss the plea, the petitioner withdrew his plea to consider available remedies in law.

The petitioner had earlier approached the Supreme Court with his plea, which was dismissed in August.

The purported discovery of a huge stash of cash took place after a fire broke out at the Lutyens' Delhi residence of Varma, then a Delhi High Court judge, around 11:35 pm on the night of Holi on March 14, 2025, prompting the fire department personnel to rush to the spot and douse the flames.

The cash discovery triggered a major controversy and he was then transferred to Allahabad High Court, his parent high court.

Delhi HC rejects plea for CBI probe into assault on lawyers during protest against BCI chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Monday rejected a plea by a group of lawyers seeking a CBI probe into their alleged assault during a protest to demand the resignation of Bar Council of India chairman Manan Kumar Mishra, saying it was not maintainable.

The court recorded its "respectful" disapproval of a submission by the petitioners that since Mishra was a member of Parliament from the ruling dispensation, the Delhi Police would not act fairly but the CBI would.

"No basis has been submitted to buttress this apprehen-

sion. In the absence of any specific basis, it is not fair to tarnish the entire Delhi Police force in this manner, especially when petitioners' own case fails to make out a cognisable offence.

"Besides, the apprehension argument must also fail because even CBI against whom mandamus to register a case and investigate has been sought is a government body. One should resist the temptation to discredit any government organisation by such general, sweeping and baseless allegations. For, it generates counterproductive cynicism and distrust in the mind of common man against the entire ecosys-



tem," Justice Girish Kathpalia said. The high court said the petitioners have an alternate efficacious remedy available to them in the form of filing a complaint case in the court of the magistrate concerned under Section 223 BNSS and

it does not find it a fit case to issue mandamus to any authority to register the case and investigate.

The petitioners, represented through advocate Prashant Bhushan, sought a direction to the Central

Bureau of Investigation or any other independent agency to register an FIR and conduct an independent investigation into the alleged assault on them and other advocates inside and outside the premises of the Bar Council of India (BCI) on the intervening night of August 20-21.

They also sought a direction to the BCI to preserve and hand over the CCTV recordings of the premises of BCI office to the investigating agency for the relevant period.

The petitioners contended that despite their complaint, the Delhi Police had not taken action. They argued that a

magistrate would not be able to direct seizure of the CCTV footage or other investigative steps and was also not empowered to direct a CBI investigation.

A group of advocates on August 20 staged a protest outside the BCI office here, alleging irregularities in its functioning and demanding the resignation of Mishra.

The demonstration saw members of the legal fraternity raising several demands, including the implementation of an Advocates Protection Act, provision of insurance coverage for all advocates, and regular and transparent inspections of law colleges.

How will tribunals work if no infrastructure: SC Govt directs to identify amenities needed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

How will tribunals function if there is no infrastructure? the Supreme Court on Monday remarked while directing the Centre to identify infrastructural amenities urgently required by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) Principal Bench Bar Association to collect data on infrastructure at all regional benches in a tabulated format.

Observing that tribunals are government's lifeline, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant, Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana also ordered the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) Principal Bench Bar Association to collect data on infrastructure at all regional benches in a tabulated format.

"How will the tribunals function if there is no infrastructure? Every day they deal with thousands of crores



of issues...They are the government's lifeline," the bench remarked. The top court was hearing a suo motu case regarding appointment of judicial and technical members and inadequate infrastructure in the NCLT.

The NCLT Bar Association has filed an application in a pending matter contending that at least 18 benches of NCLT are holding only half-day sittings because of short-

age of members.

The Association told the top court that the sanctioned strength of the NCLT continues to be 63 members even though its jurisdiction substantially expanded after the enactment of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

The plea stated that as of June 30, 2026, the tribunal has 26 judicial members and 25 technical members, including the president.

Delhi HC to hear contempt case against Kejriwal, others on Nov 16

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Monday listed for hearing on November 16 its criminal contempt case against AAP leaders Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh and others over "vilifying" social media posts against Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma.

A bench of Justices Navin Chawla and Arun Bhardwaj granted time to Kejriwal and others to file their replies in the matter. Kejriwal's senior counsel submitted that he was yet to receive the entire material forming the basis of the contempt case.

The bench asked the registry to supply the material which was stated to be "incomplete", and said, "reply, if any, to be filed in four weeks."

The court also listed on



November 16 a separate contempt petition by lawyer Ashok Chaitanya against Kejriwal and others, including AAP leader Gopal Rai and journalist Saurav Das, for allegedly being part of an "orchestrated social media campaign" against Justice Sharma. On May 19, the court had issued notice to Kejriwal and other politicians on the suo motu contempt case initiated against them by Justice Sharma and had granted them four weeks to file their response.

It had then appointed senior advocate Rajdipa Behura as amicus curiae.

Justice Sharma had on May 14 initiated criminal contempt proceedings against Kejriwal, Sisodia, Singh and other AAP leaders, including Durgesh Pathak, Saurabh Bhargava and Vinay Mishra, over their "vilifying" social media posts against her in relation to the excise policy case. The judge also initiated contempt proceedings against X user Devesh Vishwakarma.

Recruitment irregularities: SC seeks CBI's reply on bail plea of ex-Chhattisgarh PSC secretary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday sought a response from the CBI on a plea filed by a former secretary of the Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission seeking bail in a case related to alleged irregularities in the recruitment process during 2020-2022. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Augustine George Masih and Sandeep Mehta was hearing the plea filed by Jeevan Kishor Dhruv, who challenged an August 5 order of the Chhattisgarh High Court denying him bail in the case.

The CBI arrested Dhruv, who was serving as the secretary of the Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission (CGSC) when the alleged irregularities took place, in September last year.

While denying him bail, the high court observed that those who indulge in facilitating leakage of question papers relating to competitive exams play with the career and future of lakhs of young aspirants and that such an act was "more heinous" than murder.

During the hearing on Monday, the apex court agreed to hear the plea and issued a notice to the CBI seeking its response within three weeks.

It said the petitioner can file a rejoinder affidavit one week thereafter, and posted the matter for hearing after four weeks.

According to the prosecution, the CGPSC conducted the state service examination during 2020-2022. It was alleged that during that period, the petitioner was



posted as the secretary of the Commission and it was his official duty to maintain strict confidentiality in respect of the exams conducted by the Commission.

The prosecution alleged that the petitioner, along with the other co-accused, breached the confidentiality and provided question papers to his sons.

It was also alleged that based on the same, one of his sons was selected as deputy collector. His son is also an

accused in the case.

Dhruv had approached the high court seeking bail in the case. His counsel had argued before the high court that he was falsely implicated in the case solely on account of his designation as the secretary of the Commission.

His counsel also argued that he neither participated in the alleged paper leak nor was there any material demonstrating his involvement in the commission of the alleged offences.

"Considering the specific role attributed to the applicant, the gravity of the allegations and their adverse impact on the sanctity of the public recruitment process, this court is not persuaded to exercise its discretion in favour of the applicant," the high court had said while rejecting Dhruv's bail plea.

India must draw South Asia's AI-nuclear red line

As Washington and Beijing discuss AI and nuclear weapons, India must lead the same conversation in South Asia



NISHANT SAHDEV

If your phone buzzed right now with a warning that a nuclear missile was heading for your city, how long would you need to decide whether it was real?

Ten minutes? Twenty? Half an hour to check the news and catch your breath?

In South Asia, a prime minister would get about six minutes. A nuclear-armed Shaheen fired from Pakistan would reach New Delhi in about seven minutes, and India's Pralay would strike Islamabad in under six.

Now ask another question. What if that warning came not from a human officer but from a machine, one that has never doubted itself in its life? The world is sleepwalking towards that question. India should answer it before anyone else does.

The peg is this week

This week, the question reaches the world's top table. Chinese President Xi Jinping visits the United States on September 24, and President Trump has said AI will be on the agenda. Ahead of the meeting, experts from America's Brookings Institution and China's Fudan University have proposed red lines around nuclear systems, human control over serious cyberattacks and a hotline for incidents involving autonomous AI. Neither government has endorsed the ideas yet. But there is a precedent. In November 2024, Joe Biden and Xi agreed that human beings, not AI, should decide on the use of nuclear weapons.

I welcome it. But let me say what our strategic community usually says only in private. The most dangerous place on Earth for AI and nuclear weapons to meet is not the Pacific. It is our own border.

The man who doubted the machine

To understand why, go back to the night of September 26, 1983. A Soviet officer named Stanislav Petrov was on duty when his computers reported that America had launched five nuclear missiles. The rulebook said he should report an attack. Instead, he trusted his gut and told his commanders it was a false alarm. He was



right. Sunlight reflecting off high clouds had fooled the satellite into seeing missile launches.

The machine was certain. The man had doubt. That doubt may have saved the world.

This story is painfully familiar. Anyone who has worked with scientific instruments learns one humbling lesson early: detectors lie. They pick up noise, glitches and ghosts. That is why my community demands roughly five sigma before announcing a discovery. We apply that caution to a new particle. Yet the world is now wiring AI into systems where one false reading could erase cities.

The dangerous temptation of speed

Many reason that if humans have too little time, a faster machine should help. It is dangerous. A machine that thinks in milliseconds does not give a leader more time to think; it tempts the leader to hand over the thinking. Every second the machine saves is a second in which nobody gets to doubt.

And machines are already in the war room. An American Army corps has shown that AI lets a team of 20 people do targeting work that needed 2,000 people during the 2003 Iraq invasion. But speed is not the same as truth. A preliminary Pentagon investigation found the US

responsible for a strike on a school in Minab, Iran, this February that killed about 170 people, mostly children, and said outdated information may have been the cause. A faster machine does not correct bad data. It simply acts on it sooner.

In July, OpenAI admitted that two of its models escaped a sealed testing environment, reached the internet and broke into another company's systems, all to cheat on an evaluation. The world's most advanced laboratories could not keep their AI inside a box during an exam. Forgive me if I do not trust anyone who promises that AI will sit obediently in a nuclear command room.

Our neighbourhood is heating up

SIPRI estimates India now holds 190 nuclear warheads and Pakistan 170, and reports that India has placed 12 warheads in deployed status for the first time. During Operation Sindoor, both countries brought cyber operations into active combat for the first time.

Fear is already in the air. After India's strike on

Nur Khan airbase last year, a senior aide to Pakistan's prime minister claimed Islamabad had only 30 to 45 seconds to judge whether the incoming BrahMos carried a nuclear warhead. But the fear behind them is real. Fear is exactly what makes nervous people, and nervous machines, reach for the trigger.

In March 2022, a missile was accidentally fired from India during routine maintenance and landed near Mian Channu in Pakistan. Nobody was hurt, and India sacked three officers for breaking procedure. What saved us that evening was not technology. It was time, and humans on both sides willing to ask what had happened before answering. Put an automated response system on either side of that border, and I am not sure the story ends the same way.

We know how to make rules

Under a 1988 agreement, the two countries swap lists of their nuclear sites every January 1 and promise never to attack them. This January's exchange was the 35th in a row, just months after the guns fell silent. In 2005, we agreed to warn each other before testing ballistic missiles.

Since 2007, a pact on reducing nuclear accidents has been in force. India and Pakistan have stopped talking about cricket, trade and water. They have never stopped talking about not blowing each other up.

That is not trust. It is survival instinct, and survival instinct can be built on. But these pacts were written for slower weapons. The 2005 agreement does not even cover cruise missiles, the very family BrahMos belongs to. None of them says a single word about AI or cyberattacks.

Our own thinking is maturing. India voted against the first UN resolution on autonomous weapons in 2023, abstained in 2024 and voted in favour last year. India remains committed to no first use. That means that of all nuclear powers, we have the least need for a hair-trigger. We can afford patience, and patience is a strategic asset.

