

The official theme is 'Humanity First, focusing on building resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability. Leaders from member and partner countries, as well as those invited to the event, are expected to reach the Capital this week. Although India has held the chairmanship since 1 January, authorities say more than 350 meetings have already taken place in over 25 cities, covering three standard areas: political and security issues, economic and financial matters, and people-to-people links.

Minister opens WhatsApp line for transport grievances

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena has launched a WhatsApp based system to receive and address public grievances related to the Transport Department. The minister said he has personally been receiving complaints through WhatsApp for the past week. A dedicated



number, 6371912718, has now been made available for people to submit their grievances. Jena said the department will review the complaints received and work to resolve them at the earliest. A daily bulletin will be issued showing the number of complaints received and those resolved, he added. A dedicated grievance hearing will be held every Tuesday,

during which complaints will be reviewed and responses provided to complainants, the minister said. The initiative is aimed at making the Transport Department's grievance redressal process more accessible and responsive to the public. Those with pending complaints related to the department can send their grievances to the WhatsApp number for review.

MKCG med student rescued

PNS ■ Brahmapur

A first-year MBBS student of MKCG Medical College Hospital, Sagar Sahoo, who had been missing since August 31, has been safely rescued from within Tiring police station limits in Mayurbhanj district. According to reports, Sagar, a native of Jajpur district, was travelling on a bus from the Jharkhand side when police traced and rescued him. He reportedly used the mobile phone of the bus conductor to contact his family, following which they informed the police, who tracked his whereabouts and rescued him. The development brought relief to Sagar's family and the MKCG authorities, who had

been searching for him since he went missing on August 31. The MKCG authorities had lodged a complaint with Baidyanathpur police in Brahmapur after efforts to trace him failed. Based on the complaint, police launched an investigation and began tracking his movements. During the probe, police reportedly recovered Sagar's mobile phone from an area near Brahmapur railway station, which provided an important lead in the case. As further information emerged about his whereabouts, police coordinated with authorities in Mayurbhanj and succeeded in tracing him while he was travelling by bus. The Kuakhia police team subsequently went to Tiring police station to bring him back.

Delhi collapse prompts building safety drive in Odisha



Govt orders 15-day inspection of unsafe structures

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

In the wake of a building collapse in Delhi on Sunday that claimed seven lives, including five students, and injured several others, the Odisha government has directed inspection teams to identify, assess and evaluate structures posing a threat to public safety, with legal action to follow wherever necessary. Housing and Urban Development Minister Dr Krushna Chandra Mahapatra said the safety of citizens remains the government's top priority and that no unsafe structure would be ignored. Assessments of several dangerous government buildings have already been carried out and notices issued wherever required, he said, adding that a further review was held with the department on Monday. "Notices will soon be issued for demolition of buildings found to be unsafe," Mahapatra said. The

Housing and Urban Development Department will act against unsafe buildings under its own jurisdiction, while departments owning other flagged structures will be informed for coordinated action. The 15-day inspection drive will also extend to privately owned buildings, with structures found dangerous or structurally weak to be examined under existing laws. Owners of such buildings may be served notices and face further legal action. The exercise carries particular weight in older towns such as Cuttack and Puri, where several ageing, structurally weakened buildings remain in use even after decades. Urban local bodies and other concerned authorities will support inspection teams in identifying such structures and carrying out follow-up action. The government has described the initiative as a preventive measure aimed at flagging structural risks before they result in accidents, with inspections, notices and legal action to be completed within.

In Sambalpur

Junior Assistant held for Rs 1.15 cr fund misuse

PNS ■ Sambalpur

The Vigilance police on Tuesday arrested Mir Imtiyaz Ali, a Junior Assistant at CHC Fasimal under Jamankira block and in-charge Junior Assistant at CHC Govindpur under Bamra block in Sambalpur district, for allegedly misappropriating government funds amounting to Rs 1.15 crore. According to sources, a detailed investigation revealed that Ali allegedly committed criminal breach of trust and misappropriated government funds during the financial years 2021-22 to 2026-27. During his tenure at CHC Fasimal, Ali allegedly generated false online and offline bills under

various financial heads, including arrear salaries, unutilised leave encashment and provisional pensions in the names of retired employees. Instead of disbursing the amounts to the respective retirees or depositing them with the government, he allegedly manipulated the payment process and diverted Rs 70,57,450 into his own bank accounts for personal gain. Similarly, while serving as Junior Assistant at CHC Govindpur under Bamra block, Ali allegedly adopted the same modus operandi and misappropriated another Rs 44,57,089. The total amount allegedly misappropriated by him from the two health centres stands at Rs 1,15,14,539.

Sadhvi Ritambhara visits KIIT, KISS; calls institutes 'remarkable'

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

Well-known spiritual guru Sadhvi Ritambhara visited the campuses of KIIT and KISS on Tuesday. She blessed the girl students and said that she had been working in the field of education for many years, but described KISS, established by educationist and social worker Dr Achyuta Samanta, as a remarkable institution in the country. "I am so delighted to have come here that I have no words to express it," she said. "KISS embodies the sanctity of all pilgrimages and the divinity of all gods." Praising the work of KIIT and KISS Founder Dr Achyuta Samanta, she said, "KISS reflects one person's dedication and penance. Today, I have witnessed here what penance, hard work and dedication truly mean." Observing the discipline and values of the children at KISS, she said that "this is the real India," adding that students of KISS



should feel proud because they are receiving education under the guidance of Dr Samanta. She also emphasised that people should extend a helping hand to others rather than merely offering advice. "Here, children are not only taught to become self-respecting, but are also taught to become

self-reliant. A person can become self-respecting only when they are self-reliant," she said. Dr Samanta delivered the welcome address, while KISS Vice Chancellor Prof Saranjit Singh delivered the vote of thanks. Eminent educationist Ashok Pandey introduced the guests.

In city

Traffic cops to get shoulder lights for better visibility



PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

Motorists driving past traffic personnel after dark in Bhubaneswar will soon spot them more easily, with the Commissionerate Police rolling out shoulder-mounted flickering lights as part of a new safety initiative. The move is aimed at improving visibility of on-duty personnel and strengthening traffic management across the city. The initiative uses smart technology to make traffic personnel more visible while they regulate traffic

and assist commuters facing road-related problems. According to the Commissioner of Police, the lighting system is also expected to improve the efficiency of personnel during their duties. The shoulder lights will help motorists identify traffic police more easily, particularly during night-time duty and in low-light conditions, and are expected to improve personnel safety while aiding traffic management. Police Commissioner S Dev Datta Singh said the lights would help people identify the presence of police

personnel at a particular location. "It is for the purpose that people would know that a police personnel is present at a site. This will give a sense of security, it will ensure the safety of police personnel when anyone is driving at a higher speed. We have implemented this for traffic. Police personnel who are patrolling at night will also wear these on them," he said. The system is intended to make personnel more visible to motorists and improve road safety, while also enabling quicker assistance when traffic-related problems arise.

Second suicide bid at Tankapani bridge in days

Search on for missing youth

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The Tankapani bridge over the Kuakhai river in Bhubanesar is fast turning into a suicide point, with another youth reportedly jumping into the river from the spot on Tuesday, days after a similar incident at the same location. According to sources, the youth allegedly jumped into the river after leaving his auto-rickshaw parked on the bridge. The incident came to light after the



vehicle was found abandoned there, following which it was suspected that he had jumped into the water. On being informed, Fire Services personnel reached the spot and began an extensive

search of the river. The missing youth has been identified as Sanjay Swain, a resident of the Old Bhubaneswar area. Firefighters have been combing different stretches of the river in an attempt to trace him, but there has been no information about his whereabouts so far. The incident has raised serious concerns, coming just days after a similar tragedy at the same spot. A youth had allegedly jumped from the bridge into the river on Saturday and lost his life; his body was recovered on Sunday after a search by Fire Services personnel.

In State

Low pressure to trigger heavy rains from today

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

With a fresh low-pressure system brewing over the Bay of Bengal and likely to form around September 11, heavy rain is likely to resume in Odisha from Wednesday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Tuesday. Rain is likely to intensify across the state over the next few days, with several districts expected to receive heavy rainfall. According to the MeT office, northern and coastal parts of Odisha may once again face difficult conditions due to rain. A yellow warning has been issued for 20 districts for today, with light to moderate rain, along with thunderstorms and lightning, likely in several parts of the state. Rainfall activity is expected to increase from tomorrow,

September 9. Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj and Balasore in northern Odisha are likely to receive very heavy rainfall, while a yellow alert has been issued for 11 other districts. The weather office has forecast very heavy rainfall in seven districts on September 10. Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara and Cuttack are likely to receive heavy to very heavy rain during this period. On September 11, 17 districts are likely to receive heavy to very heavy rainfall, according to the forecast. A yellow alert has also been issued for five districts for September 12. Residents have been advised to remain alert and avoid unnecessary exposure during thunderstorms and lightning.

PARAKH taxonomy

Capacity building workshop begins at Rajdhani College

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

A four-day State-Level Capacity Building Workshop on 'Question Paper Setting, Secondary HPC and PARAKH Taxonomy' commenced on Tuesday at the Rajdhani College here, bringing together 100 faculty members teaching at the Higher Secondary level from across Odisha for an intensive academic exercise that will continue until September 11. The workshop is jointly organised by the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE), Odisha and PARAKH, NCERT, New Delhi. The inaugural session began with the traditional lighting of the ceremonial lamp. Delivering the presidential address, CHSE Chairman Mrunal Kanti Das highlighted

the importance of competency-based evaluation aligned with national benchmarks. DHSE Director Niyati Pattanaik graced the occasion and shared insights on enhancing academic standards, while Prof Indrani Bhaduri, Head & CEO, PARAKH, NCERT, addressed the delegates through a video message, underscoring the role of modern taxonomy in holistic assessment. Earlier, CHSE Deputy Secretary and Co-Coordinator Dr Yashobanta Samal delivered the welcome address. CHSE Secretary Subhrabala Beher spoke on examination modernisation, while Rajdhani College Principal Dr Sarojkanta Chaudhury proposed the vote of thanks.

2 die in road mishap in Cuttack

PNS ■ Cuttack

Two youths died in a road accident near Parala Park, close to the OMP Square, on Monday around midnight. According to sources, the two youths, aged around 26-27 years, were headed towards College Square by a motorcycle when a heavy vehicle crushed them on the spot. One

of the deceased was a resident of Aparna Nagar, Cuttack, while the other was a native of Niali. The Chauliaganj police are inquiring into the matter. The vehicle involved in the accident has not been traced yet. Police sources said they are verifying CCTV footage and the vehicle will be traced soon.

SJTA secures IP rights for 3 more Shrimandir identities

PNS ■ Puri

The Shri Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) has secured intellectual property protection for three more distinctive names and identities associated with the 12th-century shrine in Puri, marking a fresh step in its effort to safeguard the temple's heritage from unauthorised commercial use. SJTA Chief Administrator Arabinda Kumar Padhee said protection has been secured for Shree Mandira under Classes 19 and 45, Ratna Bhandar under Classes 14 and 45, and Shree Nahar under Class 19. The applications for all three have been accepted for publication by the Trade Marks Registry. This is the third phase of the temple administration's trademark push. In the first phase, approval was granted for three marks, Ananda Bajara, Patitapabana and the Nilachakra logo. The second phase saw five more applications



accepted for publication, including Jagannath Dham, Shree Kshetra, Mahaprasada, Nilachakra and Koili Vaikuntha. "We wish to protect the unique spiritual, cultural and institutional heritage associated with Shri Jagannath Temple and prevent unauthorised or inappropriate commercial use of names and identities closely connected to the Shrimandir," Padhee said. He added that the SJTA would continue pursuing its remaining trademark applications and take all necessary steps to secure appropriate intellectual property protection for the temple's sacred and distinctive heritage. The temple administration has so far filed a total of 29 applications with the Trade Marks Registry.

Omfed to raise milk procurement price by Rs 2/litre

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha dairy farmers received a major boost on Tuesday, with Omfed deciding to increase the milk procurement price by Rs 2 per litre from September 11, a move expected to benefit more than three lakh dairy farmers across the State.

While farmers supplying milk to Omfed will directly benefit from the hike, consumers will not have to pay more, with retail prices of Omfed milk and dairy products



continuing at existing rates. The decision comes amid rising

production costs in the dairy and livestock sectors. A recent surge

in global oil prices has pushed up agricultural production and transportation costs, adding to the financial burden on farmers. Prices of key cattle feed raw materials, including maize, de-oiled rice bran, rice polish and mustard oil cake, have risen by more than 25 per cent, further increasing daily dairy farming expenses.

Following sustained demands from farmers over rising production costs, Omfed decided to provide the additional Rs 2 per

litre from Friday.

Meanwhile, the state government is planning to set up 1,200 new dairy cooperative societies across districts, adding to the existing 4,616. Construction work has already begun, with the new societies expected to become operational soon.

Omfed has over three lakh dairy farmers and more than seven lakh litres of milk is being procured from them through primary dairy cooperative societies.

2 Gramya Banks robbed in 24 hours in State

PNS ■ Baleswar/ Sundargarh

Two Gramya Banks were allegedly looted across Odisha within a span of 24 hours, one in Sundargarh on Monday afternoon and another in Balasore on Tuesday, reviving concerns over the security of rural bank branches in the State.

In the latest incident, a group of unidentified miscreants allegedly looted a Gramya Bank at Khaprapada in Baleswar district on Tuesday. According to reports, around four men entered the bank posing as customers and made off with Rs 10 lakh after thrashing the bank manager.

A day earlier, an armed miscreant looted Rs 2.37 lakh from the Kirei branch of Odisha Grameen Bank in Sundargarh

district. Police sources said the accused entered the branch around 3 pm on Monday and terrorised the staff before fleeing with the cash. Four employees were present inside at the time, while two women customers were outside.

According to police, the miscreant briefly stepped back after entering the bank, then took the branch messenger hostage at gunpoint before collecting money from the cash counter and escaping.

The back-to-back incidents have raised fresh questions over security arrangements at rural bank branches, many of which operate with limited staffs and minimal protective measures.

Illegal liquor units destroyed in Ganjam



PNS ■ Brahmapur

Deep in the hilly forest tracts of Ganjam, where narrow streams cut through Dahabada and Gujaling under Jarada police station station, the Excise Department on Tuesday intensified its crackdown on illegal country liquor with a major joint operation, dismantling several illicit liquor-making units hidden in the terrain. Acting on information about clandestine production in the protected forest areas, Excise officials raided the units and destroyed 34,800 litres of jaggery-based fermented wash, allegedly meant for preparing illegal country liquor. Officials also destroyed 1,510 litres of illicit adulterated country-made

liquor seized during the raid. The department estimated the value of the destroyed fermented wash and liquor at more than Rs 20 lakh. The joint team comprised officials from the Chikiti Excise Police Station, Berhampur Excise Department and Digapahandi Excise office, along with the officer-in-charge of Jarada police station and police personnel. The operation is part of the department's continuing crackdown on the illegal production and sale of country liquor in the district. Officials said such raids in forest belts will continue, and residents have been urged to report information on illicit liquor units to the nearest excise or police station.

In Baleswar Vig arrests 3 officials in pension fund scam



PNS ■ Baleswar

The Vigilance Directorate on Tuesday arrested three panchayat-level officials in Baleswar district for allegedly misappropriating Rs 16.76 lakh in government funds meant for disbursement of old-age and other social security pensions to elderly beneficiaries. The arrested were identified as Subrat Kumar Pati, former Panchayat Executive Officer (PEO) of Kakhara Gram Panchayat and currently posted at Kusuda GP; Chittaranjan Baging, former PEO of Kumbharmuli GP and currently posted at Khaira Block; and Goutam Dalai, Accountant-cum-Data Entry Operator at Jaleswarpur GP under Bhogarai

Block. An intensive investigation by the Vigilance found that the irregularities took place during the officials' tenure between 2022 and 2025, a period in which the accused allegedly drew advance amounts from the Bhogarai Block Development Office for the monthly disbursement of pensions to eligible beneficiaries. Instead of returning or properly accounting for the cash left over after distribution, the officials allegedly diverted the unutilised funds for personal benefit, with the total misappropriation amounting to Rs 16,76,500, the investigation found. The three accused have been arrested and forwarded to the Court of the Special Judge, Vigilance, Baleswar.

In Baleswar Engineering girl student found dead in hostel room

PNS ■ Baleswar

A girl student was found dead in her hostel room at a private engineering college in Sergarh under Khantapada police station in Baleswar district on Monday. She had reportedly stayed back in the hostel after complaining of health issues and skipping classes. When she did not respond during the hostel's attendance check, the caretaker knocked and called out to her, then alerted the college superintendent. The door was broken open, and she was found hanging inside. The Khantapada police were informed, and a team reached the hostel and recovered



the body, which was sent to the District Headquarters Hospital for postmortem examination. "She did not attend classes, citing health issues. Later, the door was broken open, and she was found hanging. Soon, we informed the police, and an investigation into the matter is

on," said Jyoti Ranjan Rout, vice principal. The student, reportedly pursuing Computer Science, had unclear circumstances leading to her death. Neither the family nor the police have issued statements and the postmortem report is awaited.