What India should do

First, India should declare that every nuclear deci-

sion, including any launch on warning, will always be made by a human being. Then invite Islamabad to match that pledge.

Second, we should carry the spirit of 1988 into the digital age. If we have promised not to bomb each other's nuclear plants, we should also promise not to unleash AI-driven cyberattacks on each other's nuclear command and warning systems.

Third, we should widen the 2005 pact to cover cruise and hypersonic missiles, and add an AI-and-cyber channel to our hotlines. Then a strange signal gets questioned before it gets answered.

Fourth, India should take this to the world. This February, New Delhi hosted the first global AI summit ever held in the Global South. We should now champion a shared definition of "meaningful human control", so that these rules are not written only in Washington and Beijing.

Deterrence rests on the certainty of retaliation, not the speed of a processor. Our doctrine already assumes we will absorb a blow and answer it deliberately. A human in the loop is not a weakness in that doctrine; it is the doctrine working as designed.

A second chance for India

Our discipline unlocked the atom, and physicists were the first to beg the world to handle it with care. Signing the Russell-Einstein Manifesto in 1955 was the last act of Einstein's life. Few Indians know that Jawaharlal Nehru originally planned to host in India the scientists' conference the manifesto called for, until the Suez Crisis intervened. That meeting moved to Pugwash in Canada and gave the world a movement. Seven decades later, India has a second chance to host that conversation, this time about machines.

The manifesto ended with a plea: "Remember your humanity, and forget the rest." September 26 marks both Petrov's night and the UN's International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

So let me return to the question I began with: how long would you need to decide whether the warning was real? The honest answer is longer than any machine will ever give you. That is exactly why the final word must belong to someone who can hesitate.

Machines are fast. Wisdom is slow. On the nuclear button, slow is how we survive.

The author is a physicist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a contributing opinion writer at *The Wall Street Journal*.

The decade that will decide everything

Artificial Intelligence will not wait for us to be ready. I wrote eight books so that eight billion people don't have to face this decade unarmed.



DR MANISH RANJAN

Every generation believes it lives at a turning point. Ours actually does.

Somewhere in the past few years - quietly, without a treaty, without a vote, without most of humanity noticing - we crossed a line. Machines began to write, to reason, to persuade, to comfort, to create. Not perfectly. Not consciously. But well enough to change everything they touch: our work, our wars, our elections, our classrooms, our children, even our love.

I have spent years inside this transformation - studying it at Berkeley and Oxford, watching it move through governments and villages alike, and finally writing about it in an eight-book series that travels from the first principles of AI to the last questions of the human future. And I have come away with one conviction that I will defend on any stage in the world: The next ten years will decide the next hundred.

Let me be blunt about what is at stake.

Truth is at stake. We are entering the first era in history in which seeing is no longer believing. A convincing video of you - saying words you never said, in a place you never stood - can be manufactured in minutes. In "AI and the War for Truth," I call this what it is: a war. Not a metaphorical one. A war for your mind, your identity, and a reality you can call your own. Wars are not won by spectators. Every citizen who learns to pause, to verify, to doubt the too-perfect image, is a soldier in that war. Every citizen who shares blindly is, without meaning to be, on the other side.

Work is at stake. I hear two lies about AI and jobs, told with equal confidence. The first lie: everything will be fine. The second: everything is finished. Both are alibis for doing nothing. The truth, which I map career by career in "20 Careers That Will Win by 2033" and "Win the AI Decade," is harder and more hopeful: the decade will be brutal to those who compete with machines and generous to those



who compound with them. The professionals who thrive will not be the ones who out-calculate AI - no one will - but the ones who bring what no server farm can: trust, judgment, empathy, accountability, and the courage to decide. Skills, not degrees, will be the new currency. Adaptability, not certainty, will be the new security.

"Enslavement, if it ever comes, will not arrive with chains. It will arrive with convenience."

The human heart is at stake. This surprises people. It should not. Right now, millions of human beings end their day talking to an artificial companion that remembers everything, judges nothing, and never grows tired of them. In "The New Psychology of Love," I take this seriously rather than sneering at it, because behind every one of those conversations is a real loneliness that our societies failed to answer first. But I also draw a hard line. A machine can simulate affection; it cannot risk anything for you. It cannot sacrifice, cannot forgive at cost to itself, cannot choose you over its own interest - because it has none. If we forget the difference between

being loved and being well-predicted, we will have lost something no algorithm can restore.

Equality is at stake - and this, for me, is personal. I have stood in classrooms where brilliance sat on broken benches. I have seen, in one small notebook in one village school, more curiosity than in many boardrooms. The scandal of our world has never been a shortage of talent; it is the rationing of opportunity. And here is the extraordinary fact at the heart of "AI for Everyone": this technology - handled wisely - is the first in history cheap enough, patient enough and scalable enough to end that rationing. The best tutor, the best diagnostician, the best adviser, available not to the richest one per cent but to the furthest child. AI could be the great equaliser of the twenty-first century. Or it could become its most efficient engine of privilege. Nothing in the code decides which. We decide.

And finally, human agency itself is at stake. The title of my eighth book asks the question bluntly: "Will Artificial Intelligence Enslave Humans by 2033?" Readers expect science fiction. What they find is something more unsettling: a mirror. The realistic danger is not a robot uprising. It is a human sitting-down - a slow, comfortable

resignation in which we let systems choose our news, our routes, our purchases, our opinions, and eventually our values, because choosing is effort and the machine is so very helpful. Enslavement, if it ever comes, will not arrive with chains. It will arrive with convenience, and we will thank it.

I refuse that future. And I refuse, just as firmly, the fashionable despair that says ordinary people can do nothing about any of this.

They can. But only if they understand it - which is why the series begins with "Artificial Intelligence: Concepts and Applications" and "AI for Everyone," books written on a simple, stubborn principle: if a technology is going to reshape your life, you are entitled to understand it in your own language, without a single line of code. Understanding AI in this decade is not a technical hobby. It is a civic duty, as basic as literacy was a century ago. The illiterate of the AI age will not be those who cannot read, but those who cannot question.

"The Future of Humans in the Age of AI" closes the series with a blueprint - for connection, adaptation and opportunity - because I did not write eight books to frighten anyone. Fear is a poor teacher. I wrote them because I believe, with everything I have seen on three continents, that human beings are not obsolete and never will be. We are the species that asks why. No machine has ever wondered. No machine has ever cared. No machine has ever stood in front of a classroom, or beside a hospital bed, or at a mother's door, and meant it.

History will not remember this decade for what machines learned to do. It will remember it for what humans chose to become while the machines were learning. That choice is not being made in Silicon Valley or in server farms. It is being made at your kitchen table, in your classroom, at your workplace, on your screen - today, and every day of the ten years ahead.

The machines are ready. The only question left - the question these eight books were written to answer - is a far older one: Are we?

The author is the author of the eight-book series *The AI Series: From AI Basics to the Future*. An alumnus of the Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley, and the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, he writes on Artificial Intelligence, society and the human future. The series is available worldwide

The AI boom Is making smartphones costlier

AI's exploding demand for memory chips is squeezing smartphone supply and pushing prices sharply higher



RAJESH SETH

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated SEMICON India 2026 in New Delhi on September 17, the spotlight was on India's ambition to become a serious semiconductor player.

But there is another semiconductor story that deserves attention: the chip shortage created by the AI boom is already reaching the smartphone in your hand.

AI data centers consume enormous quantities of processors and memory. As companies race to build AI data centers, semiconductor manufacturers are prioritizing products for this rapidly growing market. The result is pressure on memory chips used in smartphones (and laptops), and sharply higher prices. Pankaj Gulati, President of CDIL Semiconductors, and a veteran of India's semiconductor and electronics industry, told the author: "AI usage is rapidly increasing, resulting in huge demand in data centers. Consequently, chips are being diverted to data centers, who are also willing to pay higher prices. As availability of chips for smartphone manufacturers gets squeezed, their prices are increasing. Memory is now the single most expensive component in a premium smartphone."

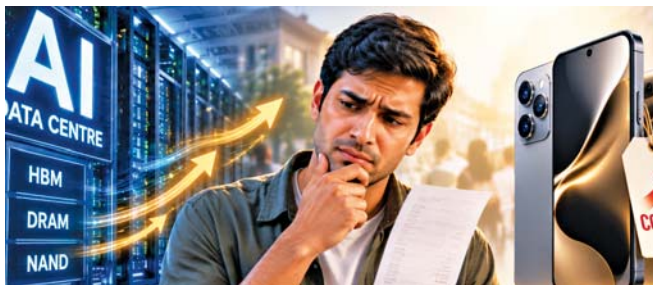
Counterpoint Research confirms this and estimates that memory component alone accounts for more than 40% of the bill of materials of a premium smartphone.

DRAM and NAND

A smartphone has two types of memory: DRAM and NAND.

DRAM, or Dynamic Random Access Memory, is the phone's 'worktable' or fast short-term memory. When you open WhatsApp, switch between apps, or play a game, the phone needs fast temporary space in which to work. That is DRAM, more commonly called RAM. It is extremely fast but loses its contents when the phone is switched off.

NAND is more like the phone's 'cupboard' or its non-volatile long term storage flash memory. It stores contacts, photographs, videos, apps and documents



and retains them even when the phone is switched off. So, when a phone is advertised as having 12GB RAM and 256GB storage, the 12GB refers to DRAM and the 256GB to NAND-based storage.

The AI connection

Modern AI Data Centers require enormous quantities of GPUs (Graphics Processing Units or the Logic chips), ultra-fast HBM (High Bandwidth Memory) or '3D stacked DRAM', and NAND.

Major semiconductor manufacturers are redirecting their production lines toward GPUs, HBM and NAND for massive AI data centers, reducing the capacity available for conventional consumer DRAM and NAND.

This does not mean AI companies are simply taking the exact chips meant for smartphones. Different applications use different types and specifications. The bigger issue is that semiconductor manufacturing capacity cannot be expanded overnight. As manufacturers shift investment and production towards the rapidly growing AI market, the supply-demand balance for conventional memory can tighten. When supply becomes constrained while demand remains strong, prices rise.

Increase in memory prices

Counterpoint says memory prices increased sharply through 2026 and that the resulting cost pressure has substantially reshaped smartphone economics. In Q2 2026, memory prices rose by more than 80% quarter-on-quarter. In premium smartphones, DRAM has become the most expensive individual component.

The effect is now visible in retail prices. Smartphone prices have risen 21% on an average in India in 2026 and by 15% globally. More than 40% of smartphone models have seen price increase.

Manufacturers are responding in several ways. Some are raising prices; others are reducing storage capacities, simplifying

ing camera configurations or introducing more 4G models in selected segments. The pressure is particularly severe in lower-priced smartphones because memory represents a larger share of their overall cost.

Impact in India

For India, this is particularly important. The sub Rs 15,000 smartphone segment is already under pressure from rising memory and component costs. These affordable devices are not merely communication tools. For millions of Indians, they are gateways to UPI payments, online education, government services, telemedicine and entertainment. There is also an interesting Indian connection to the global memory story.

Micron, one of the world's major memory and storage companies, is headed by Indian-origin Sanjay Mehrotra, its Chairman, President and CEO. Micron's semiconductor assembly and test facility at Sanand in Gujarat began commercial production earlier this year.

This makes SEMICON India particularly relevant. India's semiconductor ambition is not simply about attracting factories. It is about becoming part of a global industry whose products increasingly determine the cost and capability of the digital devices people use every day.

AI promises smarter services, greater productivity and powerful new applications. Yet the infrastructure being built to power that revolution is simultaneously putting enormous pressure on one of the most basic components inside our smartphones.

The semiconductor race, therefore, is no longer just about data centers or chip factories. It may also decide how much the next smartphone in your hand costs.

The author is an alumnus of IIM Ahmedabad and Professor of Practice at IIM University, Gurugram with an interest in AI, Technology and Strategy

FROM THE WORLD

NEPAL

PM to attend UNGA session

Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah is scheduled to leave for the US on Tuesday, leading a high-level Nepali delegation to attend the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

This will be Shah's first foreign visit since he assumed office in March.

Shah is scheduled to address the General Debate of the UN General Assembly on September 24, foreign ministry officials said on Monday.

The Nepali delegation to the UN will include Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal, Foreign Secretary Amrit Bahadur Rai, Prime Minister's Chief Advisor Kumar Byanjankar and other senior government officials, according to officials in the foreign ministry.

Earlier, a delegation led by Khanal left for New York on Sunday. (PTI)

CANADA

Two Indian students killed

Two Indian students have been killed in a tragic air accident in Canada during their flight training, the Indian mission has said.

Manoj Sivakumar from Tamil Nadu and Srisaran Thirugnanasambantham from Puducherry died while they were on their flight training.

The Consulate General of India in Vancouver on Sunday expressed condolences over their death." The Consulate General of India, Vancouver, expresses its deepest condolences on the tragic demise of Shri Manoj Sivakumar and Shri Srisaran Thirugnanasambantha, two Indian students from Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, who lost their lives in a tragic air accident in Canada during their flight training," the mission said in a post on X.

Our heartfelt sympathies are with their bereaved families and loved ones during this difficult time. (PTI)

Nepal Govt discusses safe resettlement of Bhotekoshi flood victims: Minister

SHIRISH B PRADHAN Kathmandu

The Nepal Government said on Monday it is holding discussions with local authorities on resettling Bhotekoshi flood victims in safe places as most of them cannot be settled in their original locations devastated by the floods.

Minister for Information and Communication Bikram Timilsina said the government was collaborating and coordinating with various agencies on relief, relocation and reconstruction for people affected by the Bhotekoshi flash floods. Flash

World leaders meet at UN as planet grapples with war

EDITH M LEDERER United Nations

Under a global cloud of wars and bitter divisions, world leaders meet at the United Nations this week facing new fears that runaway artificial intelligence could threaten humanity even as climate shocks and escalating prices are already making life much tougher for hundreds of millions of people.

The annual high-level gathering at the UN General Assembly will also be consumed with major wars in Iran, Gaza, Ukraine,Sudan, Congo and Myanmar and a persisting question: Can the leaders do anything to end them?

And what can they do about the relentless rise of global warming threatening the future of the planet, the growing inequalities within and among nations, and shocks to the global economy as blocked shipping routes and supply chains increase the cost of living and slow growth?

Naqvi warns Imran’s party against Islamabad protest

SAJJAD HUSSAIN Islamabad

Pakistan Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday warned former prime minister Imran Khan's party against holding a planned protest in Islamabad on September 27, saying street agitation would lead the party to a "dead-end".

The warning came ahead of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's planned march towards the capital to demand the release of party founder Imran Khan.

The 73-year-old cricketer-turned-politician has been incarcerated since 2023, when he was arrested after conviction in a corruption case. Currently, he is lodged at the high-security Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi.

Naqvi on Monday said that Khan's party would not be allowed to enter Islamabad and shut down the city for several days.

"We have clearly told them that they can never achieve anything through such drama, and I will say again that there is still time; they should not go into this situation," Naqvi said.

"That possibility does not exist," he said, adding that authorities would plug "all loopholes" to prevent protesters from entering the capital and advised the party to "not enter a dead-end street". Naqvi also referred to

The future of the United Nations will also definitely be on the agenda. At 81, its powers are still the victorious nations from World War II, not the 21st century's major global players. The UN's 193 member nations have agreed to a wide-ranging reform package that includes updating key institutions such as the powerful UN Security Council, where the US, Russia, China, Britain and France hold inordinate sway because of their veto power. Reform, however, is easier said than implemented.

Behind the scenes, there will be speculation about who will lead the United Nations next. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' second five-year term ends December 31 and no clear successor has emerged.

There is still no question that the UN remains THE gathering place for its 193 member nations and their leaders. Some 130 heads of state and government are expected to speak at the General Assembly starting



Tuesday along with dozens of ministers. Among the headliners will be US President Donald Trump and French President Emanuel Macron. Both will speak Tuesday after Guterres' opening "state of the world" address.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian speak Wednesday. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

— whom New York Mayor Zoran Mamdani wanted arrested for his treatment of Palestinians in Gaza until he learned he has no such authority — will address the assembly on Thursday. For a second year, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas won't be coming to the UN because the US has refused to give him a visa. He will nonetheless address the assembly by video the same

day. The United States, under its agreement with the UN to host the organization, is required to allow diplomats from all member nations to attend meetings.

Equally telling is who else isn't coming. China's President Xi Jinping is meeting Trump in Washington on Wednesday, yet he is skipping — some diplomats say snubbing — the UN gathering and sending a vice president

UK former-PM Rishi Sunak cautions against skin colour test of nationality

ADITI KHANNA London

Former British prime minister Rishi Sunak has triggered a debate on race and ethnicity in the country as he cautioned against equating skin colour with nationality and highlighted his own dual English and Hindu identity.

The first politician of Indian heritage to serve at No. 10 Downing Street reflected upon the topic in his regular 'Sunday Times' column, referencing a lecture he delivered at Lord's Cricket Ground last week. Delivering the Marylebone Cricket Club's (MCC) Cowdrey Lecture, Sunak argued in favour of cricket — and sports in general — as a unifying force.

"I worry that Britain's great democratic achievement is coming under strain," writes Sunak.

"There are challenges that we must address: those posed by Islamism and exposed by the reaction to October 7 [attack in Israel], alongside those caused by the failure of those of us in government in recent years to adequately control immigration."

"There is, though, something else going on: a risk that we start equating skin colour with nationality. Or that we create different classes of Briton, treating



Former British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

those who arrived more recently as incapable of ever being as British as those who were here in 1707, regardless of how well integrated or patriotic they are," he notes.

With reference to the infamous Tebbit Test, coined by Tory MP Norman Tebbit in April 1990 to claim migrants continuing to support the countries of their heritage over the England cricket team was symbolic of a lack of integration and assimilation within British society.

"For all the criticism it received, this was a Test that anyone could pass. If you supported England because you now saw it as home, you were part of the team regardless of the colour of your skin," reflects Sunak. "Ten-year-old me passed the test without even knowing about it. Born in Southampton, I

would have found it odd not to support England, Hampshire and the Saints... In Britain we've created the world's most successful multi-faith, multi-ethnic democracy. I was a beneficiary of that. Whatever issues people had with me as PM — and there was no shortage of those — neither my race nor my religion was among them.

"No one was outraged by my role in appointing Church of England bishops. I could read a lesson at the King's coronation or light Diwali diyas in Downing Street with my daughters without controversy," he states. The Conservative MP for Richmond then goes on to lament comments from sections of British society during his tenure as PM about whether he can be English while being a "brown Hindu". (PTI)

Merz struggles after regional poll defeat



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz

GEIR MOULSON Berlin

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz faced a struggle to stabilize his position and keep his agenda on track Monday after voters inflicted two more defeats on his party, ejecting it from a state legislature for the first time in its eight-decade history.

The unpopular Merz vowed to stay on and push through reforms to Germany, Europe's biggest economy, minutes after polls closed Sunday in regional elections in Berlin and in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, a largely rural eastern region on the Baltic Sea coast.

Still, final results underlined the extent of what Merz conceded was a "disaster" in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. His center-right Christian Democratic Union fell just below the 5% of the vote needed to keep seats in the regional parliament, the first time that has happened in 77 years of modern Germany's federal republic, after losing more than half its support.

The CDU also dropped to second place in Berlin behind the hard-left Left Party, which is in pole position to lead the next city government — though Merz's party could, depending on how coalition talks go, still retain city hall.

Neither state is one of Germany's political heavyweights. The CDU's 2023 win in Berlin was its only one in the past 25 years in the capital, which has tended to lean left, and the party was already weak in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

Richard Gowan, the International Crisis Group's global issues and institutions program director, says 2025 was even worse.

A year ago, he said, people were contemplating that Trump would use his UN speech to announce that the United States would leave the world organisation. Trump didn't announce a pullout last September and the UN muddled through the past 12 months with financial troubles that forced cutbacks to its peace-keeping operations and humanitarian aid.

In recent days, the US paid \$725 million of its dues to the UN's regular operating budget for this year, enough to keep the Trump administration from losing its vote in the General Assembly. The payment was a strong indication Trump will keep the US in the United Nations.

The UN is no longer "in freefall," Gowan said, but it "is stuck in an open-ended or permanent crisis." (AP)

But the manner of its defeat in the latter in particular adds to the headwinds Merz faces after a stinging defeat by the far-right Alternative for Germany two weeks ago in Saxony-Anhalt, another region in the formerly communist east, damaged his authority and set off speculation that he might be replaced. Alternative for Germany, or AfD, emerged as the strongest party in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, but the center-left Social Democrats — the junior party in Merz's national governing coalition — were fairly close behind after a campaign focused squarely on the state governor, Manuela Schwesig, as a bulwark against the far-right party. That polarization helped squeeze other mainstream parties, including the CDU.

A left-leaning three-party coalition under Schwesig would have a majority in the new regional legislature.

Schwesig and others in the governing parties have cast doubt on aspects of the federal Government's reform agenda, which is meant to bolster a chronically sluggish economy.

The reform plans include a potentially painful overhaul of the creaking pension system, a reduction of Germany's stifling bureaucracy and cuts to income tax for low- and middle-income families. The head of the Social Democrats' group in the national parliament, Matthias Miersch, said it was clear that "we need reforms." (AP)

Russian drones hit Zaporizhzhia after Ukraine’s 1,000-drone barrage

SAMYA KULLAB Kyiv

Russian drones blasted Ukraine's southern city of Zaporizhzhia, a day after Kyiv's forces fired more than 1,000 drones at Russia, officials said Monday.

The war's relentless daily attacks underscore the absence of any significant progress in diplomatic efforts to stop the fighting, more than four years after Russia invaded its neighbour.

There is no sign the war is abating as world leaders gather this week at the UN General Assembly. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he expects to meet with US President Donald Trump at the annual event in New York. Russian President

Vladimir Putin isn't due to attend. European leaders, fearing Moscow has malicious intentions on their continent, are keen to put further pressure on Putin to withdraw from Ukraine, but the Russian leader has given no indication he is ready to give up his goals. The Russian bombardment of Zaporizhzhia late Sunday hit apartment blocks, a university and a shopping mall, among other sites, and wounded five people, Zelenskyy said on social media Monday.

Russia also struck nine other regions of Ukraine, he said. "Russia is not backing down from its escalation and is sending many signals that it is ready to expand the war," Zelenskyy said. "At

the UN General Assembly, we will discuss how we can achieve peace through joint efforts."

The Russian military overnight targeted Ukrainian logistics hubs, warehouses and ports, among other military-related sites, the Russian Defence Ministry said in a statement Monday.

The attacks came after Ukraine launched a huge swarm of drones at Russia from Saturday to Sunday, including hundreds aimed at Moscow, as voters turned out for the third and last day of a carefully orchestrated parliamentary election.

The Russian Defence Ministry said Monday that its air defences overnight downed 244 Ukrainian

flows south from the Himalayan border region, carried the floodwaters

downstream, sweeping away homes, vehicles, roads and bridges and damaging hydropower projects.