In Baleswar 5 orangutans rescued, smuggling racket suspected

PNS ■ Baleswar

The rescue of five young orangutans in Baleswar district has raised suspicion of an organised wildlife-smuggling racket operating along Odisha's coastal belt, with forest officials suspecting the endangered apes were smuggled into the State.

The orangutans, believed to be around two years old, were spotted by local residents in the Bichitrapur forest area under Udaipur forest range on Tuesday. Their unusual appearance left villagers puzzled, prompting them to alert forest officials, who rescued the animals soon after.

Baleswar Wildlife Division DFO Pratik Prakash Indalkar said the rescued orangutans, three females and two males, are in good health, though they appeared visibly disturbed following human interference. Veterinary surgeons found no major health concerns.



Since orangutans are not native to India, the forest department has informed senior authorities and sought the involvement of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau to ascertain how the animals reached the area. "There is every possibility that the orangutans were smuggled by a wildlife crime syndicate," Indalkar said.

Officials are examining whether the animals were transported by road or sea, with Baleswar's proximity to West Bengal and its

road-and-maritime connectivity fuelling suspicion.

The forest department has sought the orangutans' relocation to Nandankanan Zoological Park, Bhubaneswar, for long-term care.

A joint investigation by forest and police personnel is underway to establish how the primates reached Bichitrapur and identify those behind their illegal transportation, amid concerns of a larger trafficking network through the coastal region.

B'pur MV constable murder HC hands over case to CB; raps police probe

PNS ■ Brahmapur

The High Court on Tuesday transferred the investigation into the murder of Brahmapur OMVD constable Ashutosh Mrudangia to the Odisha Crime Branch, expressing dissatisfaction with the manner in which the city police had conducted the probe. Ashutosh was rescued in a critical condition from the Town Police Station's Bijipur Police Colony on June 5 and admitted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital. He was later shifted to AIIMS Bhubaneswar

for treatment of 80 per cent burn injuries. During treatment, two dying declarations were recorded, in which he alleged that his wife Sandhya and his brother-in-law had poured petrol on him and set him ablaze. He succumbed to his injuries on June 12. Despite the statements, no arrests were made in the case, following which the deceased's sister, Nibedita Devi, moved the High Court. The police later conducted polygraph tests on the accused and informed the court that no adverse evidence

had emerged, adding that the investigation was in its final stage. The court, however, noted that one of the dying declarations had been recorded in the presence of an Executive Magistrate, lending it evidentiary weight. It observed that despite this, the outcome of the police investigation was not satisfactory. The High Court subsequently directed the Berhampur SP to hand over all case records to the CB-CID with immediate effect for further investigation.

In Sambalpur Rs 1cr ganja hidden in truck's secret chamber seized

PNS ■ Sambalpur

Excise officials seized nearly 12 quintals of ganja valued at around Rs 1 crore from a container near the Shasan tollgate in Sambalpur district on Tuesday, in what officers described as a major breakthrough against inter-state narcotics trafficking.

The contraband was found hidden inside a specially built secret chamber in the container, apparently designed to move the consignment without detection. On inspection, officials recovered 48 sacks of ganja packed inside the concealed compartment.

Preliminary investigation



indicated the consignment was being smuggled from Bargarh district to Madhya Pradesh. Acting on a tip-off, excise intelligence officers intercepted the container and arrested two persons linked to the trade. Authorities said further investigation is underway to trace the wider network behind the

smuggling operation, including the source of cultivation and the intended buyers in Madhya Pradesh.

The seizure points to the scale of inter-state ganja trafficking through Odisha and the increasingly elaborate concealment methods being adopted by smugglers to evade checks at tollgates and border points.

In Brief

Vedanta Aluminium Tech Showcase Deep-Tech Initiatives

Jharsuguda, Odisha; September 8, 2026: Vedanta Aluminium, in collaboration with V-Spark, India's largest manufacturing deep-tech incubator, recently hosted Met-ALverse, an immersive tech showcase in Jharsuguda, Odisha. The company also announced partnerships with several cutting-edge technology providers, including market leaders such as Open-AI, Microsoft and SAP. Together, they will deploy innovative, multi-pronged solutions to cumulatively unlock up to ₹2,100 crore in value through the enhanced adoption of AI, digitalisation and automation technologies across Vedanta Aluminium's operations.

Presently, Vedanta Aluminium is actively collaborating with nearly 70 startups under the program, spanning one of the world's largest alumina refineries in Lanjigarh, Odisha, the world's largest single-location aluminium plant in Jharsuguda, Odisha, and India's iconic aluminium producer, BALCO in Korba, Chhattisgarh.



Actress Ms. Sreeleela Unveils Kalyan Jewellers' First Showroom in Rayagada

Rayagada, September 08th, 2026: Kalyan Jeweller today launched its all-new showroom in Rayagada, Odisha. Actress Ms. Sreeleela inaugurated the showroom, which aims to further strengthen the brand's presence in the region. The showroom offers an array of exquisite designs from Kalyan Jewellers, featuring popular house brands such as Muhurat (Wedding Jewellery Line), Mudhra (Handcrafted Antique Jewellery), Nimah (Temple Jewellery) and many more.

Addressing the gathering, actress Ms. Sreeleela said, "It is a pleasure to inaugurate this beautiful showroom for Kalyan Jewellers. I truly admire the brand's commitment to trust, transparency, and its customer-first approach. Mr. Ramesh Kalyanaraman, Executive Director, Kalyan Jewellers, said, "The launch of our new showroom in Rayagada marks an important milestone as we continue to strengthen our presence in Odisha. Headquartered in Thrissur in the state of Kerala, Kalyan Jewellers is one of the largest jewellery retailers in India with a presence in the Middle East and the USA.



Jindal Stainless Signs Tech- Assistance Agreement with Japan's JFE Steel

Bhubaneswar, September 08, 2026: Jindal Stainless, India's leading stainless-steel manufacturer, has entered into a Technical Assistance Agreement with JFE Steel Corporation, Japan, one of the world's leading steelmakers, to strengthen its manufacturing capabilities for selected ferritic stainless-steel grades. The collaboration will focus on enhancing product quality, manufacturing practices, and process efficiency through technical assistance.

Ferritic stainless-steel grades are widely used in automotive components, railway coaches, kitchen equipment, industrial machinery, construction, and several other value-added applications, making them an important growth segment for the future. Under the Technical Assistance Agreement, JFE Steel will support Jindal Stainless' ongoing efforts to strengthen product quality and manufacturing practices for the grades specified in the Agreement.

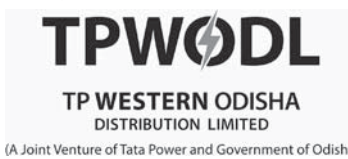
The Managing Director, Jindal Stainless, Abhyuday Jindal, said, "The future of manufacturing will be shaped by materials that deliver superior performance, sustainability, and value. Stated the release.



TPWODL to Join 3rd National Lok Adalat on 12th Sept. 2026 to help electricity consumers

Burla, 08 September 2026: TP Western Odisha Distribution Limited (TPWODL), a joint venture between Tata Power and Government of Odisha, will participate in the 3rd National Lok Adalat being organised across India by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) and Odisha State Legal Services Authority (OSLSA) on 12 September 2026, from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

The initiative provides consumers with an opportunity to resolve pending electricity theft and assessment cases through a fast, transparent and conciliatory process, helping facilitate quicker closure of eligible cases and reduce the need for prolonged legal proceedings. Consumers with pending electricity theft and assessment cases are encouraged to visit their nearest SDO or Section Office in advance to complete the necessary preliminary formalities. This will help ensure a smoother process during the National Lok Adalat. Stated the release.



Punjab National Bank Inaugurated Trisulia Branch

Bhubaneswar: On 7th Sept., 2026, The Punjab National Bank (PNB) marked another significant step in expanding its banking presence with the inauguration of its new Trisulia Branch. The branch was inaugurated by Bhusan Sharma, Zonal Manager, in the august presence of Kshetrabasi Mishra, Deputy Zonal Manager, Zonal Office, Bhubaneswar, and Avishek Bhattacharyya, Circle Head, Circle Office, Katka. The inauguration ceremony reflected PNB's continued commitment towards strengthening its banking network and providing convenient, efficient and customer-focused banking services to the people of the Trisulia area. The opening of the Trisulia Branch represents another milestone in Punjab National Bank's efforts to enhance its presence and deliver reliable banking services while contributing to financial inclusion and economic development in the region.





Two days after collapse, DU students seek safety, answers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Two days after a multi-storey building collapsed in Satya Niketan, killing at least seven and injuring several others, anger and anxiety continue to grip the densely populated South Campus neighbourhood, with Delhi University students demanding accountability and raising fresh concerns over their safety in the area's cramped paying guest accommodations.

For students living in the tightly packed alleys of Satya Niketan, the collapse has revived long-standing worries about unsafe buildings where many spend years of their college life while paying steep rents. "These issues only

come up when there is an incident, but the deeper questions go unanswered. Where will students go? Is the Government or the university administration not responsible for students' safety?" one student said.

Satya Niketan, home to six or seven colleges within walking distance, remains a preferred choice for students despite high rents and constricted living spaces. "There must be lakhs of students across DU, but hostel accommodation is available for merely a few thousand. What about the other students and their safety?" said Ujjwal Kesari, a history student at Ram Lal Anand College.

Students said the Government must ensure

safe housing in the area and address rents that have made living there increasingly difficult. "Rent is around ₹12,000 to 13,000 for a bed, and even then the rooms are not always safe," said Annu Priya, a physics student at Motilal Nehru College, adding that several building owners have now asked residents to vacate rooms, deepening the uncertainty.

The concerns extend beyond students to labourers, vendors and shopkeepers in the area, who fear losing their livelihoods if authorities order widespread closures. Several students said shops in the area have remained shut since the collapse, making it difficult to arrange food and daily essentials.



The incident has also raised questions about the safety of basements and other enclosed spaces in the locality. Parth Rastogi, a history

student from Prayagraj studying at Ram Lal Anand College, said the collapse has made him question the safety of student accommodations

generally. "Students come here to study from different parts of the country. We should not have to worry about whether the building

we live in will collapse on us," he said. Students Mehak and Palak from Maitreyi College said they now fear their own buildings could be declared unsafe, leaving them uncertain about where they would go. They said they were willing to cooperate with inspections but wanted clear information from the administration on the process.

Rising rents have compounded the anxiety. Anjali, a second-year Maitreyi College student, said she has seen rooms barely large enough for one person. "We pay so much rent for rooms like matchboxes, often without basic facilities," she said. Students also cited issues with poor water supply and insects in some accom-

modations. Swati Ray, a Hindi student at Maitreyi College, said students should not have to choose between education and safety, noting that many from other states have no alternative accommodation if forced to leave.

Venkateshwara College principal Vajala Ravi said his college was among the first in South Campus to open its gates to displaced students, providing mattresses and food. Twenty-six girls and 46 boys, including some from outside the college, had taken shelter, though all have since moved in with friends or relatives.

Students said such immediate relief could not substitute for a long-term solution to the area's accommodation crisis.

CM meets injured students, gives ₹5 lakh aid

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A labour contractor has been apprehended from Kasganj in Uttar Pradesh in connection with the collapse of a five-storey building in Delhi's Satya Niketan that left seven people dead, as investigators scrutinised construction and repair work at the building and a rent agreement that reportedly disclaimed liability for tenant casualty, police said on Tuesday.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, who visited the AIIMS Trauma Centre on Tuesday and met the families of students affected by the building collapse, provided financial assistance of ₹5 lakh each to the injured. The compensation for the kin of those who died in the tragedy will be announced soon, sources from her office said.



doctors to ensure the best possible medical care and said there should be no shortcomings in the treatment. The Government will bear the full cost of treatment and provide all necessary assistance, according to the Chief Minister's Office.

The CM also directed the municipal corporation to conduct a safety review of PGs across the city, including checks of building safety, requisite permissions, Fire Safety NOCs, and structural

stability certificates. The contractor, Sanoj, was on his way to Delhi for questioning in connection with the construction and repair work carried out at the building housing the Hostel Daze PG, the police said.

According to the FIR, the entire building had collapsed by the time police reached the spot, with several people trapped under the debris. The structure comprised a ground floor and four upper floors and housed several

LABOUR CONTRACTOR ARRESTED IN DELHI BUILDING COLLAPSE CASE

students and other residents.

A local enquiry mentioned in the FIR found that the building was several years old and that its owners, Hariram and his brother, had constructed additional floors allegedly for rental income.

The FIR states that the new construction had put pressure on the existing structure and that the owners knew its foundation could not bear the additional load. Investigators are also examining a rent agreement issued to occupants of the PG.

According to a police source, the agreement states that the PG operators would not be responsible for any "casualties or risk" to tenants.

It also purportedly says the hostel would not be liable to pay compensation for personal injury, loss or damage to belongings caused by circumstances beyond its control, including sealing, fire, earthquake, heavy rain and other natural calamities.

Don't send your kids to Delhi: Victims' families

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

They sent their children to Delhi with dreams of a better education and a brighter future that their small towns could not offer. But after a boys' hostel collapsed in Satya Niketan, the families of the victims are returning home with a bitter message for anyone still dreaming the same dream: Don't send your kids to Delhi.

The families of the students who died in the collapse had struggled to put them through college in the national Capital. Sunday's collapse of the decades-old building housing a boys' paying guest accommodation has not only claimed lives and shattered families but also left them questioning whether the city was worth the risk.

For Bhupendra Jai, who decided to donate his son Ankit's one eye after the other got damaged in the tragic incident, Delhi has been a profound disappointment. "We have become completely disappointed. I just want to say to everyone, don't send your kids to Delhi," Bhupendra said.

The family of five had endured considerable hardship to provide Ankit with a good education, Jai said. He recalled that shortly after the building collapsed, one of his son's friends called the family around 3 pm to ask about him and warned them not to let him return to the area if he was still in Dewas — their hometown in Madhya Pradesh.

"We told him that he had already left for Delhi and had reached there in the morning. We had a lot of trouble just



finding his body. Nobody was ready to tell us anything. They showed only two photographs to us when there were more bodies," Jai said.

The family has demanded a thorough investigation into the collapse.

The tragedy also prompted the family to take a decision that has brought some meaning to their loss. Doctors told them that one of Ankit's eyes had already been damaged in the collapse, while the other could still be donated. "We decided at that time itself that we would donate his eye," Jai said.

His grandfather, Makhnail Jai, said the authorities were of no help.

"This [collapse] is complete negligence of the authorities. All such dilapidated buildings should be vacated immediately. After reaching there, we had a hard time searching for him as the authorities did not help us at all," he said.

"All our hopes were pinned on him... Now what do we have left?" he said.

For the family of 19-year-old Neeraj

Bawa, a second-year Bachelor of Arts student of Motilal Nehru College, Delhi too was a choice made in pursuit of education. A resident of Jammu, Bawa remains admitted to the intensive care unit of a hospital in critical condition. His lower body suffered severe injuries in the incident.

His cousin Ashok Kumar said the family learnt about the incident through news reports. "His father, who has retired from the Army, was watching the news when reports of the building collapse came. At first, he did not pay heed, but slowly it struck him that Neeraj also lived in a PG in that area. After some time, we saw his photograph somewhere. We took a taxi and came here immediately," Kumar said.

The family had repeatedly asked Neeraj to study in Jammu, but he wanted to come to Delhi to attend a good college.

"Look what Delhi has done to him," Kumar said.

62 dangerous buildings identified across Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

After failing to avert the tragic incident of building collapse in Satya Niketan that killed 7 students, the Delhi agencies have identified 62 buildings as "dangerous" near the accident site and other parts in the national Capital. Among these, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has already acted against 20 structures, demolishing 16 and sealing four. The remaining 42 buildings are now slated for demolition or sealing on priority.

belongings of students from inside the building and safely bringing them out. All students and local residents are requested to cooperate with the authorities. The Chief Minister also directed that no construction work of any kind be carried out there until safety is ensured, and that activities posing a risk to the lives of workers be stopped immediately. No compromise with the safety of citizens will be accepted at any level in Delhi," the Chief Minister Office (CMO) stated on Tuesday.

According to the sources, a report was circulated



Delhi Government directed the agencies concerned to carry out demolition of dilapidated buildings declared unsafe. According to MCD officials, action has been taken across all 12 zones of the MCD, particularly in Laxmi Nagar, Vishwas Nagar, Mukherjee Nagar, Jamia Nagar, Shaheen Bagh, Tilak Nagar, Karam Pura, Karol Bagh, Ramesh Nagar, Mansarovar Garden, Chandni Chowk, and Nehru Vihar. Most of these areas house a substantial student population.

"Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has expressed serious concern over the safety of workers engaged in construction work in buildings around the incident site in Satya Niketan. The MCD had been directed, in the interest of public safety, to demolish dilapidated buildings located near the accident site. Delhi Fire Service personnel are systematically removing the

among the concerned departments of the civic agency after the incident of building collapse took place earlier on September 7 so action could be initiated against the structures considered unsafe. The survey classifies 62 structures as dangerous based on information compiled from different MCD zones. Of these, 50 fall under the maintenance category, while 12 have been listed under the building category.

From June 1 to August 31, the MCD carried out demolition action against 959 properties and sealed 456 properties. It issued 1,461 show-cause notices for unauthorised construction, 590 show-cause notices for sealing and 687 demolition orders during the period, it states. Overall, between June 1 and September 8, the MCD carried out demolition action against 1,007 properties and sealed 471 others.