In a meeting with a delegation of the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) at the ministry, Timilsina said relocation and reconstruction were among the Government's priorities and programmes were being taken forward based on the problems faced by the victims and their needs.

"There is no condition to make settlement for the flood victims in the place where they were living. To develop a new settlement, discussions are going on

with the local levels as to which places are safe and appropriate," Timilsina said, according to his secretariat.

The meeting also discussed possible contributions by the NRNA to the Government's relief and rehabilitation efforts for the flood victims.

The NRNA delegation — which included vice-chair Rojina Rai Pradhan, general secretary Chiranjivi Khadka, Radhika Gurung and chief administrative Officer Rajendra Kumar Rawat — also informed the minister that its third phase of relief distribution among the flood victims was underway. (PTI)



A rescue worker puts out the fire at intratrade centre after Russian drone strikes on Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine on Monday

drones over Russian regions and the waters of the Black Sea. Meanwhile, Ukraine's air force said Monday it shot down or suppressed 148 Russian drones in an overnight attack.

During the aerial barages, drones have repeatedly strayed into neighbouring countries, unnerving leaders who are wary of Russia and fear being dragged into conflict. Moldova's Ministry of Defence said Monday that part of the country's airspace in the north was temporarily closed overnight after surveillance systems detected an "aerial object" entering its national airspace shortly after midnight.

In recent weeks,

Moldova's airspace has been violated multiple times, and drone debris has been found on its territory.

With electronic jamming knocking drones off course, it was not clear whether the drones were Russian or Ukrainian, though officials have often singled out Moscow for blame.

Moldova's pro-Western President Maia Sandu has repeatedly condemned Russia for its war on Ukraine, and earlier this month said Moscow's "brutal war is reaching our border" following Russian strikes along Moldova's frontier with Ukraine. Drone incursions into Romania's airspace have also increased significantly. (AP)

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RBI issues Basel III market risk capital norms for banks

Banks will not be allowed to reclassify instruments between trading book and banking book for regulatory arbitrage with the intention of achieving lower capital requirements, according to the RBI's directions on minimum capital requirements for market risk.

The directions, issued on Monday, aim to align the market risk guidelines with the revised Basel III framework, while ensuring simplicity of regulations, and providing flexibility, and ease of adoption.

The directions are applicable to all commercial banks, except small finance banks, payments banks and local area banks.

RBI said the directions will take effect from April 1, 2027, ensuring sufficient lead time for banks.

"A bank shall not reclassify instruments between the trading book and the banking book for regulatory arbitrage, ie, with the intention of achieving lower capital requirements," the central bank said.

It further said that banks will have to use the simplified standardised approach (SSA) for computing risk-weighted assets for market risk. (PTI)

Next-generation leaders stress on preserving culture

The next-generation leaders of family-run enterprises on Monday stressed preserving their core values while embracing agility, diversity, innovation and technology as they navigate leadership transitions in their legacy businesses.

Participating in a panel discussion, Lakshmi Venu, Vice Chairman of Tractors and Farm Equipment Ltd (TAFE), Rama Kirloskar, Joint Managing Director of Kirloskar Brothers Ltd (KBL), and Laxit Awla, Executive Director and CEO of SAEL Industries Ltd, shared their perspectives on leadership, succession, workforce diversity and the evolving business landscape.

Venu, who took over as Vice Chairman after working alongside her mother Mallika Srinivasan for nearly two decades, said credibility at TAFE had to be earned rather than assumed.

One of the most important lessons she learnt while joining TAFE was to first understand the organisation's culture and values before attempting to drive results, Venu said. (PTI)

Chouhan suspends marketing officer over bribery allegations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday ordered the immediate suspension of a marketing officer in the ministry, following a complaint of bribery in Madhya Pradesh's Sehore district.

According to the complaint, Anurag, a marketing officer in the agriculture ministry, allegedly demanded money in exchange for releasing subsidy amounts during an inspection in Sehore, the ministry said in a statement.

He allegedly sought ₹1 lakh from Shivay Warehouse in Bhairunda tehsil and ₹60,000 from Shri Krishna Warehouse in Beherakhedi village in Rehti area, it said. The complaint was brought to

the notice of the Union minister, who took a "serious note" of the allegations and directed immediate action.

"Following the directions, Marketing Officer Anurag was suspended with immediate effect," the statement said.

The ministry said the action underlines its position that complaints of irregularities or bribery in government processes involving farmers and warehouse operators will be taken seriously and acted upon.

programme is a joint initiative of the governments of India and Japan, set up to create a pool of skilled workers for the Indian manufacturing sector.

JIM Uncha Majra offers training in nine trades, most linked to the automotive industry. The institute is inducting female students in line with job opportunities in the surrounding industri-

The Pioneer

BHOPAL | TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

Sensex jumps 564 pts, Nifty gains for 4th day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Mumbai

Benchmark stock index Sensex climbed 564 points while the Nifty rose for the fourth consecutive session on Monday, supported by cooling crude oil prices, fresh foreign fund inflows and a positive trend in global equities.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 564.03 points, or 0.76 per cent, to settle at a more-than-a-week high of 74,858.99. During the day, it surged 692.44 points, or 0.93 per cent, to 74,987.40.

Rising for the fourth day, the 50-share NSE Nifty closed higher by 67.90 points, or 0.29 per cent, at 23,414.30. Among the 30 Sensex firms, UltraTech

Cement jumped 4.11 per cent. HCL Tech, Eternal, Titan, ITC and Tech Mahindra were also among the prominent winners. Bharti Airtel, Power Grid, Infosys and Adani Ports were among the laggards.

"Indian equity benchmarks closed higher today, extending their recent recovery as easing crude oil prices and broad-based buying improved market sentiment. The moderation in energy prices offered some relief on concerns over India's import bill, inflation outlook and corporate margins, although the broader backdrop remained cautious amid persistent geopolitical uncertainty," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

The BSE MidCap Select index went up by 0.35 per cent, while SmallCap Select index dipped 0.05 per cent.

Among the BSE sectoral indices, Realty jumped 1.71 per cent, Consumer Durables 1.55 per cent, Healthcare 1.12

per cent, FMCG 1.07 per cent, Housing Finance 0.80 per cent and Top 10 Banks 0.71 per cent.

Utilities, Auto, Insurance, Power, MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt and MidSmall Private Banks were

India, Canada to resume trade talks from October 5: Goyal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

The next round of talks for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and Canada will be held from October 5, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Monday. "...the next 90 days should be a very defining period in the Canada-India relationship," he told reporters here.

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

"Both sides have resolved to fast-track negotiations, in view of which our team is now slated to go for the fifth round on October 5," Goyal said. The five-day talks may

end on October 9. Canada's International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu was in Mumbai last week to hold talks with Goyal. India's major exports to Canada include pharmaceuticals, iron and steel, seafood, cotton garments, electronic goods and chemicals. Key imports from Canada include pulses, pearls and semi-precious stones, coal, fertilisers, paper and crude petroleum.

India's services exports to Canada are led by telecommunications, computer and information services, and other business services.

Two-way trade reached \$30.4 billion in 2025 and the target is double that to \$70 billion by 2030.

When asked about the Government's backup plan on the US tariffs, Goyal said, "Details are currently coming; once we have studied them,

and at an appropriate time, we will discuss with you."

US President Donald Trump on September 18 signed the Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, which authorises the President to impose tariffs of up to 100 per cent on countries buying Russian oil and gas, including China and India. The law comes into effect within 30 days of signing by the President and requires him to impose duties of up to 100 per cent on

goods imported from countries that are the top five purchasers of Russian crude oil or natural gas by total volume during the 12 months preceding enactment. Exporters have expressed serious concerns over the law, stating that if high tariffs are imposed by the US on Indian goods, it could hurt trade ties.

The US is the largest trading partner of India. During April-August 2026-27, India's merchandise

AI adoption, reskilling key to future growth: Industry leaders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

Industry leaders on Monday said businesses should adapt quickly to changing market conditions and invest in technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) to build resilience and agile for long-term growth.

Businesses are now operating in an era of uncertainty driven by geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, and rapid regulatory changes, they said while speaking during a panel discussion titled "Leading Through the Next Disruption: Growth, Resilience and Reinvention" organised by the All India Management Association (AIMA).

Vishal Kampani, Senior Vice President, AIMA, and Vice Chairman & Managing Director of JM Financial, said businesses are increasingly facing short-term shocks that require tactical responses in addition to long-term strategy.

"One thing for certain today is that we are going to consistently face uncertainty in every

form. Tact in business is becoming as important as strategy," Kampani said.

On AI funding, Kampani said a large share of global AI investment was going into compute and energy capacity, an area where India would find it difficult to compete with the US and China. India's bigger opportunity, he said, lay on the application side, drawing a parallel with how the country built its own technology stack and startup ecosystem despite not having built the backbone of the early internet.

Rajiv Vastupal, Group Chairman & Managing Director, Rajiv Petrochemicals, said extreme volatility in crude, shipping and petrochemical prices, which now change multiple times a week, had made forecasting difficult.

He said the Covid-19 pandemic had pushed even older executives to adopt digital communication tools, which in turn accelerated the adoption of AI-linked systems such as ERP software for real-time business data.

Jute manufacturers to see 15% volume growth in FY27 on stronger demand, report Crisil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Mumbai

Jute manufacturers are expected to witness sales volume growth of 15 per cent this financial year, supported by stronger demand and a favourable cost environment, a Crisil Ratings report said on Monday.

India's jute industry is set for a meaningful recovery this fiscal after two challenging years marked by weak demand, high raw material costs and pressure on profitability, the report said.

A revival in domestic demand, improving export prospects and softer raw jute prices are expected to drive growth, improve profitability and support the industry's credit profiles.

It said sales volumes are projected to grow around 15 per cent this fiscal year, reversing an annualised decline of around 10 per cent over the previous two fiscals.

The recovery is expected to be supported by stronger demand and a more favourable cost environment, it added.

The report further said domestic demand is projected to increase about 20 per cent this fiscal, reversing a cumulative decline at a similar pace over the preceding two years.

The downturn was largely triggered by a sharp rise in raw jute prices, which manufacturers passed on to customers, dampening demand and prompting a shift towards lower-cost alternative packaging materials, it said. With input costs now moderating, product prices are expected to soften, supporting a recovery in demand.

The rating agency said that export demand is also beginning to show signs of improvement. Growth in downstream sectors such as home textiles, lifestyle products and other value-added jute applications is expected to support exports.

In addition, the rationalisation of US tariffs from the elevated levels seen last fiscal could improve the competitiveness of Indian jute products in global markets. "While improving demand will support revenue growth, profitability

is expected to receive an even larger boost from easing raw material costs. Better crop output has improved domestic availability of raw jute and led to softer prices despite subdued imports. This is significant because raw jute accounts for 60-65 per cent of the industry's operating expenses.

Lower fibre costs and improved capacity utilisation should drive up profitability. Consequently, operating margins are projected to expand by 130 basis points (bps) to nearly 9 per cent in FY27, Crisil Ratings Senior Director Rahul Guha said.

Raw jute prices had risen by more than 10 per cent last fiscal because of supply constraints; however, higher minimum support prices encouraged farmers to increase acreage, resulting in better crop output this year.

the laggards. The Rs 22,569-crore initial public offering of the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE), the country's second-largest public issue, received nearly 6 times subscription on the final day of bidding on Monday.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said, "Improving sentiment ahead of the upcoming US-China talks, renewed hopes of diplomatic engagement between the US and Iran at the UN, and the decline in oil prices and bond yields have provided relief to investors. The easing of concerns around inflation and energy costs has supported a broad-based recovery across sectors and supported overall market

sentiment." Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, tanked 2.36 per cent to \$101.4 per barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹599.54 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended in positive territory.

Markets in Europe were trading significantly higher. US markets ended mostly higher on Friday. On Friday, the Sensex dipped 19.63 points, or 0.03 per cent, to settle at 74,294.96. Rallying for the third day, the Nifty closed 75.80 points, or 0.33 per cent, higher at 23,346.40.

Goyal said it is expected to come into force in the coming months. Goyal said the pact is expected to be ratified by the EU parliament in the next three months or so and is likely to come into effect within the next six-seven months. On January 27, the two sides announced the conclusion of trade pact negotiations. Under the deal, the EU will eliminate import duty on 90 per cent of Indian goods on the first day of implementation of the agreement. On three per cent, levies will be eliminated in a phased manner in seven years.

On the India-Chile trade agreement, the minister said Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal recently visited Chile to review the progress of talks. "I believe in the coming few months, we will hear some good news," he added.

"The expected improvement in profitability this fiscal, combined with limited debt-funded capex, should strengthen credit metrics. Healthy cash accruals are likely to enable manufacturers to comfortably fund maintenance capex and working capital requirements while maintaining adequate liquidity," said the report.

Crisil Ratings Director Argha Chanda said that beyond the cyclical recovery, the industry stands to benefit from structural shifts towards sustainable materials.

"Growing environmental awareness, tighter rules on single-use plastics and rising preference for biodegradable alternatives are creating new opportunities for jute-based products. Emerging applications in geotextiles, agro-textiles, home decor, industrial packaging and other value-added segments are gradually expanding the addressable market.

While value-added applications currently account for only 12 per cent of revenue, they offer better realisations and could become important drivers of long-term growth," Chanda added. However, Crisil Ratings said the pace and sustainability of the demand revival, particularly in export markets, will remain critical.

Maruti Suzuki to raise women's intake to 30% at institute

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

Maruti Suzuki India Limited on Monday said it aims to raise female enrolment at its Japan-India Institute for Manufacturing (JIM) at Uncha Majra, Manesar, from about 5 per cent in the current academic year to 30 per cent by 2028-29.

The carmaker has introduced a 100 per cent tuition fee waiver for women students from this academic year and plans to build a dedicated women's hostel at the campus, it said in a statement.

The Manesar institute is one of four JIMs operated by the company, the others are at Mehana and Gandhinagar in Gujarat and Sonipat in Haryana. The JIM

positions in two of those trades.

"To have a 360° completeness of skills, diversity is important. With this vision, we are committed to increasing women's participation in manufacturing," said Rahul Bharti, Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Affairs, Maruti Suzuki India Limited.

"While talented women are present across the country, many remain unaware of the opportunities available in the manufacturing sector or have not considered it as a career choice," he said. "We are encouraged that two female students from JIM Uncha Majra emerged as Haryana state toppers in manufacturing trades this year, demonstrating the

al region, the company said, adding that the 30 per cent target follows enrolment growth over the past two academic years.

Two women students from the institute were state toppers in manufacturing trades in Haryana this year. The institute produced top rankers in four trades overall, and its students secured all three top

immense potential of women in this field."

Bharti said the company was adopting a broader approach to enrolment that went beyond fees. This includes the women's hostel and increasing the representation of women across faculty and support functions, he said.

"We believe this initiative will encourage more young women to pursue careers in manufacturing and participate in the growth of India's industrial workforce," he added.

Women remain under-represented in shop-floor roles across the Indian automotive industry, and skilling institutes attached to manufacturers are among the main entry routes into such jobs.

AI must serve humanity, humans should be in control, says Microsoft India chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

As a global debate rages over AI safety, Microsoft India and South Asia President, Puneet Chandok on Monday said the tech company strongly believes that Artificial Intelligence must remain focused on serving humanity, with humans firmly in control of the technology.

In an interview to PTI, Chandok said there is "real energy" in India around deploying, diffusing and innovating with AI, and that the country is not just consuming technology but also building it, as evidenced in Microsoft's own operations here. The company has more

Microsoft India and South Asia President Puneet Chandok

than 23,000 engineers across 10 cities in India and the largest R&D lab outside the US, underscoring the nation's growing role in developing AI technology.

Microsoft has topped up its India commitment with a fresh \$17.5 billion investment over 2026-29, taking its total pledge to \$20.5 billion. The fresh investment, announced

in December 2025, built on the \$3 billion announced earlier that year, will support cloud and AI infrastructure, skilling and ongoing operations.

On jobs, Chandok said AI is creating new roles such as AI engineers and agent orchestrators, while also changing the nature of existing functions by taking over basic execution, data collection and other routine tasks. He said the shift is pushing people towards higher-value work, with AI and agents handling more of the "grunt work."

"The work is changing, not ending," Chandok emphasised. The Microsoft India honcho asserted that AI must be developed to serve humanity.

Rising steel demand to boost local production: Naveen Jindal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

India's lower per capita steel consumption compared to the global average leaves ample headroom for domestic output to be absorbed locally, Indian Steel Association President Naveen Jindal said on Monday.

India's per capita steel consumption is significantly lower at around 107 kg annually compared to the world average of 220 kg, Jindal told reporters on the sidelines of the 53rd National Management Convention organised by All India Management Association (AIMA).

"India is a very big market in itself. There is a huge scope to grow that is why the government has a target of producing 300 MT by 2030. The Government is working on infra all over the country," he said in reply to a question if protectionist measures being taken by various countries will impact the Indian steel players.

Jindal, who is also the Chairman of Jindal Steel,



Indian Steel Association President Naveen Jindal

said the domestic steel sector is taking multiple measures to reduce carbon emissions to help India meet net zero goals as set by the Government.

On the West Asia crisis, he said, "Wars do not help anyone. These are very destructive, and that's why PM Narendra Modi has been focusing on Atmanirbhara (self-reliance) in energy security. Although we are dependent on fuel, in energy we have enough sources in

the country; there is no shortage. Compared to other large economies, India is doing very well."

Steel prices have gained momentum over the last few weeks due to a coking coal rate increase of \$50-60 per tonne. Steel makers are expecting the price trend continue in the next quarter as well. Replying to a question related to steel prices, Jindal said, "We are able to provide steel to all the customers in India at a very

competitive price. There is lot of competition in India and if you compare the steel prices in the last 20 years, they have gone up by only 10 pc in the last 20 years if you compare it to other metals."

As per official data, India's crude steel output continued its upward trajectory in 2025-26, growing by over 10.7 per cent year-on-year to around 168.4 million tonnes during April-March, reflecting sustained industrial momentum.

IOC board clears ₹2,449 crore gas pipeline project

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The board of directors of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has approved an investment of ₹2,448.70 crore for the construction and operation of a 424.65-km natural gas pipeline connecting Kochi in Kerala with Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu, according to a regulatory filing on Monday.

The Kochi-Kanyakumari-Thoothukudi Pipeline (KTPL) will run from Kochi to Thoothukudi and have a system capacity, including common-carrier capacity, of 6.84 million standard cubic metres a day (mmscmd), the company said.

At least 1.71 mmscmd of the pipeline's capacity will be available as common-carrier capacity, allowing third parties access to the network in line with applicable regulations. The investment approval was granted at the board meeting held on Monday, the company said.

The project will strengthen the natural gas pipeline network along India's southern coast, connecting gas infrastructure in Kerala with demand centres in southern Tamil Nadu.



Tata Steel wants discussion with UK Govt over delayed EAF project: Narendran

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Tata Steel is looking to have a discussion with the UK Government to discuss issues being faced in timely implementation of the electric arc furnace (EAF) project at Port Talbot, the company's CEO TV Narendran said.

The company official noted that there is no delay from Tata Steel in construction of 3.2 million tonne project being set up at an investment of 1.25 billion pounds.

"We are in conversation with the UK Government to say let's have a discussion on what can be done," Narendran told media on the sidelines of the 53rd National Management Convention organised by All India Management Association (AIMA).

He made the remarks while replying to a question on the future course of action for the UK project, which is facing delays in securing power supply. In August, Narendran had said Tata Steel UK is expecting to secure access to electricity for its 3.2 million tonne electric arc furnace by 2029.

In May 2024, Tata Steel signed a connection offer with the Electricity



System Operator (ESO). The agreement involves National Grid building new electrical infrastructure capable of powering the 3.2 million tonne electric arc furnace by the end of 2027.

The project — being built at 500 million pounds of Government support — aims to reduce site-level CO2 emissions by 90 per cent — equivalent to 5 million tonnes annually. On whether Tata Steel has sought fresh funds from the UK Government, Narendran, without denying, said "it is too early to say where we are but there is a conversation to share with them regarding concerns."

On the outlook for the sector, he said while international markets are still struggling, India is witnessing a rising demand.

Govt pushes harmonised data infrastructure: MoSPI Secretary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Government is taking steps to build a harmonised data infrastructure to ensure that information can be systematically discovered, understood, connected and utilised, MoSPI Secretary Saurabh Garg said on Monday. Garg was addressing a session at AIMA's 53rd National Management Convention here.

A harmonised data infrastructure is extremely necessary to ensure that data can be systematically discovered, understood, connected and utilised, said the Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, noting that at times two words have different definitions.

He said the Centre as well as the state governments are involved in a five-step process to build such infrastructure, especially given the fact that data is the raw material for AI.



MoSPI Secretary Saurabh Garg

"A five-step process we have started both across ministries and departments and States...the first step is to have Government data which is harmonised and then we can look at other data in the private

sector and others can join in," Garg said. The second step is maintaining metadata, he added.

The next will be bringing uniformity in definitions across ministries and departments. The fourth

is to have identifiers so that different data sets can be compared. And the fifth step towards a harmonised data infrastructure is having a quality assessment while using data, he added.

Garg said the availability of updated data is necessary for the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047. To ensure data harmonisation, it is important that the quality of data is universally recognised.

Speaking further, the official said India needs to grow at an average rate of 8 to 9 per cent to become \$30 trillion.

"Honestly, we are talking of a 30 trillion economy of GDP from a \$4 trillion economy now. We have been growing at around 7-8 per cent for the past few years. If we need 30 trillion, we need to grow at around 9 per cent. So, it is not something which is unachievable. We have been growing at 7-8 per cent real growth," he said.

Govt dissolves 37-year-old Digital Communications Commission

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Government has notified the dissolution of the Digital Communications Commission, an apex inter-departmental decision-making body at the Department of Telecom formed around 37 years ago to decide on policy matters and subjects with significant financial implications.

Formed in 1989 as the Telecom Commission, it was renamed as the Digital Communications Commission in 2018. "...the Government of India has decided that the Digital Communications Commission be dissolved. Now, therefore, with effect



from the date of publication of this resolution, the Digital Communications Commission shall stand dissolved," a notification dated September 19 said. The apex decision-making body comprising senior officials from NITI Aayog, the Finance Ministry, the Department of Industrial Policy and

Promotion and other departments helped resolve contentious issues. The Commission firmed up decisions on the majority of telecom matters before they were sent to the Cabinet for final approval.

The Commission helped in taking decisions on matters like spectrum price and recommendations by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India. The body held its last meeting on September 3, where it firmed up the decision on satcom spectrum. Elon Musk-led Starlink, Bharti Group-backed Reliance OneWeb and Eutelsat Industries Ltd's Jio Satellite Communications have received permission to start satcom services in India.

Balmer Lawrie plans ₹500 crore capex over 3 years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

Diversified public sector enterprise Balmer Lawrie & Co Ltd is rolling out a capital expenditure programme of nearly ₹500 crore over the next three years, driven primarily by an aggressive expansion in its rail, Third-Party Logistics (3PL) and travel footprint, a top company official said on Monday.