Nehru Vihar building remains tilted despite complaints

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A residential building in North Delhi's Nehru Vihar has tilted repeatedly over nearly a decade, with residents blaming a faulty sewer line and alleging that repeated complaints to civic authorities have failed to bring a permanent solution.

The building, which residents said is not more than eight years old, was demolished and rebuilt after it first developed the problem. However, the structure reportedly began tilting again within a few years and was most recently reconstructed around three years ago.

The structure tilts to one side in a crowded neighbourhood where many people pass every day. A coaching centre opposite it draws hundreds of students. Locals fear

that if the building gives way, students and passers-by could be buried in debris.

"The building started tilting because of a faulty sewer line. It was demolished and rebuilt once. Within a couple of years, it developed the same problem again," a resident said in a statement on Tuesday while speaking to the media.

The resident said the structure, which is not more than eight years old, had been demolished and reconstructed more than once, most recently around three years ago, but the tilt had recurred.

"We keep complaining but no one listens. Before this, no Government body — neither the Jal Board nor the MCD — carried out proper maintenance," the resident alleged. The resident further alleged that at least 400 dwellings in the nearby F Block of Gandhi Vihar were



tilting in one direction or another. The Delhi Jal Board and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi did not immediately respond to

Delhi records 330+ building-related calls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Fire Service received over 330 calls related to building issues between January 1 and September 6 this year, with such incidents leaving 30 people dead and 120 injured, according to Delhi Fire Services data.

In the corresponding period last year, the DFS had received 446 calls, with building-related incidents resulting in 46 deaths or fatal incidents and 155 injuries, the data accessed by PTI showed. A DFS official said the calls received and responded to by the department did not pertain only to major building collapses, but also included minor incidents and precautionary calls involving cracks in structures, falling bricks, roof collapses and other building-related concerns.

Despite the decline in the overall number of calls and casualties compared with last year, the city has witnessed several fatal building collapses and other major incidents this year. These include the May 30 collapse



in Saidulajab that killed six people, a house collapse in Malka Ganj's Sabzi Mandi area and the collapse of a four-storey building in Karawal Nagar, both in June. A major fire at a bed-and-breakfast establishment in Hauz Rani on June 3 also claimed 23 lives, including 11 foreign nationals. The latest major incident occurred in Satya Niketan, where a five-storey building housing a boys' paying guest accommodation near Delhi University's South Campus collapsed around 1.30 pm on September 6.

The over 27-hour rescue operation at the site concluded around 5.10 pm on Monday, with all rescue units

subsequently withdrawn, according to the DFS. Twelve people were pulled out of the debris, of whom seven died, and five were injured.

Multiple agencies, including the Delhi Police, DFS, National Disaster Response Force and Delhi Disaster Management Authority, were involved in the rescue operation through the night and into Monday.

Locals claimed that repair work was underway at the building when it collapsed.

Police have arrested the building owner, 81-year-old Hariram, a retired Indian Air Force sergeant, his 75-year-old wife Urmila and their 52-year-old son Mahesh in connection with the incident.

Sood meets PG students, promises regulatory policy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Education and Urban Development Minister Ashish Sood on Tuesday said the Delhi government will bring a comprehensive policy and a web portal to regulate Paying Guest (PG) accommodations and coaching institutes in the city within a month and a half. Sood made the remarks after meeting students living in PG accommodations to understand their concerns, days after the building collapse in Satya Niketan that left seven dead and several injured.

"We were already working on this, but this tragic incident has forced us to expedite the implementation of the Gauba committee report and formulate a policy," Sood said.

He said students from DU's South Campus and professional colleges under Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University were invited to share their concerns as users of PG accommodations.



The students raised issues related to rent, facilities provided by PG operators, implementation of agreements and safety, he said. Sood said the government was considering a system under which details of PG accommodations, including their availability, facilities and safety norms, could be registered on a common portal.

"The PG building may belong to one person, be operated by another and the money may be collected by someone else. The implementation of agreements and the facilities promised to students are a major

concern," he said. The minister said the Government would consult PG management, parents, agencies, student organisations and other stakeholders, including departments dealing with water and electricity, before finalising the policy. He said the proposal would subsequently be discussed with Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and the Lieutenant Governor before being placed before the Cabinet.

"We will try to bring the policy before the public within one to one-and-a-half months after consulting all stakeholders," Sood said.

MEA distance itself from Eiffel Tower BAPS temple controversy

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has described the controversy surrounding a BAPS delegation's visit to the Eiffel Tower as a matter between the organisations directly involved.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India was aware of the inauguration of a BAPS Hindu temple in the Paris region but said the ministry would not comment on the specific dispute linked to the Eiffel Tower.

“We are aware of the opening of a temple by the BAPS Sanstha in the Paris area. As to the particular issue pertaining to the Tower, this is a matter purely between the entities concerned,” Jaiswal said during a media briefing in New Delhi.

The controversy erupted after reports that female employees at the Eiffel Tower were asked to move away from their regular work areas during a visit by around 100 people associated with BAPS, or Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha.

French union representatives reportedly objected to arrangements under which



MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal

some women were moved to different areas while certain duties were temporarily assigned to male employees. There were also allegations that female staff had been instructed not to cross particular areas while the delegation was present.

The reported incident resulted in a staff protest, and the Eiffel Tower was closed for a day before reopening to visitors.

The company operating the landmark, Société d'Exploitation de la Tour Eiffel, later acknowledged that the delegation had requested limited interaction with female employees.

The operator said such arrangements should not have been permitted.

BAPS has since expressed regret over the controversy and said it was taking the concerns raised by Eiffel Tower employees seriously. The organisation said the visit had been coordinated with the tower's teams and scheduled around the start of normal operating hours to reduce disruption.

BAPS also said that, to its knowledge, no visitor had been denied access to the Eiffel Tower. It apologised to anyone who may have been affected by the incident and reaffirmed its commitment to

mutual respect and service.

The controversy has drawn criticism from several senior French political figures. Paris Mayor Emmanuel Gregoire described the reported arrangements as unacceptable and said an investigation would be undertaken.

National Assembly President Yaël Braun-Pivet also criticised the reported treatment of female employees, saying demands from foreign visitors should not result in women being asked to step aside.

France's Minister for Gender Equality and the Fight Against Discrimination, Aurore Berge, called the incident unacceptable and stressed that gender equality remains a fundamental principle in the country.

Former Prime Minister Gabriel Attal also criticised the reported restrictions, saying cultural or religious beliefs should not determine the position of women in public spaces.

The BAPS delegation was in France in connection with the opening of a new Hindu temple near Paris. The organisation has described the BAPS Hindu Mandir of Paris as its first traditional Hindu temple in France.

Delhi traffic advisory issued ahead of BRICS summit rehearsal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

Ahead of the motorcade rehearsal for the BRICS Summit 2026, the Delhi Traffic Police have released a comprehensive advisory, imposing restrictions and diversions on major roads in the national Capital from Tuesday evening.

The advisory stated that the motorcade rehearsal would take place from 7.45 pm to 10 pm on September 8. The advisory also said the BRICS Summit would be held at Bharat Mandapam in Pragati Maidan from September 11 to 13.

The traffic police said over 35 roads would be regulated and that traffic diversions would take place at 22 locations during the advisory period.

The following major roads are likely to be affected: Sardar Patel Marg, Mother Teresa Crescent, Teen Murti Marg, Akbar Road, Tees January Marg, Rajesh Pilot Marg, Subramania Bharti Marg, Mathura Road, Moti Lal Nehru Marg, Dr Zakir Hussain Marg, Brig Hoshiyar Singh Marg, Janpath, Ashoka Road, Barakhamba Road and Tolstoy Marg.

The advisory includes 22 diversion points, such as Dr Dinesh Nandini Dalmia Chowk, Ram Charan



Aggarwal Chowk, Mir Dard Chowk, Kasturba Gandhi Marg/Outer Circle, Janpath/Connaught Place, Patel Chowk, the roundabout at the RML Hospital and Vande Matram Marg/Simon Bolivar Marg.

At Dr Dinesh Nandini Dalmia Chowk, traffic heading towards Mathura Road and Tilak Marg will be prohibited, and vehicles will be directed via routes such as BSZ Marg, IP Marg, and Delhi Gate, depending on their destination.

Commercial vehicles heading beyond Ram Charan Aggarwal Chowk towards the W-Point will also be prohibited. At Mir Dard Chowk, traffic will be directed via roads such as Mir Dard Marg, Abdul Gaffar Marg, DDU Marg, Kotla Marg and BSZ Marg.

Restrictions will also apply

around Connaught Place, with traffic heading for the C-Hexagon diverted from the Outer Circle. At Patel Chowk, vehicles bound for Windsor Place and the RBI on Sansad Marg will face restrictions.

Traffic flow around Dhaula Kuan, Moti Bagh, Lodhi Road, and the Mathura Road corridor will also be controlled.

Traffic on the Mathura Road heading towards Bharat Mandapam will also be diverted at various points, such as underneath the Lodhi Flyover, at Neela Gumbad, underneath the Oberoi Flyover and at the U-turn opposite the DPS on Mathura Road.

The advisory also proposes alternative routes for commuters travelling to the major railway stations. For New Delhi Railway Station, routes have been suggested via ISBT Kashmiri Gate,

Boulevard Road, Rani Jhansi Marg, DBG Road, Panchkuian Road, and Connaught Place, among others.

At Hazrat Nizamuddin Railway Station, people can take routes via AIIMS, Ring Road, Ashram Chowk, and Mathura Road; alternative routes have also been proposed for Old Delhi. During the advisory period, the traffic police recommend using the Metro when travelling to the airport. The advisory sets out different road routes for commuters coming from Gurugram, Dwarka, New Delhi, and South Delhi, as well as from West, North, and East Delhi, to reach the airport terminals. Metro services will run fully at all stations, though some bus routes might be diverted during VIP movements.

Taxis and autos will be allowed to operate, but roadside parking will not be permitted except in designated areas. The traffic police said emergency and medical vehicles would be given priority and that they would ensure their routes remained clear. Essential services and utility operations would also keep going without interruption. The traffic police asked commuters to remain informed by checking their official social media accounts.

CRPF to replace Indian Army in Jammu anti-terror operations



MOHIT KANDHARI

■ Srinagar

In a tactical shift in their strategy ahead of the winter months, the top brass of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has been directed to take over counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism (CI/CT) operations from the Indian Army in vulnerable pockets of the Jammu region in a phased manner.

Security agencies have so far identified 21 locations in Kathua and Udhampur districts where CRPF units, supported by specialised Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) companies, will replace Army camps currently handling hinterland CI/CT roles.

CoBRA battalions, equipped for jungle warfare, can act as a force multiplier to effectively deal with the foreign terrorists who have carved out their safe hideouts inside jungles and execute targeted killings without coming on the radar of the security forces, especially in the Jammu region.

Soon after the formal induction of these battle-hardened companies into the multi-tier security grid, the CRPF will be tasked with undertaking operations in the forested areas of Jammu and Kashmir.

Having successfully led anti-Naxal operations in central India, select CRPF units are currently being de-inducted from the Left Wing Extremism (LWE) theatre to be repositioned in Jammu and Kashmir, officials added.

The reorganisation of paramilitary forces will allow Army infantry and Rashtriya Rifles units to be withdrawn from routine anti-terror duties in the hinterland and redeployed to strengthen the Line of Control and Line of Actual Control.

At present, quick reaction teams (QRTs) of the CRPF are already participating in anti-terror operations along with the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Jammu and Kashmir police and the Indian Army.

Some of the CRPF units also remain deployed in the outer cordon to plug the escape routes of terrorists and deal with the local masses during the engagement of troops with the anti-national elements.

In several areas, CRPF personnel have already set up Temporary Operating Bases (TOBs) in the upper reaches to track down the suspected movement of armed terrorists following a surge in the terrorist related incidents in the forested areas of Kathua and Udhampur.

Last year in April, a new Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) was raised for Jammu and Kashmir, on the directions of the Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Last year, Pakistan-based terrorists launched several operations targeting security personnel and patrolling parties to inflict maximum injuries and spread the reign of terror across the Jammu region. In response, the security forces had to launch massive combing and

search operations to track down the footprints of perpetrators behind these attacks. The Pakistan-based terrorists relied heavily on their network of over-ground workers, and on the other hand, the security forces were not receiving adequate human intelligence to launch anti-terror operations to neutralise these hiding terrorists.

According to official sources, 21 CRPF companies comprising around 2,100 personnel, along with at least nine CoBRA teams, are expected to man the camps. Sources indicated that troop numbers and formal handover procedures are being finalised, with the first phase focused on the most sensitive sites. The CRPF will operate from existing Army infrastructure to ensure continuity.

According to the latest assessment of the Intelligence agencies, Pakistan is making desperate attempts to push fresh groups of armed terrorists inside Indian territory via the Line of Control and the International border with Pakistan. During the winter months, the plain areas of Jammu and the Line of Control in the frontier districts of Rajouri and Poonch become active transit points for the various terrorist groups.

The Home Ministry has already given its nod to modernise the CRPF units by equipping CRPF personnel with specialised winter gear, including Himsuraksha clothing sanctioned earlier this year.

BJP confident of winning West Bengal by-elections

SAUGAR SENGUPTA

■ Kolkata

The BJP is confident of winning the Assembly by-elections to two seats, Nandigram and Rejinagar, polling to which would be held on October 6, Bengal Chief Minister Adhikari, who vacated the former seat after winning from the Bhawanipore constituency in Kolkata, defeating former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in the April-May State elections, said.

While Nandigram is in East Midnapore district, Rejinagar is in Murshidabad district. Both the seats are differently important considering their

political status and features. Adhikari has been the sitting MLA of Nandigram, the main battleground of Mamata Banerjee's land movement that eventually catapulted her to power in 2011. In 2021, Adhikari won the seat, defeating Banerjee by a margin of little more than 1,900 votes, before becoming the Opposition Leader in the State Assembly. Adhikari, a son of the soil, is confident of winning this seat for the BJP by breaking all records.

“The question is not who wins Nandigram... Because it is for sure that the BJP will win it... The question is who bags the second position...



West Bengal CM Suwendu Adhikari

The TMC or the breakaway section of the TMC or the Left that has suddenly risen to hog the opposition lime-light... Both Nandigram and Rejinagar will help the BJP Government and the other political parties to rejig their strategies in future,” said Bishwanath Chakrabarty, a

political analyst.

Rejinagar, on the other hand, is a Muslim-dominated seat and a traditional stronghold of the Congress and later on the Trinamool Congress before Kabir left that party to form his own. He won this seat in this year's elections along with the Bharatpur seat. Rejinagar fell vacant after he chose to retain the other seat. The seat is important because it is likely to witness a keen contest between BJP, Congress, Left and Kabir's party, and the results would decide whether the BJP can capitalise on the division of Muslim votes in the region.

Senior Bengal minister Dilip

Ghosh said, “The way the Government has worked in the past four months, there is no doubt that the BJP will win by a huge margin... Rest assured, we are winning... Nandigram definitely and Rejinagar too... The people have reposed their faith in us by giving us such a huge mandate, and the Government is responding to it by taking all the decisions very confidently and effectively.”

The polls are to be held on October 6, and results will be declared on October 9. The last date for filing nominations is September 16, and withdrawal of nomination can be done till September 19.

Kashmir offers stories beyond landscapes: Pankaj Tripathi, Divyendu

MOHIT KANDHARI

■ Srinagar

Budding filmmakers, movie buffs and students attending the first-ever International Film Festival in Srinagar on Tuesday interacted with the star cast of the popular web series Mirzapur.

During their exchange of ideas, Actors Pankaj Tripathi and Divyendu, known for their roles as Kaleen Bhaiya and Munna Tripathi, respectively, said Kashmir can offer filmmakers stories beyond its landscapes, including its people, food, culture and everyday life.

Responding to a question related to filmmaking in Kashmir, the duo said the region offers rich material for storytelling, praising its natural beauty and deeply rooted local narratives.

“We like Dal Lake. Kashmir has beautiful, rooted stories,” they said.

They added that Kashmir can offer filmmakers stories beyond its landscapes, including its people, food, culture and everyday life.

“Kashmir is one of the most beautiful parts of the country. If infrastructure is further developed, it would be wonderful to come here and tell stories about Kashmir,” they said.

Another renowned filmmaker Imtiaz Ali during his interaction with the media said Kashmir has many untold stories, characters and



cultural traditions that can provide rich material for filmmakers, while expressing hope that the region's growing connection with cinema would create more opportunities for local talent.

Interacting with the media at SKICC Srinagar, Ali said he always hopes to return to the region whenever he shoots a film. “We always hope that whenever we shoot, we come back to Kashmir. There is perhaps no other place in the world that is so cinematic,” he said.

On Laila Majnu, he said the film was deeply rooted in Kashmir, with its characters and setting closely connected to the region. “Laila Majnu is a film based in Kashmir. The characters are from Kashmir, and the whole setting and feel of the film are Kashmiri,” he said.

Ali said he was happy that the film continued to remain

popular in Kashmir even years after its release. “Eight years later, it is still popular here. This is Kashmir. I am very happy and I thank Kashmir for Laila Majnu,” he said.

Speaking about the future of cinema in the region, the actors Pankaj Tripathi and Divyendu said Kashmir's storytelling potential goes far beyond its scenic beauty. There is a lot of future ahead. There will be theatres, OTT platforms and many other opportunities. There is tremendous scope,” they said, adding that young talent in the region could benefit from the evolving film ecosystem.

Responding to students and aspiring filmmakers attending the festival, the actors said film festivals and masterclasses offer valuable opportunities to learn from experienced professionals.

“We have seen how films are made. In a four-day festival, if there are masterclasses, that is a very good thing. There will be a lot to listen to and learn,” they said.

Reflecting on Kashmir's long association with the film industry, the actors noted that while filmmakers historically visited the region for song sequences and shoots, there is now an opportunity to tell deeper stories about its people and culture.

“Kashmir has had a connection with cinema for a long time. People used to come here for songs and shoots. But there are so many other things, the people, food and culture. Why not talk about them?” they said.

Meanwhile, Five films, helmed by directors from Jammu and Kashmir, have been selected for the J&K Select Section, the competitive category of the 1st International Film Festival of Jammu & Kashmir (IFFJK), 2026.

The films were recommended by the Preview Committee constituted for the festival, following a review of submissions and assessment of their artistic merit and suitability for the competitive section.

The selected films include Searching for the Grandpa, directed by Mohammad Wali; Arifa, directed by Rohin Ravendran Nair; Batt Koch (The Lost Lane), directed by

Siddarth Koul and Ankit Wali; Tasrufdaar (Djinns of Kashmir), directed by Kapil Mattoo; and Naqsh-e-Daur (The Story of Ghulam Nabi Dhar), directed by Baba Tassadduq Hussain.

Spanning Kashmiri and Hindi languages, the films explore themes ranging from childhood, family and memory to displacement, identity, heritage, resilience and the changing social landscape of Kashmir.

Searching for the Grandpa follows two young siblings in a Kashmiri village on Eid. Arifa centres on a woman returning to her ancestral home in Kashmir and confronting memories of her childhood and father. Batt Koch explores displacement, identity and the enduring idea of home through the story of a Kashmiri migrant family. Tasrufdaar (Djinns of Kashmir) weaves together mystery, memory and the scars of Kashmir's past, while Naqsh-e-Daur portrays the life and legacy of a Padma Shri-honoured woodcarver in downtown Srinagar, highlighting Kashmir's craftsmanship, heritage and resilience.

The selected films will form part of the competitive programming of the four-day International Film Festival, offering audiences and filmmakers an opportunity to engage with distinctive cinematic voices and stories from Jammu and Kashmir.

Deaths due to passive smoking in India up 50% compared to 1990: Lancet study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

Deaths in India due to second-hand smoke increased nearly 50 per cent in 2023, compared to 1990, even as death rates improved by about 30 per cent, according to a global analysis published in The Lancet Public Health journal.

The estimates also suggest that while the population

exposed to second-hand smoke increased from 375 million in 1990 to 444 million in 2026 — up by 18.4 per cent — age-standardised prevalence dropped from 43.2 per cent in 1990 to 30.6 per cent in 2023 in India.

Age-standardised prevalence is a statistical adjustment made to data to allow a fair comparison of prevalence across age groups.

An international team of

researchers forming the ‘Global Burden of Disease (GBD) 2023 Second-hand smoke Collaborators’ estimated prevalence of exposure to passive smoking and the disease burden it contributes to across 204 countries and territories.

“In 2023, an estimated 2.71 billion people worldwide were exposed to SHS (second-hand smoke), including 767 million children aged 0-14



years,” the authors wrote.

Globally, exposure prevalence was 33.9 per cent in 2023. China, India, and Indonesia accounted for nearly half of the world's exposed population, with 664 million, 444 million, and 142 million people exposed, respectively, in 2023, they found.

However, “age-standardised prevalence was highest in Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Oceania (48.4 per cent),

with female individuals in some countries experiencing nearly 1.8 times the exposure prevalence of male individuals,” the team said.

In India, absolute deaths in 1990 due to passive smoking were 2,17,700, while those in 2023 were 3,25,600 — death rates or deaths per hundred thousand population, however, fell from 46.1 in 1990 to 30 in 2023, down by 35 per cent, the findings show.

States Focus



VP PAYS TRIBUTES TO BOSE AT INA MEMORIAL IN MANIPUR

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan on Tuesday paid tributes to legendary freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at the INA Martyrs' Memorial Complex in Manipur's Bishnupur district, an official said.

Radhakrishnan visited the historic flag-hoisting site at Moirang Kangla, where the Indian National Army (INA) under the leadership of Bose hoisted the Tricolour for the first time on Indian soil on April 14, 1944, he said.

"The vice president also toured the INA War Museum gallery commemorating the valour and sacrifice of the INA. He also paid floral tributes to the statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at the complex," the official said.

Earlier in the day, the vice president was accorded a guard of honour upon his arrival at the Imphal airport. (PTI)



BHUPEN HAZARIKA'S VOICE CARRIES ASSAM'S SOUL: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that the voice of eminent singer-composer Bhupen Hazarika carried the soul of Assam and the spirit of the Northeast to the entire nation.

The Prime Minister, in a tribute to Hazarika on his birth centenary, said that his songs brought people closer. "On his 100th birth anniversary, remembering the legendary Dr Bhupen Hazarika Ji. His voice carried the soul of Assam and the spirit of the Northeast to the entire nation," Modi said in a post on X. "Through his music, he beautifully gave expression to the thoughts and spirit of countless people. His songs brought people closer," he said. (PTI)

Bihar floods worsen: Over 34 lakh people affected

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Patna

The Bihar flood situation worsened as over 34 lakh people across 13 districts have been affected, with the authorities sounding an alert in downstream areas after the water level of the Ganga crossed the "flood mark" at Sultanganj in Bhagalpur district on Tuesday, officials said.

A small boat capsized in a flood-hit area of Kharik Raghupur in Bhagalpur district this morning. State Disaster Relief Force (SDRF) personnel rescued all 10 people aboard the boat, officials said.

Floods have affected

around 34.31 lakh people across 480 gram panchayats in 13 districts of Bihar, including Patna, Bhagalpur, Vaishali, Saran, Begusarai, Khagaria and Munger.

Around 29.13 lakh people have been impacted by floods as overflowing rivers inundated large swathes in 13 districts on Monday.

According to the Bihar Meteorological Service Centre, the State has recorded 79.6 mm of rainfall in September so far, which is 31 per cent above normal.

The Disaster Management Department in a statement said, "The Ganga at Sultanganj in Bhagalpur recorded 36.80 metres at 8 am on September 8, sur-



passing its previous Highest Flood Level (HFL) of 36.75 metres recorded on August 17, 2021. The trend, however, remains stable.

Several rivers, including the Gandak, Kosi, Budhi Gandak, Ganga, Punpun,

Bagmati and Ghaghra, are flowing above danger levels at multiple locations.

The water levels of the Gandak river at Dumriaghat and Hajipur, Kosi at Baltara and Kursela, Budhi Gandak at Khagaria, Ganga at Digha,

TN Assembly passes resolution urging Union Govt to ensure official names of OBCs in Census

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chennai

The Tamil Nadu Assembly on Tuesday passed a resolution urging the Centre to collect details related to OBCs during the second phase of the 2027 census only on the basis of the official lists of the State and Union Governments that specifically identify such castes.

Minister for Backward Classes Welfare V Sampathkumar moved the resolution and briefly traced the history of the census in India.

The minister said that if people used different names to denote the same caste, including regional variations, the data collected could become unclear.

This could lead to difficulties in enumeration and may also prevent the full benefits of the census exercise from being realised.

"Hence, the exercise must stick to official names alone as per the notifications of the



State and Union Governments to ensure social justice and equal justice," he said.

The Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities notified by the State and Union Governments should be pre-loaded into the census enumeration portal/application, he said.

Selecting a caste from the pre-loaded data using a 'drop-down menu' would be the appropriate method,

the minister noted.

The resolution said data must be collected solely based on the names contained in the official lists, and the ambiguous 'open-column method' for enumerating BCs, MBCs and DCs must be completely dispensed with.

It said: "In order to ensure social justice for all sections of society, this Assembly unanimously resolves to urge the Union Government to

collect the caste details of Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities during the second phase of the 2027 census of India, in the same manner as followed for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes."

The collection of caste-wise details of OBCs has been omitted from censuses conducted after Independence.

Hence, it is essential to obtain accurate data based on the lists of Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities notified by the state and Union Governments in accordance with the Constitution, the resolution said.

DMK MLAs were not present when the resolution was debated and passed, as they had been evicted following a ruckus.

After legislators, including those from the AIADMK and PMK, spoke in support of the resolution, it was passed unanimously.

No share cut from other communities: Fadnavis over Maratha quota row



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

With activist Manoj Jarange's fast for Maratha quota entering its 11th day, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Tuesday said the Government would grant whatever is permissible under the Constitution but would not take from one community's share to give another.

He was replying to questions on the issue of Maratha reservation and reports that a late-night meeting was held by the Government to discuss Jarange's agitation.

Jarange, who began his latest hunger strike at Antarwali Sarati village in Jalna district on August 29, has been demanding reservation for the Maratha community under the OBC category, including implementation of the Hyderabad and Satara Gazette records and issuance of Kunbi caste certificates to eligible members of the Maratha community. Kunbi is a traditional agrarian (farming) community that officially falls under the OBC category, making them eligible for reservation benefits in education and

Government jobs.

Activists from the Other Backward Classes had also staged an agitation in the village to safeguard the constitutional rights and reservation share of the OBC community.

Fadnavis said the ruling alliance had taken all major decisions concerning the (Maratha) community so far and would take any further decisions required within the framework of the Constitution and subject to court orders.

"Whatever is permissible under the Constitution will certainly be given. Whatever is subject to the court's decision will be dealt with accordingly. We are not going to take from one community's share and give it to another," he told reporters at Uran in Navi Mumbai.

The Government had not merely taken decisions on paper, but the actual benefits of these decisions were visible to the Maratha community, he stressed.

"We will do everything that is possible. We have never closed the doors for dialogue. A Government finds a solution through discussions, and the entire process is moving forward in that spirit," Fadnavis said.

ED finds ₹60 crore discrepancy in TMC MP-linked newspaper raids

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) detected alleged financial irregularities of around ₹60 crore in an Urdu newspaper linked to TMC Rajya Sabha MP Nadimul Haque, during searches for over 24 hours, officials said on Tuesday.

The marathon searches at premises linked to Haque and his media entity began on September 7 morning and were completed early Tuesday.

"Financial records and digital documents are being examined to establish the trail

of the transactions and determine the nature and source of the funds under investigation," an ED official said.

The central probe agency is probing alleged illegal financial transactions involving the newspaper and is examining whether some of the funds were routed through hawala channels, sources said.

During the searches, ED officials examined bank transaction records, financial documents and digital material, and questioned Haque at his residence and office in Kolkata, he said.

The ED investigators are



also looking into the alleged movement of funds linked to the TMC, he said.

According to ED sources,

investigators found discrepancies relating to transactions worth around ₹60 crore for which they could not

immediately find satisfactory supporting records.

The central probe agency is now examining whether the transactions were genuine business dealings or whether the funds were moved through informal channels, including hawala, the official said.

Similar searches were conducted at seven other locations in Delhi and Ranchi, including the newspaper's office in the city's Park Circus area and premises linked to Haque.

The TMC MP was in Ranchi when the operation began and was subsequently

brought to Kolkata on Monday night, following which he was questioned during the search at his residence and office, the official said.

The investigation stems from an FIR registered by the Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate and the subsequent registration of an Enforcement Case Information Report by the ED. The case includes allegations of illegal and unaccounted financial transactions and receipt of funds from suspicious sources. The ED has so far not made any arrest in connection with the case.

MP hooch tragedy: Death toll rises to 15

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Sagar (MP)

The death toll in the spurious liquor tragedy in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district rose to 15 on Tuesday after two more victims succumbed during treatment, police said on Tuesday.

One of the deceased men is an accused in the spurious liquor network, while nearly 40 people remain hospitalised, three of them in critical condition, an official said.

Talking to media, Sagar Superintendent of Police (SP) Anurag Sujania said that a total of 15 people have died so far in the spurious liquor case, including one of the accused.

He said that the police



have so far arrested 14 of the 30 accused in the case and a search is on for the others.

Meanwhile, a pall of gloom has descended on Gugra Khurd village in the district, where five people have died so far after consuming poisonous liquor.

The deceased include three men from the same family - two brothers and a cousin.

Villagers claim that 30 people from the village are

still hospitalised.

Jasrath Lodhi, a villager, told media that Ujiyar Singh and Bhagwan Singh Lodhi worked in a factory in Indore and had come home for Raksha Bandhan.

The duo had returned home after a long time, went to party with friends and got drunk.

Suman Singh Lodhi, the wife of the deceased Bhagwan Singh Lodhi, is expecting another child.

"My dreams are over now. There is nothing left in life. We only demand from the Government administration that they help us and ban the sale of liquor so that such a tragedy does not befall anyone else," a distraught Suman said.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The BJP on Tuesday demanded Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's resignation over the alleged suicide of a man, who was pressured by local AAP leaders to apologise for questioning Minister Harpal Singh Cheema over the drug menace in his village.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, party spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia also demanded the resignation of Cheema and the lodging of an FIR under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections related to abetment of suicide.

According to media reports, a 47-year-old daily

wager, identified as Gulzar Singh, a resident of Dirba in Sangrur district, died after consuming poison on Monday night after some local leaders of the ruling party allegedly pressured him to apologise for questioning Cheema during an event in the village on September 6.

"Gulzar Singh raised the issue of drug menace during Cheema's visit to his village. Singh told Cheema that his son takes chitta and urged the minister to take action on its supply," Bhatia said.

"After the minister left, an AAP leader, who is the sarpanch of the village, visited Gulzar Singh's home and asked him to apologise to the minister for his



BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia

remarks," the BJP leader added.

Neither the ruling party nor the Punjab Government has responded to the BJP's charge.

"When the protector turns the predator, he has no right to remain in office. Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann must immediately resign

from his post," Bhatia said.

Before Singh died at a hospital, he narrated the entire episode and took the names of those who threatened him for raising the drug issue before Cheema, the BJP spokesperson said, showing video footage of it.

He demanded that all those named by Singh in the

video be booked for abetment of suicide under BNS.

"Cheema must also resign immediately," Bhatia demanded, adding, "Since he (Gulzar Singh) belonged to a Scheduled Caste, action should also be taken under provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act."

Some BJP leaders took to X condemning the death and demanding action.

BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari alleged that the ruling party in Punjab has become a "gangster party".

In a video post on X, he pointed to the induction of Gurpreet Singh Sekhon, one of the main accused in the 2016 Nabha jailbreak case, into the AAP two days ago.

6 killed as speeding truck collides with SUV in Maharashtra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gondia

As many as six people, including a three-year-old boy, were killed and seven others were injured after a speeding truck collided with an SUV in Maharashtra's Gondia district, police said on Tuesday.

The victims were labourers from neighbouring Madhya Pradesh and were travelling to Karimnagar in Telangana for work, an official said.

The grisly crash occurred on Monday night near Nagra village, about 4 km from the district headquarters, Inspector Vaibhav Pawar of Gondia Rural police said.



The truck driver, Mohsin Khan (32), a resident of Gondia, crashed into the SUV coming from the opposite

direction, he said.

Pawar said that the victims were extricated from the mangled vehicle, with the impact killing six of them on the spot, while seven sustained injuries and were shifted to a Government hospital.

The deceased were identified as Kiran Santosh Vaidhy (26), Santosh Matre (38), Sushila Matre (35), Rupsen Tejpal Satyakar (35), Jyoti Rupsen Satyakar (32) and three-year-old Aarush Matre, all residents of Kirnapur tehsil of MP's Balaghat district.

A case under sections 281 (rash or negligent driving) and other relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Motor Vehicle Act has been registered against the truck driver.

People of Manipur suffering both within and outside State under Modi Govt, says Kharge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday alleged that the "incompetence" of the Modi Government has left the people of Manipur suffering both within the State and outside it. His attack came after the alleged lynching of well-known Manipuri musician Chongtham Vikram Singh by a mob in Delhi.

"The merciless lynching of Chongtham Vikram Singh ji, a well-known musician from Manipur, by a mob is yet another chilling reminder of the utter lawlessness



under the BJP," he said in a post on X. "Students are unsafe. Women face atrocities every day. People from Northeast India face discrimination. Dalits, Adivasis

and minorities remain highly vulnerable. "Under HM Amit Shah's watch, Delhi has become a crime capital, with the NCRB recording highest levels of crimes in the national capital year after year," the Congress chief alleged.

Expressing his condolences to the bereaved family, Kharge said, "They deserve justice, and those responsible must face the strictest action."

"The incompetence of the Modi Sarkar has left the people of Manipur suffering both within their state and outside it," the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha alleged.

PM Modi: Working to provide free online coaching to students

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Vadodara

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the Government was working to reduce the burden of fees faced by the families of students preparing for competitive examinations by providing free online coaching.

Speaking at the 'NaMo for Viksit Bharat' programme here where he inaugurated or laid foundation stones for ₹35,000 crore-worth development projects, the PM referred to the announcement he had made in this regard in his August 15 Red Fort speech.