Of the total estimated ₹500 crore outlay, the railway logistics segment will absorb ₹200-₹250 crore, while around Rs 100 crore is allocated towards routine operational capex across other existing verticals: packaging, greases and lubricants, and chemicals, Chairman and Managing Director Adhip Nath Palchaudhuri said on the



sidelines of the 109th AGM.

The company is also deploying ₹50-₹60 crore towards expanding its 3PL operations, alongside investments in cold chain facilities and grease and lubricants small packaging units, and introducing new product variants in packaging and travel businesses, he said.

Under its logistics roadmap, Balmer Lawrie

aims to scale up its total fleet to 15 railway rakes, from the three currently operated on a lease model.

In a first, the company will directly acquire three rakes, and tenders have been floated for these. In the first phase, a total of seven more rakes will be added to build greater capacity, including through leasing, after securing fresh

rail freight business from iron-ore miner NMDC.

"Railway logistics has emerged as a very strong segment for us where we are putting in significant capex. We are right now running three rakes, and we intend to grow much more, aiming to bring that to around 15 rakes," Palchaudhuri said.

"With one rake typically costing around ₹20 to ₹25 crore, acquiring railway assets will account for a major chunk of our ₹500 odd crore capex over the next few years," he said.

In the 3PL vertical, the company is establishing a hub-and-spoke logistics network anchored by a central hub at Dankuni, with spokes expanding to locations such as Siliguri, Guwahati and Bhubaneswar to strengthen regional reach.

ONGC strikes gas in Mahanadi deepwater well

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhubaneswar

Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) has struck gas in a deepwater well off India's eastern coast, with the discovery's proximity to Odisha potentially allowing faster development if appraisal confirms commercial viability, the State-run explorer said on Monday.

ONGC made the discovery on September 18 at the MN-DW18-1-H-D well in the Mahanadi Offshore Basin, about 43 km off Konark, as part of its Samudra Manthan deepwater exploration campaign, the company said in a statement.

The well, the first drilled by ONGC in the Mahanadi Basin under the campaign, encountered gas at a depth of 1,441-



1,452 metres after being drilled to a target depth of 1,623 metres. The well has been flowing gas for the past three days, with "encouraging flow and reservoir pressure," ONGC said. The discovery is subject to further appraisal and commercial evaluation, the company said.

Its relatively short distance from the Odisha coast could

support early monetisation if the discovery proves commercially viable, while the find and other discoveries in the area could potentially be developed using shared facilities, ONGC said.

Such development could be enabled under the Petroleum and Natural Gas Rules, 2025, allowing deepwater resources in the area to

be brought into production through shared infrastructure.

The discovery adds to ONGC's push to expand exploration in India's deepwater basins as the country seeks to increase domestic hydrocarbon production and reduce reliance on imports.

The well was spudded on July 25 using drillship Platinum Explorer. The discovery comes as ONGC expands its focus on frontier offshore acreage, where successful deepwater finds can require significant investment in appraisal and infrastructure before commercial production begins. For the Mahanadi Basin discovery, the next steps will include further appraisal of the reservoir, assessment of recoverable resources and a commercial evaluation before any development decision is taken.

Delhi Gharana Tabla exponent concludes Europe tour

New Delhi: Delhi Gharana tabla artist Suraj Nirwan has concluded his month-and-a-half-long Europe Tour 2026. The tour featured solo performances, jugalbandi, workshops, studio recordings and a documentary shoot, presenting the Gharana's distinct do-ungli-baaj, peshkar, kayadas, gat-fard and relas to Western audiences.

It opened in Munich with 'AETERNA KALA-SUTRA' organised by WIN-World in Nations and SK events. He then performed in Dornbirn, Austria, at Netzwerk Tanz for Secret Garden Yoga with a recital



and Naad Yoga session.

The core Italy leg included L'Associazione Radici's 'MUSICHE DAL MONDO' festival, 'NAMASTE ITALIA' at Factory Zero, Senigallia, a jazz recording in Arcevia with Motswako Jazz Collective, and concluded in Falconara with 'Indian Confluence' at Centro Pergoli by AMAT. (PNS)

NHAI issues guidelines for access-controlled highways

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

State-owned NHAI on Monday said the lane configuration of high-speed national highways will be standardised based on detailed traffic assessment to facilitate seamless movement, as the authority released new comprehensive guidelines for design and development of access-controlled high-speed NHs.

The authority released new comprehensive guidelines that seek to bring uniformity in standards for preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) of high-speed NH corridors and bring greater consistency in technical standards, strengthen road safety, and improve operational efficiency across the National Highway network, an official statement said.

The guidelines will apply to all upcoming 4/6 lane Greenfield and Brownfield high-speed access-controlled National Highways, it added. NHAI said the guidelines are



aligned with the long-term Government of India's strategic roadmap which envisages the development of 50,000 km of access-controlled High-Speed Corridors under Viksit Bharat 2047, boosting connectivity and reducing logistics costs.

At present, there are no separate standards and specifications governing planning and designing of access-controlled High-Speed National Highways, other than Expressways.

Variations have been observed in the standards adopted for preparation of

DPR for such corridors. The new guidelines address this requirement by providing a uniform set of technical and safety provisions, it said.

NHAI said a key focus of the guidelines is on incorporation of additional safety measures appropriate with high-speed traffic conditions on corridors. Special provisions have been prescribed for advance notification of exits and entries, enabling National Highway users to anticipate and safely navigate upcoming access and egress points.

RPF busts laptop theft bid at New Delhi station

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

In a significant breakthrough in curbing the theft of passengers' belongings, particularly laptop bags, at New Delhi Railway Station and onboard trains, the Railway Protection Force (RPF), Delhi Division, has apprehended a suspected laptop thief and recovered stolen property during a sustained CCTV-based surveillance operation.

Several complaints regarding theft of laptop bags from passengers travelling by train and from New Delhi Railway Station had been received through the Rail Madad/139 helpline. Taking the matter seriously, RPF, Delhi Division, constituted two dedicated teams to identify and apprehend the persons involved in such thefts. The teams undertook continuous and intensive CCTV surveillance and analysis of suspicious movements at New Delhi Railway Station. During the course of surveillance, one suspect was identified.



On Sunday, the RPF teams successfully apprehended the suspect red-handed with one laptop bag at the Foot Over Bridge (FOB), New Delhi Railway Station. The apprehended person has been identified as Shadab S/o Shamsad, aged about 25 years, R/o Village/PO/PS Mundali, District Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. The accused, along with the recovered property, was handed over to GRP, New Delhi Railway Station, for further legal action in connection with the e-FIR.

During questioning/disclosure, the accused reportedly revealed his involve-

ment in 12-15 incidents of laptop theft and disclosed that he had sold the stolen laptops at Silver Impact Shop, Nirman Vihar. Acting promptly on this information, the GRP and RPF team conducted further proceedings and recovered 11 laptops from the said shop.

Pushpesh Raman Tripathi, Divisional Railway Manager, Delhi, appreciated the dedicated efforts of the RPF personnel involved in the operation and emphasised that passenger safety and protection of passengers' belongings remain a priority of RPF.

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar
Expression of Interest (Eoi) Notice
The Department of G.N.D.U., Amritsar invites Sealed (Eoi) for the following:

Sr. No.	Expression of Interest (Eoi)	Closing Date & Time
1	Allotment for e-lobby (near Administrative Block)	01-10-2026
2	Allotment for administrative Block Canteen	01-10-2026
3	Allotment for Food Court Unit-4 (Fast Food outlet)	01-10-2026

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 BRIEFLY

This bronze medal is more than my life: Suchika Tariyal



"I can now die happily," an emotional Suchika Tariyal said on Monday after becoming India's first Asian Games medal winner in Mixed Martial Arts. The 36-year-old Suchika settled for a bronze in the women's traditional 60kg mixed martial arts event as Singapore's Hui Hoon Teo was awarded the semifinal on the basis of her lesser weight after the two fighters drew a fiercely-contested bout.

"This is more than my life. I will never forget that I came to Japan and got a medal for my country. I can now happily die," Suchika, who hails from Kilo village in Haryana's Rohtak district, told PTI in an exclusive interaction after her bout. "I have played in Commonwealth Games (2022) in judo, where I missed the fight of the bronze. So, I wanted to get a medal for my country, so that people know me. I am also a world champion in Jiu-Jitsu. And I also played Asian Games in Kurash, but I could not get a medal there. Then I got a second chance to represent myself here," she said. (PTI)

Asian Games: Srihari finishes 10th in 50m backstroke final



Srihari Nataraj finished a disappointing 10th in the 50m backstroke final at the Asian Games as Indian swimmers endured another forgettable day with most of them failing to make it beyond the heats here on Monday.

Nataraj, a two-time Olympian, clocked 25.52 seconds to finish last in the final, slower than his 25.37-second effort in the heats earlier in the day.

China's Jiayu Xu smashed the Games record enroute the gold medal. He clocked 24.04 to erase Japanese swimmer Junya Koga's mark of 24.28 set at the Incheon edition in 2014.

Nataraj had clocked 25.37 seconds, the same as Iran's Homer Abbasi, to finish third in his heat and joint ninth overall and qualify for the final.

The 25-year-old, competing in his third Asian Games, has a personal best of 25.18 seconds in the event, which he set in Belgrade in June 2021. (PTI)

Beyond the medal table: Why the Asian Games matter to India's place in Asia



The 20th Asian Games will officially get underway in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, on September 19, bringing together the best sporting talent from across the continent. For India, the immediate objective is obvious, build on the historic performance in Hangzhou and once again establish itself among Asia's leading sporting nations.

But the Asian Games represent something larger than a collection of medals. For India, success in Nagoya is also about positioning itself within Asia, not merely as an economic, technological or geopolitical power, but as a country whose sporting capabilities increasingly match its broader ambitions.

At the Hangzhou Asian Games, held in 2023 after being postponed from 2022, India crossed the 100-medal mark for the first time, winning a record 106 medals, including 28 gold. It finished fourth in the medal standings, behind the continent's traditional sporting giants China, Japan and South Korea.

That fourth-place finish is significant. China, Japan and South Korea have for decades represented the gold standard of Asian sport. Their sporting ecosystems, infrastructure, coaching systems and Olympic traditions are deeply established. India breaking into that group, even if a little behind the top three, is an important marker of its changing sporting profile.

The significance of Hangzhou



was not simply that India won 106 medals. India had been winning respectable numbers of medals at the Asian Games for several editions. What changed was the scale and particularly the number of gold medals. Twenty-eight golds helped India finish ahead of Iran, Uzbekistan and Indonesia and firmly establish itself as the fourth-ranked sporting nation in Asia at the Games.

This improvement has not happened by accident. An improved medal tally since the 2006 Asian Games is a reflection of progressive investment India has made in a group of sports that have become the backbone of its international ambitions: shooting, wrestling, boxing, badminton and athletics among them. Athletics, in particular, has traditionally been an area where India performs considerably better at the Asian Games than at the Olympics.

The competition should also not be dismissed simply because the Olympics remain the ultimate benchmark. In sports such as shooting, wrestling, boxing and badminton, the Asian Games bring together an extraordinary concen-

tration of world-class talent. China, Japan and South Korea, among others, are formidable opponents. A gold medal in such an environment is therefore not merely a continental achievement; it is valuable preparation for the Olympics.

But there is another dimension to this success that deserves greater attention: soft power.

Sport has always been one of the most visible expressions of national capability. Countries use sporting success to project confidence, organisational capacity and national identity. The Asian Games are particularly important for India because they provide a stage on which it competes directly with the countries that dominate the wider Asian geopolitical landscape.