"You are aware that lakhs of young people prepare for competitive examinations. Every year, a significant



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the inauguration and foundation stone laying of ₹35,000 crore development projects at an event, in Vadodara, Gujarat

portion of our families' earnings is spent on coaching for these students," Modi said.

"We aim to save money for the families of poor and middle-class students. Consequently, the Government is moving towards providing free online coaching, allowing our youth

to prepare under the guidance of India's best teachers. The Government itself will oversee this coaching arrangement," he added.

Changing global needs had also changed the approach to education, with skills being given equal importance alongside degrees, the prime minister noted.

Hence, the Government was reshaping the education policy and institutions, he said. Artificial Intelligence expertise would not be limited only to the IT sector and it could be used in agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing and robotics startups, he noted.

India was witnessing an "extraordinary era," Modi said, and called upon the youth to prioritise the goal of a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

Election petition, SIR delay bypolls to 2 LS seats

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

An election petition and the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls have delayed bypolls to two Lok Sabha seats, while a by-election to another parliamentary constituency has already been announced.

The Basirhat seat in West Bengal, the Shillong seat in Meghalaya and the Nagaon constituency in Assam fell vacant on different dates.

The Election Commission on Monday announced a bypoll to the Nagaon Lok Sabha seat but not to the other two.

Responding to a query on why bypolls to the Shillong and Basirhat parliamentary seats were not announced, senior EC functionaries said the ongoing SIR in Meghalaya and a pending election petition in the Calcutta High Court were behind the deci-



sion. An election petition was filed challenging the election of TMC's SK Nurul Islam from Basirhat. But months after taking the oath as a Lok Sabha member, he died on September 25, 2024.

Despite his death, the petition challenging his election remains pending. An election petition can be filed against the victory of a candi-

date in the concerned high court within 45 days of the declaration of results.

EC officials said an "election petition with second prayer" is pending.

The second prayer in an election petition usually asks the high court to declare the petitioner or another candidate as duly elected, after the first prayer declaring the

winning candidate's election as void.

The Shillong Lok Sabha seat was vacated following the demise of Voice of the People's Party MP Ricky Andrew Syngkon on February 19 this year.

Poll authority functionaries said the SIR is in progress in Meghalaya, where the final electoral rolls will be published on October 21.

The lone Lok Sabha bypoll will be held in Assam's Nagaon constituency, which was vacated by Pradyut Bordoloi. Votes will be cast on October 6, and counting will take place on October 9.

Bordoloi had won Nagaon on a Congress ticket in 2024 but quit the party in March this year and joined the BJP ahead of the Assam assembly elections. He subsequently resigned from the Lok Sabha, contested the assembly polls as a BJP candidate from Dispur and won.

Congress seeks FIR over purification ritual at UK Haldwani rally venue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

A Congress leader on Tuesday sought registration of an FIR against Shri Ram Dharmarth Seva Nyas president, Girish Chandra Pandey and 15 others over an alleged "purification" ritual performed at Ramila Maidan in Uttarakhand's Haldwani after the party president Mallikarjun Kharge's address.

In his complaint at Parliament Street police station, MP Mallu Ravi alleged that Pandey and 15 unidentified persons entered into a "criminal conspiracy" and performed a yajna and sprinkled Gangajal at the venue on August 10, two days after Kharge addressed the meeting there on August 8.

Ravi alleged that the act was aimed at insulting and



Police stop Congress leaders during a protest march towards the Uttarakhand CM's residence over an FIR filed against Rahul Gandhi in Haldwani over the 'purification' row, in Dehradun

humiliating members of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities and was contrary to constitutional guarantees of equality and the abolition of untouchability.

He said the incident had deeply hurt his feelings and those of his community, adding that he had received

calls from several people expressing concern over the alleged practice.

Ravi urged the police to register a case, arrest those responsible and take strict legal action under the SC/ST Act, the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act and relevant provisions of the BNS.

CWMA directs Karnataka to release 6,000 cusecs to TN

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) on Tuesday upheld the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee's (CWRC) recommendation directing Karnataka to ensure a flow of 6,000 cusecs of water to Tamil Nadu for 15 days. The decision was taken at the 57th meeting of the CWMA held in Delhi under the chairmanship of SK Haldar. Officials from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka among others participated in the meeting.

"Karnataka has released 33 TMC of Cauvery water towards Tamil Nadu's Biligundlu border point so far in accordance with the directions issued by the CWMA and CWRC," Cauvery Neeravari Nigama Limited Managing Director Mahesha told reporters after the meeting. He added that



despite Karnataka being in a "distress situation", the state has been following the orders of the CWMA and CWRC and there has been no violation so far. "If the situation were normal, it would be different. But now that we are in a distress situation, we have to follow the distress-sharing proportion as per the orders

issued by the CWMA and CWRC. We have been following those orders so far and, accordingly, have released water," Mahesha told reporters.

Earlier in the day, the CWRC had recommended that Karnataka release water to Tamil Nadu at a rate of 6,000 cusecs for the next 15

days. The recommendation was upheld by the CWMA later in the afternoon, Mahesha said.

"The people of Tamil Nadu are demanding nearly 20,000 cusecs. They made this demand at the meeting, but at the same time, the CWMA's direction is restricted to 6,000 cusecs," he added. This

follows the CWMA's earlier order on August 25 when, upholding the CWRC's recommendation, it had directed Karnataka to ensure a flow of 9,000 cusecs of water to Tamil Nadu for 15 days.

The meeting was held following the Supreme Court's direction to the Tamil Nadu Government a day earlier to raise before the CWMA its grievance over the release of its proportionate share of Cauvery water by Karnataka.

At its 141st meeting on August 24, the CWRC had directed Karnataka to release water from its reservoirs and ensure a flow of 9,000 cusecs at the Biligundlu border point. The flow had to be maintained continuously for 15 days, during which Tamil Nadu was expected to receive approximately 11.66 TMC of water.

The release is expected to benefit Kuruva cultivation and meet Tamil Nadu's drinking water requirements.

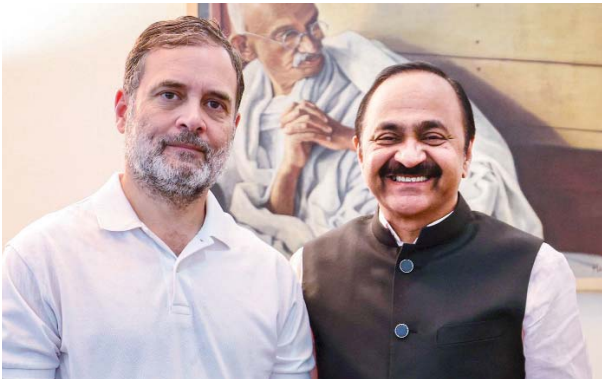
Rahul questions Amit Shah over Manipuri musician's death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday lashed out at the Modi Government over the beating to death of a musician from Manipur here, asking what Home Minister Amit Shah's ministry is doing to stop this "growing lawlessness" and demanding a swift investigation into the incident.

Vikram Singh, a 54-year-old Manipuri musician, died after a group of delivery workers and dhaba staff allegedly assaulted him when he objected to their shouting and drinking alcohol outside his Kilokari village apartment early Monday, officials said.

Police arrested seven men and apprehended one juvenile in the case. "Chongtham



VP in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi meets Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan at 10 Janpath, in New Delhi

Vikram Singh ji, a renowned musician from Manipur, went downstairs to ask some men to lower the noise outside his home. He was beaten to death for it," Gandhi said on X. A father, killed outside his

own home, in his own country's capital, he said.

"After many such incidents, every Northeast family in Delhi is asking the same question today - are we safe here?" the Leader of

Opposition in the Lok Sabha said. "What are Shah's MHA and Delhi Police doing to stop this growing lawlessness, especially against people from the Northeast?" Gandhi said. There must be a swift investigation, and the culprits must be brought to justice, he asserted and expressed condolences to Vikram's family, he said. The Sunlight Colony police station received a PCR call regarding the beating of Singh, who has been residing in Kilokari village for several years.

A preliminary enquiry revealed that Singh, who belonged to the Meitei community, objected to men creating a nuisance outside his house. He sustained injuries during the attack, in which the men rained blows and punches on him, police said.

Singh's son Yaiphaba rushed him to Holy Family Hospital, where he later succumbed to his injuries, they said. Police initiated an investigation into the circumstances leading to the assault and Singh's death.

The North East Students Society, Delhi University (NESSDU) condoled Singh's death and described him as a "respected Manipuri musician". "According to reports, Singh went downstairs from his residence in Kilokari, New Delhi, after a group of six men were allegedly drinking and creating a disturbance outside his apartment. When he requested them to lower the noise, he was reportedly attacked by the group and sustained severe injuries, to which he later succumbed," the students' body said.

MP CM Yadav visits BEEAH HQ in Sharjah to discuss waste management

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Dubai

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Tuesday visited the headquarters of BEEAH in Sharjah during the three-day Annual Investment Meeting (AIM Congress) 2026 and held a high-level bilateral meeting with BEEAH Group CEO and vice-chairman Khalid Al Huraimel.

The discussions focused on environmental protection, smart city development, circular economy and advanced waste management solutions, with particular emphasis on their potential implementation in Madhya Pradesh.

During the visit, Yadav inspected BEEAH's facilities for the treatment of industrial waste, sewage waste, waste reprocessing and disposal of inert material. Experts briefed him on the advanced technologies being used at the facility.

Yadav invited BEEAH to explore investment and technology partnerships in municipal solid waste management and waste-to-energy projects across Madhya Pradesh. He said the State was moving rapidly towards clean energy and sustainable urban development and that BEEAH's digital, AI-enabled and circu-



MP Chief Minister Mohan Yadav visits the BEEAH waste management facility in Sharjah

lar-economy capabilities could complement Madhya Pradesh's smart city and clean-energy initiatives.

The Chief Minister also discussed the potential for collaboration in electric vehicle-based fleets and renewable energy projects.

Highlighting Indore's waste management model, Yadav said the city had established an exemplary model in solid waste management and bio-CNG. He proposed that BEEAH work with the Indore model to develop advanced solutions aimed at improving waste management and achieving the goal of zero-waste landfills.

Yadav also formally invited Al Huraimel to the Global Investors Summit 2027, scheduled to be held in Bhopal next year. He urged BEEAH to consider Madhya

Pradesh as a priority destination in its future global expansion plans.

During the visit, Yadav toured BEEAH's AI-enabled and net-zero-ready headquarters, designed by renowned architect Zaha Hadid, and appreciated its sustainable design and advanced facilities.

Established as a public-private partnership in 2007, BEEAH has expanded from a waste management company into a diversified group operating in environmental services, renewable energy, technology, healthcare and sustainable real estate. According to the information shared during the visit, the group has more than 13,000 employees representing 46 nationalities and operations across the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

MPSC aspirants protest in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar

Scores of MPSC aspirants staged a protest in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar on Tuesday, alleging widespread corruption and paper leaks, and demanded a high-level probe into the recent recruitment examinations.

Protesters gathered at the Kranti Chowk area of the city, demanding the immediate appointment of officers with a "clean image" to the top posts in the Maharashtra Public Service Commission (MPSC). A similar march was held in Pune on Monday.

ED action against Haque part of Operation Lotus 2.0: TMC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Trinamool Congress on Tuesday said the Enforcement Directorate's search of its Rajya Sabha MP Nadimul Haque's Delhi residence was part of "Operation Lotus 2.0" to put pressure on party lawmakers who do not cross over.

TMC sources claimed a former leader of the party had been in touch with



Haque as part of an attempt to pressure him, but the MP refused to "strike a deal".

The ED on Monday searched seven premises linked to Haque and his Urdu newspaper Akhbar-E-Mashriq in Kolkata, Delhi and Ranchi as part of a money-laundering probe. Officials had said the probe relates to allegations concerning the publication and dissemination of material promoting communal disharmony.

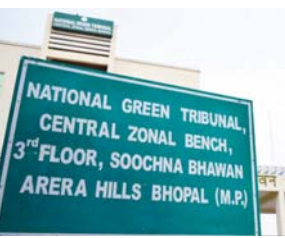
NGT orders replacement of dead saplings and tighter waste control in Bhopal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

National Green Tribunal's (NGT) Central Zone Bench in Bhopal has directed authorities to replace all saplings that died during compensatory plantation undertaken over the past five years and ensure 100% survival of the new plantations.

The direction came during the hearing of a petition filed by Nitin Saxena concerning tree felling and compensatory plantations linked to development projects in Bhopal. The bench, comprising judicial

member Justice Shyo Kumar Singh and expert member Sudhir Kumar Chaturvedi, expressed serious concern over the extremely low survival rate reported by the Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) and the Forest Department's Environmental Forestry Division. The tribunal observed that compensatory plantation is intended to offset the environmental impact of trees felled for development works. However, the death of planted saplings due to inadequate maintenance defeats the purpose and results in



environmental loss.

The NGT directed the authorities to immediately replace saplings that have died over the last five years and ensure regular watering and protection until the plants are fully established. It also sought details of the

average height and girth of saplings planted during the period, rejecting reliance solely on plantation figures recorded on paper.

The tribunal has sought site-wise photographs of 10,000 trees planted along roadsides and medians and 70,000 trees on land allotted by the Bhopal Collector in Huzur tehsil. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board have been given 30 days to submit the required information.

In a separate matter, the NGT issued directions for

stricter management of biomedical waste in Bhopal. The case involved alleged dumping and burning of expired medicines, medicine strips, syrup bottles and injection vials at an open site in Rani Avantibai Transport Nagar behind the RTO premises. A joint committee reported that the waste had been removed and handed over to an authorised Common Biomedical Waste Treatment Facility (CBWTF). The facility confirmed receiving 5.2 kg of expired medicines, which were disposed of through incineration. A sub-

sequent inspection on August 27 found the site clear of biomedical waste and related residues. The tribunal directed that biomedical waste transport vehicles have GPS-based online real-time tracking, separate cabins for staff and colour-coded waste containers, leak-proof waste compartments and bio-hazard markings.

The NGT directed that biomedical waste must be collected, transported and treated within 48 hours of generation. The MPPCB was asked to ensure that healthcare establishments have the

required authorisations and memberships of authorised CBWTFs and take action against violators.

The municipal corporation was also directed to strengthen source-level segregation and separate collection of household healthcare waste and ensure its regular handover to authorised facilities. It was asked to prevent mixing, unauthorised disposal and open burning or dumping of waste. The next hearing in the tree plantation matter has been scheduled for October 6. Advocate Harpreet Singh Gupta represented Saxena.

Editor's
TAKE

When negligence turns into a death trap

A five-storey hostel in Delhi collapsed after years of regulatory neglect and dangerous construction. Once again, it took a collapse for authorities to wake up

On Sunday afternoon, a five-storey building in Delhi's Satya Niketan collapsed. It housed a private student hostel, incongruously named Hostel Daze, packed with young men who had left home to study. At least seven are confirmed dead as rescue teams dig through the debris; the toll is still climbing, and dozens more spent the night trapped or in intensive care.

This was not an act of God. It was the foreseeable consequence of a system that has normalised looking away. The proximate causes are already visible. The structure was roughly fifty years old, built as a residential property and then quietly converted into paying-guest accommodation without the clearances that conversion demands. It reopened to tenants in August even as renovation work continued around them – labourers were reportedly excavating the basement, removing load-bearing walls, while students slept two floors above.

Two days of monsoon rain had pooled in that same basement. Delhi's chief minister said waterlogging and ongoing repairs likely triggered the collapse. Each of these facts, alone, is a violation.

Together, they describe a building that should never have held a single tenant, let alone dozens. But blaming the collapse on one absentee landlord, now arrested and charged, lets everyone else off too lightly. Somebody had to license this hostel, or fail to notice it operated without one. Somebody had to inspect this building, or sign off without inspecting it. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi has suspended five officials from its safety wing – a tacit admission its oversight regime existed on paper and nowhere else.

This is not the first ageing structure Delhi has lost to a monsoon season that arrives, with its casualties, like clockwork. The complacency here is not incidental; it is the system's steady state, interrupted only by the occasional funeral.

What follows a collapse like this is depressingly scripted: condolences, an arrest, a magisterial inquiry, promises of audits. Delhi's government has already announced mandatory structural audits and safety certificates for hostels, nursing homes and schools. That is necessary and overdue, and worthless if enforcement fails the same way again.

Audits mean little without independent inspectors insulated from the bribery that residents in Satya Niketan already allege. Certification means little without a public registry that a student or parent can check before signing a lease. And suspension cannot be the ceiling of accountability – officials who cleared or ignored illegal conversions must face the same liability as the men who built them. Delhi does not lack rules for who may run a hostel. It lacks the will to enforce them before, rather than after, the bodies are counted. Nor is this a Delhi problem alone - millions of students across India's university towns live in hostels converted the same way, licensed loosely if at all, and inspected on the same schedule: never, until something falls down. Seven families now know the cost of that gap. The only honest tribute is to close it before the next monsoon, not after the next collapse.

—DAIV



Delhi: A bipartisan record of neglect

In Delhi, illegal construction, ignored safety norms and regulatory complicity have become a deadly cycle. From Uphaar and Lalita Park to Mundka, Old Rajinder Nagar, Hauz Rani and now Satya Niketan, the names change but the story remains the same: buildings fail because enforcement does



KUSHAN MITRA

The death toll in the Satya Niketan building collapse has touched seven. Seven young lives snuffed out in an instant when a decades-old, code-violating building simply gave way. It came down barely a few metres from where a near-identical collapse killed two workers in 2022, in a structure the civic corporation had already declared dangerous, a warning nobody acted on. And every few years the story repeats: building-code violations and entrenched corruption killing Delhi's own citizens, with no political will to fix it.