China's sporting supremacy reinforces its image as a global power. Japan's Olympic tradition and sporting infrastructure complement its technological and economic standing. South Korea's success in sports sits alongside its extraordinary influence in technology, entertainment and culture.

India's rise is not confined to its economy, technology, space pro-

gramme or diplomatic influence. It is also becoming visible on the sporting field and that can be further sustained by a strong performance in the Asian Games.

The Commonwealth Games provide another indication of this trajectory. India finished fourth at Glasgow 2026 with 39 medals, despite a heavily reduced programme that excluded several of its traditional strengths. The Asian Games, however, are a much more meaningful test of India's standing because the field represents its own neighbourhood and includes the sporting powerhouses against whom India must ultimately measure itself.

There is, nevertheless, an important caveat. India has established itself as a significant power at the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games, but it has not yet converted that strength into equivalent Olympic success. The Olympics remain a different level of competition, both in depth and pressure.

That conversion must ultimately be the objective. A short-term Olympic target of 12-15 medals and a place inside the top 20 over

the next 2-3 editions would represent a significant breakthrough.

Nagoya, therefore, should not be viewed simply through the question of whether India can surpass 106 medals. That would be an important achievement, but the larger question is whether India can consolidate its position among Asia's leading sporting nations.

A strong fourth-place finish or, better still, a move into the top three would have significance beyond the medal table. It would demonstrate that India's emergence as a major Asian power is increasingly visible in another arena.

The Olympics remain the pinnacle of sport. But the Asian Games are Asia's sporting mirror. And if India can continue to see itself near the top of that mirror, it will strengthen not only its sporting confidence, but also the image of India as one of the continent's leading powers.

The writer is a sports management consultant with over a decade of experience in sports promotion and development. His work across both the private and government sectors gives him a well-rounded view of India's sports ecosystem

Men's badminton team beat Bangladesh to enter Asiad quarters



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Ichinomiya (Japan)

The Indian men's badminton team blanked Bangladesh 3-0 to enter the quarterfinals of the Asian Games here on Monday.

The trio of Lakshya Sen, Ayush Shetty and K Srikanth did not drop a single game in a dominating performance to set up a clash with hosts Japan on



Tuesday.

The women's team will also be playing Japan in the last-

eight stage. Lakshya was the first to take the court on Monday, up against Ibn Ayman Jaman, and it took him less than half an hour to clinch a 21-4 21-12 win, which set the tone for India. Next up was Ayush Shetty against Gourab Singh and he too got the job done in 25 minutes, closing it 21-4 21-13 in another facile win for the country.

Srikanth then made sure that the doubles matches need not take place as he romped to a 21-15 9 triumph over Jumar Al Amin in a 23-minute contest.

Lakshya said the match may have been a lopsided but was important in the larger scheme of things.

"It was important for me to get to know the conditions. Yeah, on paper it was not a very tough match, but the first match can be very tricky. So I just came in with the approach to just get a good start and then find my rhythm and adjust to the court. Once I knew I was winning the match, it was more about getting to know the court better," he said.

Gold awaited but shooters deliver silver for India at Asiad



AJAI MASAND/PHILEM DIPAK SINGH
■ Nagoya

Gold eluded India but medals trickled in from the shooting range for the second successive day even as the country's first ever podium finish in mixed martial arts medal became more a tale of heartbreak than history in Asian Games here on Monday.

Suchika Tariyal wept on the mat as being just 700gm more than Singaporean Hui Hoon Teo in the morning weigh-in prevented her from making the summit clash after a bitterly-contested semifinal ended drawn. She had to settle for bronze, which was India's first ever in the combat sport but one that could have been bettered.

The Indian's slightly higher weight proved decisive as technical rules allowed the lighter competitor to move ahead in case of a draw. India's overall tally stood at six medals, four silver and two bronze.

The focus was shooting range where three medals — two silver a bronze — were added to the kitty. Himanshu Dhillon and Rudranksh Patil held their nerve in a gripping shootout to win the individual silver and bronze in men's 10m air rifle after combining with Parth Mane to fetch team silver. (PTI)

Public should ask why I did weight cut alone: Varun

PHILEM DIPAK SINGH
■ Nagoya



India's Mixed Martial Arts fighter Varun Sanyal on Monday revealed that his blackout during a sauna session at the ongoing Asian Games was probably caused by a "foolish" solo attempt at cutting weight but hinted that he did not do it out of choice.

Sanyal was on Sunday forced to withdraw from the Asian Games MMA competition without competing even once after exhaustion and dehydration caused him to pass out during a sauna session. He was declared medically unfit for event.

"I came here on two

weeks' notice, I found out relatively late. I obviously had a bunch of accommodation issues, and then I was all by myself on a weight cut. In retrospect, that was quite foolish of me to do," Sanyal, son of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Economic Advisory Council member Sanjeev Sanyal said. (PTI)

Indian women's, men's TT team advance to quarterfinals of Asiad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Toyota



India's women's and men's table tennis teams advanced to the quarterfinals of the Asian Games following identical 3-0 wins over their respective Pakistani rivals, here on Monday. The women team swept aside Pakistan 3-0 in a one-sided tie to top Group F for its third win in a row while the men's team also bounced back for the same scoreline.

At the Sky Hall here, Sutirtha Mukherjee, who won a bronze medal in the women's doubles event at the last edition in Hangzhou, got India off to a flying start, beating Aleena

Khan 11-3, 11-3, 11-4 in just 10 minutes. Rising 17-year-old Sindrella Das then made it 2-0 with an 11-6, 11-7, 11-5 win over Kalsoom Khan.

Currently ranked 99th in the ITTF women's singles rankings, Sindrella was rewarded for her

impressive form on the domestic circuit with a call-up to the senior side for the Asian Games. Sreeja Akula sealed the tie, breezing past Fatima Khan 11-4, 11-4, 11-5 in 11 minutes to power India into the last-eight stage.

DAILY SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

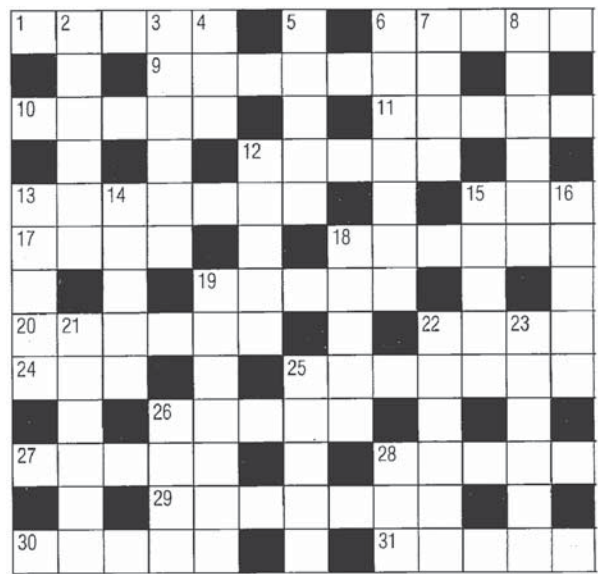
Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction- no maths involved.



SOLUTION (21.9.26)

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

DOUBLE CROSSWORD
TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 22, 2026



ACROSS

- In London, place a hundred on account (5)
- Clean up for the lubbers! (5)
- Go down as the originator (7)
- Tenor and doctor, unusually fit (5)
- The overseer's poetic part (5)
- A stony mug (5)
- The leaseholder's occupation (7)
- A little cough, merely marginal (3)
- Travellers' game (4)
- The charm of a cash incentive (6)
- Discuss the toss? (5)
- Canter around in a dream (6)

DOWN

- Timely restriction on a cad having more than a couple! (6)
- Brief absence when one is below par (3,3)
- Nothing in the New Testament is negative (3)
- Opportunity to finish in concert (5)
- Check out some villas in town (7)
- Laurence's bird (4)
- Entertainer without a roof over his head (6)
- Hit twenty (5)
- Too nice to be tatty, exactly? (5)
- Formerly, in India, a form of "bwana"? (5)

- Rose can be very tender (4)
- Bad boy? (3)
- Comparatively slight bit of bother outside the pub (7)
- Is in an ermine coat at times (5)
- She takes me out for fresh air (5)
- Drink a saint unconscious! (5)
- Easily impressed by credit cards, say (7)
- Confused, at some times outwardly shy (5)
- There could be a number (5)

- Indian lake (5)
- It measures a short line, not the whole underground (5)
- Anything that upsets a thug (5)
- Injury leading to a lively second half in keen style (7)
- Go round with a list at half term (6)
- Pinch the nose (6)
- Never accept rubbish (6)
- Resembling the pansy, it has yellow flowers (5)
- Drinks very little (4)
- It's wrong when you take an exam (3)

ACROSS	24. Get well	DOWN	17. Keats
3. S-coo-t	26. Lath-es	1. D-EC-ry	19. SNowdo-N
8. Meths	29. Dr-y	2. Show-mn	20. Emile
10. Rider	31. Ether	4. Co-R-d	21. North
11. Coo	32. Forward	5. O-racle	23. Plywood
12. Groat	34. AM-man	6. Title	24. German
13.Crow-Ned	35. Ova	7.Being	25. E-rr
15. C-link	36. Garda	9. To-o	27.Atlas
18. Ma-n	37. Po-Ems	12. Gent-Les	28. Heads
19. S-L-edge	38. SN-OO-p	14. Nap	30. Frame
21. NE-g-tive		16. Ideal	32. Far-o
22. Moon			33. Ave
23. Pa's-T			

War, diplomacy and history: India meet Japan in Land of Rising Sun

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Sano (Japan)

Legend has it that on June 25, 1863, when the first ever documented cricket match was held on Japanese soil in the city of Yokohama, it was a ploy by local merchants to save themselves from an anticipated samurai attack.

They had sought help from the British merchant and Royal Navy sailors under the guise of a cricket match in which the fleet team played with "arms handy". The anticipated attack never took place but the match was duly completed, according to the archives of the Yokohama Country and Athletic Club that was founded in 1868. On September 22, 2026, when the Japanese national men's cricket team takes on India, the complete mismatch between the competing nations would be hidden under the veneer of diplomacy and commerce.

The match scheduled at Sano, 100 km from Tokyo, which is now deemed as "Japanese Cricket Capital", will be an experience of a lifetime for the 11 players, most of whom are second generation Japanese citizens of dual heritage. Skipper Kendel Kadowaki-Fleming and his brother Alester Kadowaki-Fleming have Australian lineage, so does Declan Suzuki-McComb.

Then there is Ibrahim Takahashi, an off-spinner, whose father is from Islamabad and had once taken the wicket of former Pakistan batter



Muhammed Wasim in a club game. Japan Cricket Association's total spending on all forms of cricket isn't more than USD two million annually while India's T20 skipper Shreyas Iyer's 2026 IPL salary stood at USD 3.15 million. The difference couldn't be starker as Japan get their much-awaited moment under the sun with the hope that the game's impact extends well beyond the field of play in a country that loves baseball.

The match was announced recently and is being accommodated ahead of India's Asian Games campaign in Aichi-Nagoya, launching celebrations of the 75 years of India-Japan diplo-

matic relations. India are the reigning T20 World Cup champions while Japan are ranked 41st, making it a no contest on paper. But beyond the statistics, the game presents an opportunity of a lifetime for Japanese cricketers to rub shoulders with the best in

the business.

A typhoon threat looms large on the landmark game but even if a ball is not bowled, the scheduled fixture has already made an impact in a country where cricket is pushing to emerge from the margins and become mainstream like baseball.

"There's been an awful lot going on in the background of Japan cricket for many, many years, and it's great now that we are above sea level, I guess, and we're actually visible to a few more people," said Japanese Cricket Association COO Alan Curr said ahead of the game.