Three UPSC aspirants drowned in July 2024 in an Old Rajinder Nagar basement the MCD's own inspection found had been illegally converted from parking into a coaching-centre library. In 2022, investigators found the Mundka building where 27 workers burned to death had no fire clearance and one exit for roughly a hundred employees.

Delhi Police told the Delhi High Court that at least 43, by some counts 45, died in the 2019 Anaj Mandi fire, in a factory that had deliberately avoided a legal power connection. Officials attributed the 2010 Lalita Park collapse, which killed around 65 people, to an unauthorised construction the civic body had cleared without scrutiny. And court records from the Uphaar Cinema case found illegally installed extra seating blocked exits during the 1997 fire that killed 59.

Earlier this year, fire tore through an illegally expanded bed-and-breakfast in Hauz Rani, killing at least 22 people – among them members of two Indian families and medical tourists from Africa, Central Asia and Bangladesh who had come to Delhi's hospitals for treatment. The building was licensed for six rooms and was running twenty-five, with a single entry-exit point. Delhi's building-safety failures are no longer a domestic story alone; foreign embassies are now watching too.

Seven documented disasters across three decades – Uphaar, Lalita Park, Anaj Mandi, Mundka, Old Rajinder Nagar, Hauz Rani and Satya Niketan – now account for well over 200 deaths tied, on the official record, to unauthorised or non-compliant construction. No party can be credibly absolved of a share, based on who held power when each regulatory failure occurred.

Congress-led governments ran Delhi for fifteen consecutive years under Sheila Dikshit, during which unauthorised colonies climbed into the thousands and regularisation became routine policy. When the Supreme Court ordered sealing of illegally-used premises in



DELHI POLICE TOLD THE DELHI HIGH COURT THAT AT LEAST 43, BY SOME COUNTS 45, DIED IN THE 2019 ANAJ MANDI FIRE, IN A FACTORY THAT HAD DELIBERATELY AVOIDED A LEGAL POWER CONNECTION. OFFICIALS ATTRIBUTED THE 2010 LALITA PARK COLLAPSE, WHICH KILLED AROUND 65 PEOPLE, TO AN UNAUTHORISED CONSTRUCTION THE CIVIC BODY HAD CLEARED WITHOUT SCRUTINY

The writer is Director and the Printer & Publisher of *The Pioneer*

2006, a Congress-led central government pushed the Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Act through Parliament to stay those orders - legislation the Court itself later held was beyond the legislature's competence.

The civic bodies that were BJP-controlled for the fifteen years before the 2022 municipal unification whose engineers issue, or fail to withhold, building and fire clearances, were in charge when both Anaj Mandi and Mundka occurred. Successive central governments, including BJP-led ones, kept re-enacting the same "special provisions" shield in 2014, 2017, 2021 and 2023, and the current BJP-led Delhi government has launched yet another "as-is-where-is" regularisation drive rather than a safety audit.

The AAP governed Delhi from 2013 and took charge of the unified MCD from December 2022. On AAP's watch, over both the state government and the civic body, the Old Rajinder Nagar basement - per the MCD's own findings – had been operating in violation of building bylaws for some time before the deaths occurred.

None of this requires speculation about motive: across three decades, Congress, BJP and AAP administrations have each presided over enforcement systems that repeatedly failed to prevent buildings that later killed people. A plausible reason is on the record too - when the MCD tried to seal illegal premises under Supreme Court orders in September 2006, trader protests turned violent and four died in police firing during a bandh.

That episode is widely cited as the moment enforcement became politically costly enough that governments have since preferred renewable moratoria to sustained implementation – a pattern the Supreme Court itself called a "cat and mouse game... to protect the vested interests of those having little or no respect for the rule of law". Delhi's own disaster management author-

ity does not dispute the scale of this unaddressed risk. The DDMA states plainly that the National Capital Territory falls in Seismic Zone IV, where shaking of intensity up to VIII on the Medvedev-Sponheuer-Karnik (MSK) scale is "quite probable," with two active fault systems – the Delhi-Haridwar Ridge and the Delhi-Moradabad fault – running through the territory .

The Ministry of Earth Sciences told Parliament this "severe intensity zone" rating stems from Delhi-NCR's proximity to the Himalayan seismic belt and its Main Central Thrust, Main Boundary Thrust and Himalayan Frontal Thrust systems, where the Indian and Eurasian plates continue to collide.

On what this means for buildings, the DDMA's own assessment is unambiguous: "till date there is no legal framework to require that all constructions in Delhi must implement seismic code provisions," so "most buildings in Delhi may not meet codal requirements on seismic resistance". A gap the authority itself says leaves "a real potential for a great earthquake disaster in Delhi".

Even where the government tried, follow-through fell short: the NDMA told Parliament in 2025 that a structural safety audit it commissioned for Delhi's public buildings "could not be continued further due to the unsatisfactory quality of reports submitted by the implementing agencies". This is not a hypothetical for dramatic effect; it is the Delhi and central governments' own documented assessment of a risk a fire department can contain and a seismic event will not.

Three decades, seven documented mass-casualty events, and one official, unresolved seismic warning have outlasted every administration that has governed Delhi. That is public record, not partisan conjecture – and it is one voters and courts alike are entitled to keep asking every party in office to answer for.

Daiv Vani

WISDOM FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE

The Limits of Self-Reliance

We live in a time that celebrates self-sufficiency, teaching us to solve every problem through our own effort, strategy, and willpower, often treating the need for help as a kind of failure. The story of Gajendra, king of elephants, offers a gentler truth.

Gajendra was bathing in a lake when a crocodile seized his leg, dragging him toward the depths. For years, he fought with all his strength, using every trick his herd and instincts offered. Nothing worked. Exhausted, defeated, and finally without any strategy left, he stopped struggling and called out to Vishnu in total surrender, not as a king, but as a being with nothing left to offer except his faith. Vishnu appeared instantly and freed him.

We often try to fix our deepest struggles through sheer effort alone, control, planning, willpower, refusing to admit when we are simply out of strength. Gajendra's rescue came not when he fought hardest, but when he surrendered completely, without conditions.

Surrender is not weakness; it is the recognition that some battles are not won by grip, but by letting go. Today, identify one struggle you have been trying to control entirely on your own, and allow yourself, just once, to ask for help without holding back.

—DAIV



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

2ND OPINION

Sanjaya of the Mahabharata fame summarised at the end of the Bhagavad-Gita, "Where there is the Yogeshwara Shri Krishna and where there is the archer Arjuna, there will be opulence, victory, wealth and morality" (18.78). Don't we want all these? I certainly do and much more.

Lord Krishna has offered a lot in the Gita. Sample these. In verse # 18.54, the Lord offers supreme devotion to Him to get started.

This will ensure supreme peace (18.62), which we all crave desperately; I do. Additionally, we can become 'jeevan mukta', that is, liberated while living in the present body (5.28). Liberation will follow at the end of the present life (18.62), if we stay focused. All troubles will come but go due to generous help from God (18.58).

We will experience eternal bliss (5.21). We will be



appointed to a very special position as a God's 'nimitta' (instrument), as Arjuna was (11.77), empowered to do big tasks. There will be nothing to fear (18.66); life will run smoothly ('theek chalegi').

How did Arjuna become so deserving? The very first step he took was to accept the position of a disciple of God (2.7). Additionally, he took shelter of Lord Krishna (2.7). In the same verse, he prayed for guidance. This culminated in Arjuna accepting what Lord Krishna had instructed him to do (18.33). Such devotion to the Lord had qualified him to receive the most confidential knowledge (9.1).

And Arjuna was wise enough to keep on enquiring,

God has his door open for all of us

asking questions throughout the course of the Gita. Arjuna had good lineage. Most importantly, he was born with divine qualities (16.5). He was respectable (2.33). Arjuna was a follower of dharma - a necessary quality required to fight for it. Thus, he became very dear to Lord Krishna, Who called him His friend.

This is a lot. Still, we don't have to get discouraged; I am not. Therefore, I started on this divine path. Before I give a brief description of it, let me brief you about my status then. I was confused and depressed. I had lots of attachments, especially to my material body. I was ignoring my duty towards my own self - a soul. I was not realising the real position of the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent and really everything God (7.19).

Now good sense prevailed, and I cut a large photo of Lord Krishna from a calendar, got it framed, and hung it on the right side of my bed. The spiritual journey had started in the right earnest.

I began to pray for guidance and help. It was a humble, sincere and hopeful practice. I was prepared to learn and practise what I was learning. Intuitions began to come. Reformations followed. I began to get what I really needed; protection was being granted to what was valuable to me (9.22). To cut a long story short, now I feel liberated (5.28). I am hopeful of getting liberated in this life itself (18.62).

The writer is a spiritual teacher and columnist

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

When negligence costs lives

The tragic collapse of a five-storey building housing college students in Delhi is a chilling reminder of how casually human safety can be compromised. Five lives are lost and several people got injured, not because risks were unforeseeable, but amid repair work in the basement of an ageing building.

When students living away from home for education become victims of unsafe accommodation, the issue goes far beyond one building; it raises serious questions about regulatory vigilance, accountability and the value we attach to human life.

If safety norms were violated, responsibility cannot end with the property owner. The role of municipal authorities, engineers, inspectors and other agencies entrusted with ensuring structural safety must also be examined.

Delhi urgently needs a time-bound audit of buildings being used as paying-guest accommodation, hostels and student housing. Structural safety certification, fire preparedness, safe electrical systems and periodic inspections should be mandatory, with violations attracting stringent penalties. Young students come to cities to build their future, not to lose their lives under unsafe roofs. Preventing the next tragedy must become a regulatory responsibility, not just a post-disaster reaction.

BJRI BHUSHAN GOYAL | LUDHIANA

Biogas can strengthen energy security

This refers to the article "How are India and Japan reimagining energy security?" (September 8).

The proposal to develop 1,000 compressed biogas plants in India by 2030 is a welcome step towards a more secure and diversified energy system. The partnership with Japan is particularly useful because it combines India's abundant biomass with Japanese technology and financing. However, the success of this initiative will depend less on the number of plants announced than on how reliably they operate.

India's agricultural and municipal waste is widely dispersed, and collecting it economically remains a challenge. Small farmers may also find it difficult to supply feedstock regularly unless they are offered fair prices and timely payments. The government should therefore support local collection networks, transparent procurement systems and long-term supply agreements. Cooperative models can help ensure that the benefits reach farmers and rural communities. The programme should avoid becoming another infrastructure scheme where plants remain underused. Authorities must assess feedstock availability, transport costs, water requirements and the market for biogas and digestate. The partnership deserves support, provided its promises are matched by sound planning.

SM JEEVA | CHENNAI

ISRO must evolve, not retreat

It is with reference to the editorial "ISRO must evolve, not retreat" – September 8.

The Indian Space Research Organisation is a source of pride for India as it drives technological self-reliance, boosts socio-economic growth and establishes the country as a cost-effective leader in global space exploration. ISRO builds rockets and spacecraft at a very low cost compared to other nations. Launching Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya-L1 to study the Moon and the Sun are scientific milestones in the history of ISRO.

ISRO has also launched hundreds of satellites for other countries. Very recently, ISRO successfully launched EOS-05 aboard the GSLV-F17 rocket, marking an important milestone in Indian Earth observation programmes. The success of the 2,037-kg EOS-05 has put behind the failures ISRO encountered in August 2021 and in subsequent launches.

ISRO has scripted history by achieving a soft landing on the Moon through Chandrayaan and advancing space-docking technology through SpaDeX. The Indian Human Spaceflight Programme is an ongoing project to develop the technology needed for crewed spaceflight into low Earth orbit.

P VICTOR SELVARAJ | TAMIL NADU

PIC TALK



Devotees take part in the religious procession of Lord Mahakal, in Ujjain

PHOTO: PTI

Himalayan Day: Guarding the roof of the world

Himalayan Day is a reminder that the mountains are more than a symbol of natural beauty. Emptying villages, climate-driven instability, unchecked tourism and fragile infrastructure are reshaping the region, turning an environmental and demographic crisis into an urgent national security challenge



KRIPA NAUTIYAL

Every year on Himalayan Day, we pause to celebrate a mountain system that has shaped civilisations, sustained economies, and defined the northern edge of the Indian subcontinent for millennia. Yet this year, celebration alone feels insufficient. Behind the

postcard images of snow-capped peaks and terraced valleys lies a quieter, more urgent story - one of emptying villages, sinking towns, warming glaciers, overwhelmed hill stations, and a national security question that has crept up on us largely unnoticed.

The Himalayas are part of a vast highland arc running nearly four thousand kilometres from Kyrgyzstan to Myanmar, encompassing the Pamir, Hindukush, and Karakoram ranges. Every one of the roughly four hundred mountains on earth that exceed seven thousand metres, including all fourteen that top eight thousand, lies within this system. Far from being an uninhabited wilderness, the Himalayas support around fifty million people, spanning an extraordinary range of ethnicities, languages, and faiths, with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam all converging across its length.

In India, the Himalayas cover Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and the northeastern states, extending into Tibet, Bhutan, and Nepal. In Uttarakhand, communities like the Jaunsari trace their lineage to the ancient kingdom of Kuninda, remembered even in the Mahabharata — a reminder that these mountains have never simply been geography. They have been home, sanctuary, and civilisation, sustained by generations of traditional knowledge in farming, ethno-medicine, and reading the land itself. There is now a warning of crumbling mountains. Nowhere was this made clearer than on 26 August 2026, when a section of glacier atop Langtang Lirung in Nepal collapsed without warning, sending a catastrophic surge of ice, rock, and water nearly a hundred kilometres down the Trishuli River. More than 390 people were killed and 1,500 reported missing after the glacial collapse triggered catastrophic flooding across the Nepal-Tibet border region, with entire settlements in Nepal's Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts buried or swept away, and the strategic Gyirong border crossing with China destroyed. Satellite analysis showed the glacier moving at an accelerating rate in the months before it finally gave way - a pattern scientists link directly to warming temperatures and thawing permafrost in the high Himalaya. This was not an isolated freak event. Uttarakhand's own history includes the 2013 Kedarnath disaster and repeated glacial lake outburst warnings across Chamoli, Pithoragarh, and Uttarkashi. As glaciers retreat and permafrost weakens, the mountains that sustain a fifth of humanity are becoming measurably less stable - and the communities living closest to them are the first to pay the price. Joshimath's case is a warning from within.

Instability is not confined to remote glaciers. In early 2023, the town of Joshimath — gateway to Badrinath and home to around 20,000 people — began visibly sinking, with cracks spreading through homes, hotels, and roads until construction had to be banned across the area. Experts at the time stressed that resettlement must balance risk, impoverishment, and reconstruction carefully, with fair compensation so displaced families are not left destitute. Joshimath was a warning that unplanned construction and disregard for fragile mountain geology can turn any Himalayan town into a slow-motion disaster. The Himalayas are also being affected by the weight of too many feet visiting them. Char Dham pilgrimage numbers and hill-station visits have surged into the millions annually, straining water supplies, waste systems, and roads never designed for such volume. Even international pilgrimage routes are exposed: the Gyirong crossing destroyed in the 2026 floods carried over 100,000 crossings in just the first half of the year, much of it tied to the Kailash pilgrimage. Unregulated construction for resorts and homestays, hillside deforestation, and vehicles idling for hours on narrow roads add further pressure to a landscape already destabilised by climate change — turning affection for these mountains into one more force degrading them.

There is a crisis behind the celebration as well. Over the past two decades, Uttarakhand has lost lakhs of people from its remote hill districts to outmigration. State records now classify more than 1,800 villages as



HIMALAYAN STATE, DEMOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY ARE BOTH DESTINY. RECOGNISING THAT TRUTH — THROUGH SUSTAINED INVESTMENT, DISCIPLINED REGULATION, AND GENUINE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN DEFENCE, DEVELOPMENT, SCIENCE, AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES — IS NO LONGER OPTIONAL. IT IS A NATIONAL SECURITY AND SURVIVAL IMPERATIVE THAT CAN NO LONGER BE IGNORED

The writer is an anthropologist and defence and strategic studies expert. He has undertaken research on a unique Himalayan tribe

“ghost villages” — completely abandoned - with another 1,000 having lost more than half their population. Villages once celebrated for their crafts, such as one in Pithoragarh once renowned for wood carving, now stand hollowed out. The causes are painfully mundane: no roads, no schools within reasonable distance, no healthcare, and no reliable livelihood.

What makes this crisis different from ordinary rural-to-urban migration elsewhere in India is geography. These are not interior villages - they sit along India's most sensitive and contested frontiers with China and Nepal. That is where a demographic and developmental issue becomes a national security one.

Empty borders indeed are dangerous borders

Inhabited border villages perform functions no technology can fully replace. Locals have traditionally served as the eyes and ears of security forces, offering ground-level intelligence, informal early warning, and logistical support that satellites cannot replicate — a role documented as far back as the 1962 war and the 1999 Kargil conflict. As villages empty, this human network collapses, forcing security forces to stretch thin resources across larger, uninhabited zones, while depopulated areas also weaken India's claims of effective territorial control, a principle central to resolving border disputes.