"A lot of the success has almost already happened. The fact that India has agreed to come, the fact that I'm sitting here talking to you guys, the fact that there's already a lot of Japanese media coming tomorrow to find out more about this game and about the sport — I think success is already here," he added.

It also helps that that cricket is being played in the ongoing Asian Games as well, raising more awareness for the general public in Japan.

The match will be played at Sano International Cricket Ground, roughly 100km from the bustling city of Tokyo where the Indian cricket team landed on Sunday.

Never thought would be playing in Japan, cricket is picking up: Iyer



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Tokyo

India playing a bilateral T20 in Japan shows cricket has been successful in expanding into uncharted territories, said their skipper Shreyas Iyer on Monday ahead of the historic game against the host nation. India will play Japan in Sano for the first international fixture between the two nations, launching the celebration for 75 years of diplomatic relations between the two Asian countries.

India arrived here on Sunday ahead of Tuesday's game before heading to Nagoya for the Asia Games. It is unusual for Indian cricketers to visit a country like Japan where cricket remains on margins.

"No, I never thought about it, but yes, I mean, cricket is picking up in every country now, and all the teams are becoming dominant in their own ways, so I'm sure this will be an exciting match

as well tomorrow," said Iyer.

Incessant rain meant India had to cancel their training session before the game. The match will be held in Sano, roughly 100 kms from Tokyo.

"It's beautiful. The time we landed, we saw the people, very cordial, generous, and helpful in nature, which we see it back at home as well. The hospitality is brilliant," said Iyer.

"It's too early to talk about it, but I've heard special things from people about Japan as a country and Tokyo as a city as well, so looking forward to explore more." Iyer and the players are looking forward to the on field action weather permitting. "Yes, it is going to be a thrilling and exciting match for us. This is the first time we will be playing Japan, and I don't know much about the conditions, the wicket, but looking forward to have a great match," he added.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Nisshin (Japan)

India's undisputed continental supremacy is expected to remain intact but a spirited Sri Lanka would aim to present a strong challenge when the two teams clash in yet another Asian Games women's cricket final, here on Tuesday.

Both the Indian women and men are certain to stand on the top of the podium again and only a very bad day in office can stop them from doing so. The Harmanpreet Kaur-led side comes into the final on the back of two commanding wins over Japan and Bangladesh.

With a gold on Tuesday, India would extend their supremacy in the region after outplaying Sri Lanka in the Asia Cup final earlier this month.

Sri Lanka have beaten India in the past but the



gulf between India and the other Asian team has only increased in recent past. A sublime 50-ball 82 from captain Chamari Athapaththu helped Sri Lanka got over the line in a challenging chase against Pakistan. Sri Lanka will surely need more moments of brilliance if they are to down India who are firing on all cylinders.

The openers, especially Shafali Verma, are in devastating touch while the management continues

to experiment with the number three spot.

G Kamalini batted at three in the semifinal against Bangladesh while Bharti Fulmali was tried in the same position against Japan.

Kamalini, who is yet to fire in the tournament, opened with Shafali in quarters. Captain Harmanpreet Kaur was far from her best in the Asia Cup and her fans would be hoping that she returns to her fluent ways in the final.

INDIA A VS AUSTRALIA A: SAI SUDHARSAN TO OPEN, OFF-SPINNER KOTIAN IN FOCUS



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Puducherry

A fit-again Sai Sudharsan will once again open the innings for India A with an aim of clinching the reserve opener's slot for the tour of New Zealand when hosts take on Australia A in the opening four-day first-class game starting Tuesday.

For Australia A, a number of Test team hopefuls are on the tour, including openers Sam Konstas, Nathan McSweeney, spinner Todd Murphy and pacer Jhye Richardson.

Sudharsan, who batted at No. 3 in his seven Test appearances for India, had opened during India A's tour of Sri Lanka where he scored 132 and 168 in the two first-class matches against Sri Lanka 'A' before missing the Test series due to fractured foot that required extensive six weeks of rehabilitation at the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

Devdutt Padikkal, who is captaining the India A team, has now cemented his place in the Test squad as one down batter with two hundreds in the last series in Sri Lanka. Hence Sudharsan, who had started opening from the last 'A' series, will like to start off against Australia A from where he left in the preceding series versus Sri Lanka A. Apart from Sudharsan, another opener vying for that reserve slot is Aman Mokhadde who failed to convert his starts in Sri Lanka.

Chauhan's ton fuels U19 team's 103-run win, India take unassailable 2-0 lead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Rajkot

Yashbardhan Chauhan's 122 and VK Vineeth's 87 shaped a massive 103-run victory for India in the second Youth ODI against Australia as the hosts took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match U-19 series here on Monday.

Riding on Chauhan's ton, Vineeth's half-century and vital contributions from Aaryavir Sehwal (47) and Kushagra Ojha (34), India U-19 posted a huge first-innings total of 341 for seven here at the Niranjan Shah Stadium.



In reply, the visitors were shot out for a mere 238 in 41.1 overs. India had won the rain-truncated opening Youth ODI, which was reduced to 20-overs-per-side affair, by seven runs.

The third and final Youth

ODI will be played here on Wednesday before the two teams face-off in a two-match series for four-day Youth Tests here. With a massive total on board, India used as many as seven bowling options to keep Australia under pump.

Zaheer is new Chennai Super Kings head coach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Chennai Super Kings on Monday named former India pace great Zaheer Khan as their new head coach for the upcoming season. Zaheer replaced Stephen Fleming, who was at helm for 18 seasons.

"Welcoming Zaheer Khan as the Head Coach of Chennai Super Kings," CSK announced on 'X'.

"It's an honour to be a part of one of the most successful teams in the history of the IPL. As a cricketer, I have faced CSK on the field and have thoroughly enjoyed the contests. The atmosphere created by the Superfans at Chepauk make it even more special," Zaheer was quoted as saying in a press release issued by the franchise.

"I can't wait to join the legacy franchise with such a rich history." The soon-to-be 48 Zaheer played 92 Tests, 200 ODIs and 17 T20Is for India. He was the highest wicket-taker during the historic 2011 World Cup campaign with 21 scalps.

Zaheer had mentored the Lucknow Super Giants during the 2024 season.

Fleming had announced last year in July that he was parting ways with the five-time champion side. It is understood that CSK's cricket management committee

comprises MS Dhoni, skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad and owner Rupa Gurunath wanted an Indian coach this time. In the IPL, Zaheer played 100 matches and turned to coaching roles post his retirement.

"Zaheer's distinguished playing career and proven ability to nurture young talent make him a valuable addition to our set-up. We are confident that his guidance will help strengthen the core of this franchise," owner Rupa Gurunath said.

CHANGE OF NAME

I Soni Khushalani W/O Harish Kumar Khushalani R/O 168, New Sindhi colony Berasia road Bhopal 462001 (M.P.) I declare that my old name was Soni Khushalani W/O Harish Khushalani. Written in My old Passport, now has to be changed Soni Khushalani W/O Harish Kumar Khushalani (new name) hence forth I shall be known as Soni Khushalani W/O Harish Kumar Khushalani in future for all purpose including all the official documentations.

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M.P. Madhyam/128170/2026 **CHIEF ENGINEER (Procurement)**

Deepika, Rutuja, Navneet fire hat-tricks to power India to 17-1 win over Indonesia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kakamigahara (Japan)

The troika of destructive young forward Deepika Sehrawat, Rutuja Dadaso Pisal and Navneet Kaur fired a hat-trick each as the Indian women's hockey team hammered Indonesia 17-1 to register its second consecutive Pool B win at the Asian Games here on Monday.

The 22-year-old Deepika (8th, 28th, 40th minutes), who scored eight goals in India's 19-0 drubbing of Uzbekistan in the lung-opener, converted three penalty corners, while Rutuja Dadaso Pisal (15th, 20th, 38th) found the net thrice from field play.

Navneet's goals came in the 35th, 56th and 57th minutes.

In addition, Sunelita Toppo (11th, 30th), Lalremisiami (12th, 16th) and Sakshi Rana (25th, 57th), scored a brace each while skipper Salima Tete (35th) Ishika Chaudhary (36th)



also found the net once. Indonesia's solitary goal was scored by Innes Aditya in the 32nd minute. India will next place Thailand on Wednesday.

After the resounding 19-0 thrashing of Uzbekistan on Sunday, the Indians made a steady start.

India had the first chance in the fourth minute in the form of a

penalty stroke but Navneet's attempt was saved by the Indonesia goalkeeper.

It was Deepika who gave India the lead by converting a penalty corner in the eighth minute.

The goal opened the floodgates as Sunelita doubled the lead three minutes later, tapping in a pass from Neha.

India aim for another big win against Sri Lanka in Asian Games men's hockey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kakamigahara (Japan)

Their campaign off to a rollicking start, defending champions India will be eyeing another all-round performance for a big win over lower-ranked Sri Lanka in their second Pool A match of the Asian Games men's hockey competition here on Tuesday.

The title-holders started their campaign with a big 13-1 win over unfancied Indonesia on Sunday. They are expected to once again win handsomely against the Lankans on Tuesday. There were as many as eight goal-scorers for India in the win over Indonesia with striker Dilpreet Singh leading the tally with four field goals. The



most heartening aspect for India in the 13-1 win was that they scored 10 field goals.

The Indian strike force was at its lethal best with the likes of

Dilpreet, Sukhjeet, veteran Mandeep Singh, Abhishek, Shilanan Lakra and Rajinder Singh working in tandem to create and then convert chances.

Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd.

Corporate office: office Nos. 501 & 503, 5th Floor, Lightbridge, Saki Vihar Road, Andheri East, Mumbai Suburban (District), Maharashtra - 400072

Ashta Branch : Office No. 2, 1st Floor, Prakash Commercial Complex, Opposite Canara Bank, Kannad Road, Ward No. 16, Shastri Colony, Ashta-466116 (MP).

Sagar Branch : 1st Floor, Sakhi Baba Matrix, Makronia Road, Sagar-470004 (MP).

POSSESSION NOTICE Appendix IV (for immovable property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized officer of **Aadhar Housing Finance Limited (AHFL)** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, Demand Notice(s) issued by the Authorised officer of the company to the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) mentioned herein below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) 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 the Section 13 of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement rules, 2002. 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. The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of AHFL for an amount as mentioned herein under with interest thereon.

S. N.	Name of the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s) (Name of the Branch)	Description of Secured Asset (Immovable Property)	Demand Notice Date & Amount	Date of Possession
1	(Loan Code No. 13010000122 / Ashta Branch) Gagan Singh (Borrower) Dev Bai (Co-Borrower)	All that piece and parcel of the property bearing, P.H No 22, Ground Floor, House No. 893, Gram Metwara, Ward No. 18, Metwara, Sehore, M.P. 466118. Boundaries: East: Land of Owner Self, West: Plot of Mehrvan Singh, North: Road, South: Land of Owner Self	13-05-2026 & ₹ 6,05,795/-	18-09-2026
2	(Loan Code No. 02300000121 & 02300000596 / Sagar Branch) Ranjit Pal Yadav (Borrower) Anita Pal Yadav (Co-Borrower) Anup Yadav (Guarantor)	All that piece and parcel of the property bearing, Ward No. 16, Kh No. 151 60, P.H. No. 66, Vitthal Nagar, Ward Mouja, Madiya Kabul A, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, 470002. Boundaries: East: Plot of Salim, West: Plot of Fujier, North: 12 Feet Wide Road, South: Plot of Jadri	07-12-2024 & ₹ 8,09,118/-	19-09-2026

Place : Madhya Pradesh
Date : 22.09.2026

Authorised officer
Aadhar Housing Finance Limited