The contrast with China is stark. Beijing has invested heavily in Tibet's border regions — new settlements, roads, military infrastructure, and deliberate population-settlement programmes — while comparable Indian forces are often based near sea level and require lengthy acclimatisation before deployment. Where China is repopulating its side of the Line of Actual Control as a strategy, India's border districts are demographically retreating. Outmigration further erodes the recruitment base for regiments like the Garhwal and Kumaon Rifles, prized for natural acclimatisation to altitude, while removing the community vigilance that has long helped monitor smuggling and trafficking along the open Nepal border, and the local knowledge and manpower that disaster response depends on most when a crisis strikes. None of this is irreversible. India's own experience during COVID-19 showed that reverse migration is possible when circumstances demand it, and mountain regions in Switzerland, Japan, Austria, South Korea, and Norway have all confronted similar decline and found ways to stabilise or reverse it - models Uttarakhand can adapt.

Addressing this requires treating border regions as both a developmental and a security priority, together. Practical steps include: creating “strategic border development clusters” with concentrated investment in roads, connectivity, healthcare, and schools; strengthening delivery of the Border Area Development Programme and Vibrant Villages Programme, which currently suffer gaps between allocated and released funds; adapting Japan's “Furusato” hometown-tax model, advocated by me in a number of forums, so migrants can direct part of their income tax to their ancestral villages; and mobilising retired soldiers as formal village defence volunteers. Equally urgent is building climate and disaster resilience directly into this agenda - glacial lake monitoring, stricter enforcement of seismic building codes, and an independent technical review of construction in towns like Joshimath and Dehradun — alongside regulating tourism growth through visitor caps, waste management mandates, and genuine enforcement of environmental clearances on the Char Dham and other pilgrim routes, so that the mountains are not loved to death even as they are repopulated. Himalayan Day should be more than a commemoration of natural beauty. It is a reminder that these mountains are inhabited, living, and fragile strategic spaces, where every abandoned village is a quiet retreat of India's presence at its most sensitive frontier, every unregulated tower and overcrowded pilgrim route is a disaster waiting to happen, and every warming glacier is a warning we can no longer treat as distant.

In this Himalayan state, demography and geology are both destiny. Recognising that truth — through sustained investment, disciplined regulation, and genuine partnership between defence, development, science, and local communities — is no longer optional. It is a national security and survival imperative that can no longer be ignored.

When parents need a break, society must step in



ARCHANA DATTA

A news story highlighted a recent initiative by New York City offering four hours of free, supervised childcare for children aged six to 13, to enable parents to do whatever they choose to do. Many consider it a radical shift in public policy stance in recognising the idea of leisure as a parental right, as against the conventional public policies that implement structurally supportive facilities for relieving their financial, temporal, and social pressures.

NYC's pilot project highlights the importance of parental wellbeing, emotional fulfilment, and the need for personal joy and rest, as ingredients of a happy

society, going beyond the concept of affordability or efficiency. Globally, in the face of falling fertility rates, many governments resorted to cash incentives to check the trend which threatened long-term economic stability. However, empirical evidence revealed that cash benefits alone cannot remove ‘invisible liabilities’, the recurring burdens of modern parenting, and bring in long-term societal changes, but can generate only short-term demographic bumps or the ‘tempo effect’. Countries with massive outlays like South Korea and Singapore continue to struggle with record-low birth rates despite multi-billion-dollar packages. While studies indicated that comprehensive structural support-affordable universal childcare, flexible parental leave for fathers, and job security-moderates the decline better.

The IMF and UN research also confirmed that expanding physical childcare infrastructure has roughly five times the positive impact on long-term fertility compared to equivalent spending on direct cash transfers. While parenting, from the perspective of sociology, is not merely a private or biological act of raising a child, but a socially constructed role and institutional practice. Parents, as agents of socialisation, act as primary links between the newborn and society. Parenting has come under intense focus as smartphones, algorithmic social media feeds, and immersive online gaming environments proliferate and completely rewrite the playbook for child development and family dynamics.

According to research, a staggering 66 per cent of parents state that parenting is harder today than it was two decades ago due to the onslaught of social media in everyday life. Many parents also encounter reverse socialisation as the rapid technological change flips the traditional family relationship, more so in developing countries because of structural inequalities, rapid infrastructure shifts and massive generational gaps.

Global scientific research confirms that ‘digital parenting’-which encompasses how parents manage their children's screen habits as well as their own device usage-has evolved into a critical public health concern. The US Department of Health and Human Services found that nearly half of all parents feel completely overwhelmed by daily stress because of a multitude of unique factors which include not only financial strains, children's health, safety and future, technology and social media, but also parental isolation and loneliness. While a new study based on 42 countries found that parents in the developed world often experience higher rates of mental health strain and burnout largely due to cultural individualism and lack of communal support. On the other hand, meta-analyses of data between 2010 and 2021 from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), comprising about 54 per cent of the world population, found that the children of parents with mental health problems were nearly twice as likely to have social-emotional development problems, compared to children of parents without them.

While India's rapid shift from traditional joint families to nuclear household structures has fundamentally altered the landscape of parenting, leaving modern parents to navigate unprecedented levels of psychological, financial, and emotional stress. Over the last few decades, urbanisation, professional migration, and a rising desire for individual autonomy have eroded the informal welfare networks that once shared the heavy lifting of childrearing. A research study from the Indian Journal of Paediatrics validated that nuclear families in India report the highest initial parenting stress levels, primarily because parenting has become a closed loop with no built-in safety net of grandparents or the extended kin.

Parental well-being, undoubtedly, forms the crucial foundation for a child's holistic growth. When caregivers experience high stress, poor mental health, or physical exhaustion, their capacity to nurture and stimulate the child diminishes (UNICEF). On the other hand, strong parent-child relationships act as a vital buffer against stress, and parents directly support the child's relational health (Van Leer Foundation). Multiple sociological and public health studies demonstrated that structured, guilt-free free time directly reduces parental burnout, strengthens couple dynamics, and fosters healthier parent-child relationships. When a society, workplace, or family ecosystem actively protects a parent's personal time, it sets off a positive chain reaction across the entire household. The right to leisure for parents is far more than a nice gesture; it is a fundamental necessity for parental welfare and sustainable family health. The state and society must stop viewing parenting as a purely private and individual responsibility, but look at it as a collective priority. The public policy interventions should go beyond alleviating primary logistical and financial stressors of raising a family, and must also support evidence-based community programmes that teach child development, stress management, and emotion regulation to help build parental resilience. Societal institutions and social networks must also evolve to reduce parental isolation and foster shared responsibility.

The writer is a former Director General of All India Radio, a retired Indian Information Service officer, and a media educator



The NCRB numbers challenge Akhilesh's crime narrative



VIKRAM SINGH

the process, he appears determined to dismiss or downplay the official figures released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). This approach is unbecoming of a former chief minister. In India's democratic system, institutions perform their mandated roles, and senior political leaders are expected to respect them. Selectively accepting or rejecting institutional data based on political convenience runs counter to the spirit of democracy.

Clear improvement in crime rates

The NCRB's *Crime in India 2024* report presents unambiguous numbers. The national average crime rate under BNS/IPC cases stood at 252.3 per lakh population. Uttar Pradesh recorded a substantially lower rate of 180.2-nearly 28.5 per cent below the national average. Given that the state accounts for roughly 17 per cent of India's population, a higher absolute number of cases is only to be expected. The meaningful metric for comparison remains the crime rate per lakh popu-

lation. On that basis, Uttar Pradesh ranked 18th among all states and Union territories. This ranking reflects a tangible improvement in the law-and-order situation.

In 2024, a total of 35,44,608 cognisable crimes were registered across the country. Uttar Pradesh accounted for 4,30,552 of them. Relative to its population share, this figure is proportionate and lower than expected. The state's murder rate stood at 1.3 per lakh population against the national average of 1.9, placing it 29th in the country. Rates for dacoity, robbery and kidnapping for ransom were also well below the national averages. These are not abstract statistics; they reflect ground realities.

Stronger police performance on chargesheets

Registering cases is only one part of the picture. A key measure of police efficiency is the chargesheeting rate. Uttar Pradesh Police achieved a chargesheeting rate of 76.7 per cent, higher than the national average of 75.6 per cent. This indicates that investigators are completing inquiries and taking cases to court at a better rate



than the national norm. The chargesheeting rate in crimes against women has also remained robust.

Highest conviction rate in crimes against women

The most striking figure concerns convictions in cases of crimes against women. According to the NCRB 2024 report, Uttar Pradesh recorded a conviction rate of 76.6 per cent-the highest among major states. Of the thousands of cases that reached completion in the courts, the majority ended in conviction. This outcome is the result of sustained zero-tolerance policing, Anti-Romeo

rejection

When a leader of Akhilesh Yadav's stature continues to attack the policing system while ignoring or rejecting NCRB data, it undermines democratic norms. The NCRB is a central government agency that compiles figures supplied by the states. No data set is perfect, but dismissing official statistics for political reasons is neither constructive nor responsible. As a former chief minister, he should respect institutional findings. If he disagrees with the numbers, the proper response is to present alternative credible evidence or rigorous analysis-not blanket denial.

squads, dedicated women's help desks at police stations, fast-track courts and a strengthened prosecution system.

The rate of crimes against women itself remained below the national average. In 2024, it stood at 58 per lakh female population. The rape rate was 2.8, compared with the national average of 4.3. The data show not only better control over crime but also greater success in securing punishment for offenders.

Institutions deserve respect, not political

The Yogi government's zero-tolerance approach towards crime, decisive action against organised mafias, modernisation of the police force, expanded CCTV networks, the UP-112 emergency response system, and focused measures for women's safety have together produced measurable results. The downward trend in crime rates has continued over successive years. Even in the 2023 data, Uttar Pradesh remained well below the national average.

The numbers speak for themselves

The NCRB figures clearly endorse the improvement in Uttar Pradesh's law-and-order situation under the Yogi government. A lower overall crime rate, a stronger chargesheeting performance, and the country's highest conviction rate in crimes against women among major states together present a coherent and positive picture. Achieving this in India's most populous state was never going to be easy. Opposition parties have every right-and indeed a duty-to raise questions. Those questions, however, must be grounded in facts. Rejecting institutional data does not strengthen democracy or public trust. The evidence shows that law and order in Uttar Pradesh is better than it was. Accepting that reality and building on it is the more democratic course. Political rhetoric is no substitute for respect for facts.

The writer is a former Director General of the Uttar Pradesh Police and is currently the Chancellor of Noida International University



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Order Order

LG Saxena to administer oath to J&K, Ladakh HC CJ

For the first time since Ladakh became a Union Territory in August 2019, its Lieutenant Governor, Vinai Kumar Saxena, will administer the oath of office to Dr Justice Pushpendra Singh Bhati as Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh on September 9, highly placed official sources said on Tuesday. The ceremony will take place at 11 am at the Convention Centre in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, the sources said.

On September 5, President Droupadi Murmu had appointed Justice Bhati, a judge of the Rajasthan High Court, as Chief Justice of the J&K and Ladakh High Court, with effect from the date he assumes charge of his office.

He will succeed Justice Sanjeev Kumar, who has been serving as the Acting Chief Justice since June 2.

(PTI)

Plea to review duration of law courses: SC bats for expert body

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said there should be an expert body on legal education while terming as “important” the issue raised in a plea seeking setting up of an education commission to review the curriculum and duration of law courses. “This is an era of expert bodies and there should be an expert body on legal education,” a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana said.

“This is an important issue and the Union of India has an important role in this. They should come out with something,” the bench observed. The top court was hearing a plea filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay.

The plea said that the New Education Policy 2020 promotes four-year graduation courses in all professional and academic courses but the Bar Council of India has not taken appropriate steps to review the existing syllabus, curriculum and the duration of the Bachelor of Laws (LLB) and Master of Laws (LLM) courses.

It said the five-year duration of the BA-LLB and BBA-LLB courses was “disproportionate to the course material” and the long duration put an excessive financial burden on the students and their families. It has sought a direction to the Centre to set up a legal education commission or an expert committee consisting eminent educationists, jurists, retired judges, advocates and professors to review the syllabus, curriculum and duration of the LLB and LLM courses.

(PTI)



Graham Staines murder: SC asks Odisha to decide Dara’s remission plea

“You can’t keep it lingering like this,” the Supreme Court on Tuesday told the Odisha government, asking it to take a decision on the remission plea of Ravindra Pal alias Dara Singh, who is serving a life sentence for the murder of Australian missionary Graham Stuart Staines and his two minor sons in 1999.

A bench of Justices Manoj Misra and Vijay Bishnoi expressed displeasure over the state government’s failure to inform the court whether a decision has been taken on Singh’s remission plea.

“You want to reject it, you do it. You take a decision. We will deal with it. You can’t keep it lingering like this,” the bench said. The counsel



appearing for the State told the bench that a letter seeking adjournment has been circulated in the matter as the advocate-on-record was unwell.

Referring to its August 19 order passed in the matter, the bench said it had directed the State Sentence Review Board to take a decision and apprise the court of it.

“Last time also, time was

HC refuses to quash summons to Rahul over PM remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday refused to quash the summons issued to Congress MP Rahul Gandhi in 2019 by a magistrate court in a complaint over his alleged defamatory comments against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

A single bench of Justice N R Borkar dismissed Gandhi’s petition against the magistrate court’s order, but extended by six weeks an earlier directive to the lower court to defer hearing on the defamation claim.

Gandhi, the Leader of

Opposition in the Lok Sabha, sought the extension so that he can file an appeal in the Supreme Court.

The direction to defer the hearing on the defamation complaint meant that Gandhi would not be required to appear before the magistrate.

Justice Borkar said it did not find any “perversity and illegality” in the magistrate’s order and hence no reason to interfere. “This court finds no infirmity in the order. Hence, the petition is dismissed,” the HC said.

The complainant, M H Shrishrimal, had opposed Gandhi’s plea in the High



Court, claiming that being a member of BJP, he too was aggrieved by the remarks made against his leader.

The court refused to accept Gandhi’s contention that the complainant was not an

aggrieved party as the remarks were against a person and not the political party. BJP is a “determinate body with a class of members”, and complainant Shrishrimal is an active

member of the party since 2018, Justice Borkar said.

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a prominent face of the BJP, and any remarks made against him therefore cannot be said to be incapable of affecting those who are members of the party,” the court said.

The court added that whether the remarks made by Gandhi were of a personal nature intended against PM Modi alone could be determined only during the trial after examination of evidence and witness statements.

After the court passed its order, Gandhi’s counsel Sudeep Pasbola urged it to

extend the interim order passed in 2021 for eight weeks so that the Congress leader could appeal in the apex court.

Shrishrimal’s lawyer, however, opposed this and said the trial in the case has been at a standstill since 2021. Justice Borkar continued the interim order for six weeks. Gandhi had challenged a Girgaum magistrate’s order of August 28, 2019, for a process against him on Shrishrimal’s complaint. The complaint had alleged that Gandhi defamed PM Modi in a public speech on September 20, 2018, in Rajasthan.

SC rejects proposal of Parsvnath Developers for homebuyers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected the proposal of Parsvnath Developers specifying details about handing over possession of flats or repaying monies with interest to hundreds of hassled homebuyers, saying that it seemed like “another device” to delay the proceedings.

The top court cautioned that unless a fresh proposal satisfying the claims of all the “allottees or homebuyers” in companies and their subsidiary firms is placed on record, it will be “constrained to appoint a High-Powered Committee for entrustment of all the responsibilities.”

The homebuyers’ claims



refer to the refunds, compensation for delayed possession, and non-execution of RERA orders. Taking the proposal of Parsvnath on record, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana said, “We are satisfied that the proposal is nothing but another device to delay the compliance of possession of (flats) and

delay the repayment of monies (to homebuyers.”

The bench permitted the firm to file another proposal which may be acceptable to homebuyers who are waiting endlessly for their homes.

It observed that state authorities, which should have worked to secure the interests of homebuyers, apparently conspired with the builder, which did not even follow the orders of a quasi-judicial forum like Haryana RERA. The bench also refused to entertain a plea of the Insolvency Resolution Professional (IRP), appointed in the insolvency proceedings against the real estate firm, that at least one of the frozen bank accounts be allowed to be operated by him for running affairs of the firm.

SC dismisses BDPL’s plea, brings one of India’s longest-running corporate disputes to end

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

In a significant victory for Peerless General Finance and Investment Company Limited, the Supreme Court on Tuesday declined to interfere with the judgment of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) and dismissed the appeal filed by Bhagwati Developers Private Limited (BDPL) in a dispute over the transaction of shares. The dismissal of the plea of BDPL brings to an end one of India’s longest-running corporate disputes, which has continued for more than three decades.

A bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Alok Aradhe dismissed the petition filed by the BDPL and refused to inter-



fere with the April 16 order of the NCLAT. Senior advocate Harish Salve, assisted by advocates Arunabha Deb and Ashika Daga, represented Peerless while senior advocate Gopal Subramaniam, assisted by advocate Faraz Anees, appeared for BDPL.

The dispute originated in proceedings instituted in 1991 and concerned corporate decisions and share transactions undertaken by Peerless

in 1987-88.

At the heart of the dispute were the issuance of 30,000 equity shares by Peerless through private placement, approved by its shareholders and the board of directors, and the transfer of 15,626 shares by the existing shareholders. The transactions were subsequently challenged on allegations that they were intended to alter the control of Peerless and involved improper use or routing of funds.

The original proceedings were instituted under Sections 397 and 398 of the Companies Act, 1956. After the original petitioners sought withdrawal of the proceedings, BDPL was subsequently permitted to continue the litigation as the petitioner.

Tenure of 248 members of tribunals extended under new law: Govt to SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Centre on Tuesday informed the Supreme Court that 248 members of different tribunals have been found eligible for extension under the Tribunal Reforms Act, 2026 and their services are being extended. The government said that eligible tribunal members would continue in office until they completed the five-year tenure prescribed under the new law or attained the applicable maximum age limit.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana took note of the submissions that three



members, two judicial and one technical, of the National Green Tribunal are demitting offices during the day and it will have adverse impact on the functioning of the green tribunal.

The bench, as an interim measure, extended the

tenure of three NGT members till appointments are made to their posts.

“We have heard with respect to three members of NGT, whose term is expiring today. Even though these members may not be entitled to further extension in view

of age embargo. However, the Attorney General states that the selection process for appointment of new members will be completed very soon.

“To ensure that day-to-day functioning of NGT is not hampered, we direct that

three members continue as an interim measure till fresh appointments are made in their place,” the bench said.

With regard to other tribunals, the bench asked the Centre to take up the issue of appointment in accordance with 2026 Act without any delay. During the hearing, the attorney general informed the bench that 248 members of different tribunals had been found eligible for extension under Section 24 of the new law.

Of these, extension orders had already been issued for 229 members, while orders in respect of the remaining 19 were being issued on Tuesday, he said.

The bench recorded that

eligible members would continue in office until they completed the five-year tenure prescribed under the new regime or attained the applicable maximum age limit.

“In view of this, let a formal order granting extension subject to these two conditions be issued by the Government of India,” the bench said.

The issue had arisen against the backdrop of the earlier order of May 19, when the top court had extended until September 8 the tenure of tribunal chairpersons, presidents and members whose terms were due to expire before that date to ensure that the functioning of tribunals was not disrupted.

Prefer death to being called coward: Judge in 23rd capital punishment verdict in 4 months

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Muzaffarnagar (UP)

Additional District and Sessions Judge Ravi Kumar Diwakar, while pronouncing his 23rd capital punishment in the last four months in a dowry death case on Monday, said in his verdict that he would prefer death to being called a “coward judge”.

In his judgment awarding the death penalty to a man who burnt his wife over dowry demands, the fast-track judge asserted that he would not discharge his judicial duties “under pressure from mafias, gangsters or criminals”.

Diwakar observed that his parents had taught him to fear God and no one else, and



that if he performed his judicial duties out of fear of strongmen, mafias, gangsters or criminals, public faith in the judiciary would erode.

In his judgment, Diwakar said he would prefer death to being known as a coward judge and would continue serving as long as he could follow his principles.

The judge also stated that

he had been receiving threats from mafias and criminals, and alleged that about 100 serious cases had been withdrawn from his court, allegedly to benefit mafias and criminals.

It is learnt that Diwakar has sought protection from senior officers, alleging that his security cover in Muzaffarnagar has been reduced.

‘Confidential’ label alone not enough to deny mine maps, CIC orders disclosure of permissible info

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Central Information Commission has directed the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) to revisit the denial of Digital Elevation Model (DEM) maps of three limestone mines in Telangana, observing that merely classifying the information as confidential was not sufficient to deny its disclosure under the Right to Information Act.

Information Commissioner Sudha Rani Relangi directed the IBM’s Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) to provide relevant permissible information after



severing portions exempt from disclosure under the RTI Act.

If the information cannot be disclosed, the CPIO has been asked to incorporate relevant justification in a revised reply.

The RTI application sought certified DEM maps of three limestone mines in Suryapet district of Telangana from 2017 to 2025.

The mines identified in the application were Sulthanpur Reserved Forest Mine, Gundlapally Limestone Mine and Pedaveedu Limestone Mine. The CPIO, in its reply, said DEM maps from 2017 to 2022 were not available with the office.

It said data after 2022 was available but could not be disclosed under Section 8(1)(d) of the RTI Act, which exempts information including commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual

property where disclosure could harm the competitive position of a third party.

The First Appellate Authority upheld the denial, stating that the information could not be disclosed under Section 8(1)(d) as it contained “commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual property”, disclosure of which could harm the competitive position of the third party.

During the hearing, the appellant said the DEM maps were sought from the IBM to corroborate evidence in a court case in support of a claim of illegal mining carried out by a third-party company.

Religious bodies cannot assume authority of courts: HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bilaspur

A religious institution or private body cannot assume the authority of a court established by law or use religious belief to determine or enforce an individual’s rights, the Chhattisgarh High Court observed while nullifying a divorce order passed by a private Sharia body.

A bench of Justice Amitendra Kishore Prasad set aside an order issued by ‘Idara-E-Shariya Islami Court’ in Raipur declaring a 38-year-old woman divorced, holding that fatwas or decisions passed by such extra-judicial forums have no binding legal authority.

The court had reserved its



order on August 12 and pronounced it on Monday.

The petitioner, Nirosh Abbasi, had challenged an order dated January 18, 2022, issued by the ‘Idara-E-Shariya Islami Court’, by which it had purportedly declared that she had been divorced through ‘triple talaq’.

She also challenged the very existence of the body,

contending that it was functioning in violation of the Constitution and had no legal authority to determine her marital status.

Abbasi’s first husband died in 2015, and she subsequently married Mohammed Abid Khan of Raipur in 2020.

Khan claimed that Abbasi’s children from her first marriage were unable to adjust

with the new family and, on that purported ground, she was subjected to ‘triple talaq’.

Abbasi had contested the purported divorce, asserting that religious law could not override the law applicable in India. She had also alleged harassment, cruelty and ill-treatment by Khan and his family members and submitted a complaint to the Raipur Superintendent of Police in October 2021, following which a first information report was registered.

The High Court noted that despite the registration of the FIR and pendency of proceedings before competent authorities, the ‘Idara-E-Shariya Islami Court’ proceeded to issue its January 18, 2022 order.

INTERVIEW



A DEGREE MAY TELL EMPLOYERS WHAT A GRADUATE KNOWS, BUT IT DOESN'T ALWAYS SHOW HOW THEY WILL PERFORM AT WORK. THE REAL GAP IS JUDGMENT. WHEN FACED WITH INCOMPLETE DATA, UNCLEAR BRIEFS AND COMPETING DEMANDS, MANY GRADUATES STRUGGLE. INDUSTRY EXPOSURE CAN HELP BRIDGE THAT GAP



Universities prepare students for industry

As Indian higher education moves towards a more industry-aligned, flexible and employability-focused future, the relationship between universities and the world of work is undergoing a significant transformation. In conversation with *The Pioneer*, Vikas Rai Bhatnagar, Group Vice Chancellor, Chandigarh University, shares his perspective on the gaps between education and industry, the role of experiential learning, the impact of NEP 2020 and the changes needed to prepare students for an evolving professional landscape

India has expanded access to higher education significantly. Why is that still not translating into enough employable graduates?

Access used to be the biggest challenge for students outside Tier 1 cities. Online education has changed that in ways a physical campus never could on its own. But access without industry connection only creates more degree-holders, not more employable professionals. That is the real gap today: at Chandigarh University Online, we have expanded reach faster than we have built the bridge between education and industry.

Much of what is called industry-academia collaboration today is still limited to a guest lecture that is rarely revisited. What is actually missing is industry being involved in curriculum design from day one, helping decide what students learn, not simply commenting on it after the fact. When that connection is built properly, the difference is visible. Students stop asking, "What will be on the exam?" and start asking, "Would this solution hold up in a real client meeting?"

If higher education is serious about employability, the answer is not simply more access, more courses, or more degrees. It is building a system where industry shapes what is taught, assessment measures how students think and solve problems, and faculty are continuously equipped to teach what the market actually demands.

What are graduates still missing when they step from the classroom into the workplace?

Judgment. Employers aren't complaining that graduates don't know enough, most of them know plenty. The complaint I hear most is that graduates can't operate with

ambiguity. Give them a well-defined problem with a textbook method and they'll execute it well. Give them a messy brief, half the data missing, three stakeholders wanting different things, and they freeze. That's not a knowledge gap, it's an exposure gap, and the only way to close it is to stop treating industry exposure as a guest lecture and start treating it as a co-taught module.

That's the thinking behind bringing organisations like KPMG, Microsoft, PwC and PMI directly into the classroom at Chandigarh University Online, not as one-off speakers but as people who help shape what's taught and grade what students produce against a live brief. When a PMI-certified practitioner working on building a curriculum, the classroom stops being a simulation of work and starts being an early draft of it

Industry-academia partnerships have existed for years. Why have they largely failed



changed the way Indians access and experience higher education?

For online degree education specifically, NEP has done more than any single policy before it. Multiple entry and exit, the academic credit bank, and the formal recognition of ODL and online programmes at par with on-campus ones have together made it legitimate and not a fallback option for a working adult to build a degree over time instead of in one uninterrupted stretch. I've watched learners in their thirties and forties, already employed, resume an education they'd abandoned a decade earlier so that they could move up in their careers. That's the policy doing exactly what it was designed to do.

If you could redesign Indian higher education from scratch, what are the three changes you would make first?

First, make industry-embedded, evaluated project work a mandatory graduation requirement for every degree not an optional internship a student can skip, a live external brief with real accountability built into the grade. Second, give online and on-campus degrees genuine parity in the eyes of employers and regulators, not just on paper - same rigour, same recognition, no asterisk. Third, build a funded national infrastructure for continuous faculty upskilling, with protected time attached, not another circular asking colleges to "encourage" it.

If I had to rank them, I'd start with the industry-embedded requirement, because it forces the other two to happen anyway. You can't run a mandatory live-project model without faculty who are current enough to supervise it credibly. Change what a degree requires students to actually do, and the rest of the system has no choice but to catch up.

Five years after NEP 2020, has the policy genuinely

Perspective turns knowledge into wisdom

D PARTHASARATHY

Dean, Office of Academics and Professor, Nayanta University

Imagine a city announces a new flyover to reduce traffic congestion. The traffic engineer is pleased: traffic will move faster. The economist calculates the savings in travel time. The politician points to a visible symbol of development. Pollution experts measure the reduced emissions due to smoother flow of traffic.

Now ask the shopkeeper whose storefront will disappear beneath the flyover. Ask the pedestrian who now has to cross six lanes of traffic. Ask the bus commuter who wonders why the money was not spent on public transport, as flyovers serve a minority of the population. Ask the residents of the neighbourhood who will live with the noise and pollution.

Suddenly, the problem looks very different. This is the paradox of complex problems: the more we know about them, the more we may discover that there is to know. Expertise tells us how to solve a particular problem; perspective provides clarity on what the problem actually is.

Universities trying to improve student learning, governments tackling inequality, companies managing organisational change or challenges posed by AI, and societies responding to climate change-all confront problems that cannot be adequately understood from a single vantage point.

A traffic engineer sees traffic, usually only vehicular traffic. A sociologist may observe patterns of inequality and access. An economist perceives incentives and trade-offs. A political scientist sees institutions and power. An environmental scientist sees ecological costs. The commuter, pedestrian,



shopkeeper and resident see something else again: the consequences of decisions made by others with little consideration for their well-being. Perspective begins with a deceptively simple question: Who is affected, and in what ways? Perspective is not merely about collecting different opinions. It requires empathy-the ability to imagine what a problem looks like from somewhere other than where we happen to stand. What is a solution to one group of stakeholders may actually be a problem to another.

And empathy alone is not enough. Different perspectives come with different amounts of power to serve populations and to design specific solutions.

Hence, we must also ask: Whose perspective is heard? Whose is missing? Who gets to define the problem? Who benefits from a solution, and who bears its costs? This is where perspective becomes a question of justice and equity.

That is also why education should be more than the accumulation of specialised knowledge. History, economics, sociology, political science, philosophy, liter-

ature and the sciences offer not merely different information but different ways of seeing. A broad education should teach us to move between these ways of seeing-and to recognise the limits of our own.

Diverse experiences-through fieldwork, community engagement, collaborative projects, literature, case studies and encounters with people whose lives differ from their own-can deepen this process. Classroom discussions, field experiences, community engagement, collaborative projects and encounters with unfamiliar social worlds can all become occasions for this kind of learning.

This requires the classroom to become a space where a diversity of experiences becomes a source of evidence, rather than merely something students are invited to mention. The teacher can deliberately design questions for which students' different locations, family backgrounds, social experiences, disciplines or observations produce genuinely different answers. That is a powerful moment of learning about perspective. The classroom becomes a small laboratory of perspective.

From classrooms to startup founders

RASHMI MITTAL

Pro-Chancellor, LPU

In 2014, India counted a few hundred startups. By January 31, 2026, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade had recognised 212,283 of them; the count has since crossed 2.40 lakh, with over 23.36 lakh direct jobs created by the close of the financial year - enough to make India the world's third-largest startup ecosystem. FY26 alone added more than 55,200 recognised startups, the highest in any year since Startup India was launched in 2016, and a rise of nearly 52 per cent over the previous year. The Union Budget for 2026-27 has backed this trajectory with capital rather than applause: a further ₹20,000 crore for the ₹1 lakh crore Research, Development and Innovation Fund; a ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund; and a sharpened focus on deep tech, semiconductors and frontier sectors.

Behind that arithmetic lies a question higher education has not yet answered at scale: where do founders actually come from? They come from classrooms. Almost every founder in that 2.40 lakh was, a few years earlier, a student being prepared, quite deliberately, for employment rather than enterprise. That is the gap. India has built world-class instruments for funding a startup once it exists. What it has not built, uniformly, is a university system that treats the making of one as a legitimate academic outcome.

This is a design problem, not a resource problem - and design problems have solutions that can be copied.

For instance, institutional case

studies from universities illustrate the impact of long-term academic restructuring around enterprise building. Students have earned over ₹20 crore through startups, freelancing, consultancy, paid internships and innovation grants, resulting in over 400 student-launched ventures. Additionally, more than 15,000 students now participate in experiential learning models rather than traditional classroom routes.

During a campus investor event, student-led startups raised ₹2.65 crore, while enterprises such as Femora AI and Macbease were featured at the India AI Impact Summit 2026. Notably, alumnus Anirudh Sharma co-founded space-tech company Digantara, securing \$12.5 million in venture funding to build space-surveillance satellite infrastructure.

None of that is accidental, and none of it came from motivational lectures. It came



FOR THIS APPROACH TO BECOME NATIONAL PRACTICE RATHER THAN AN INSTITUTIONAL EXCEPTION, FOUR THINGS MUST CHANGE:

- **Academic Credit for Enterprise:** Entrepreneurship must carry academic credit as a matter of course - a registered venture, a granted patent, or a shipped prototype should count towards a degree exactly as an examination does.
- **District-Tied Incubators:** Every institution should operate a functioning incubator tied to the industry of its own district, not a nameplate on a corridor.
- **Early Campus Risk Capital:** Risk capital must reach the campus at the stage where ₹5 lakh decides more than ₹5 crore later; the Budget's new funds need an explicit academic channel.
- **Academic Fail-Safes:** Failure must be made academically survivable so that a student whose venture folds in the sixth semester loses a company, not a year.

from changing the rules of the degree itself.

A student can now earn up to half of their academic credits through experiential learning. Attendance is relaxed for founders whose ventures cross Technology Readiness Level Six, and academic relaxations follow DPIIT registration. Scholarships

are calibrated not to examination marks but to

monthly startup revenue, grants received, private investment raised and intellectual property granted - a venture earning above 78 lakh a month or attracting 710 lakh in investment can carry a full programme fee waiver. Three incubators, from a NIDHI Technology Business Incubator to an MSME-supported facility, sit on the same campus as the classrooms. In short, the university stopped treating a company as a distraction from the degree and started treating it as evidence of one.

The return here is measurable. A generation trained to build rather than only to apply will create employment instead of queuing for it - and India's demographic advantage, the youngest large workforce in the world, will convert into an entrepreneurial one only if its campuses are wired for it.

A cap table is a short document listing who owns what and who was willing to build it. The task before Indian higher education, between now and 2047, is straightforward: make certain that the names on those documents are increasingly the students' - and that they got there because their university helped, not despite it.

India's examination system enters a new era of trust

SUMAN CHAKRABORTY

Director, IIT Kharagpur
Institute Chair Professor and JC Bose National Fellow

India's public examination system is not merely an administrative mechanism for conducting tests. It is one of the largest exercises of institutional trust and social mobility anywhere in the world. For a young person in a metropolitan coaching centre, a student in a village with intermittent connectivity, or a first-generation learner, the examination hall represents something profoundly democratic: the belief that where I come from should matter less than what I can demonstrate. That belief is precious, and it must be protected.

This is the larger context in which the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Act, 2026 needs to be understood. The original 2024 legislation created a statutory framework against organised unfair practices in public examinations. The 2026 amendment, which received Presidential assent on July 31, 2026, strengthens that framework substantially. But its significance goes beyond punishment. It recognises that the architecture of examination malpractice has changed, and therefore the architecture protecting

examinations must change as well.

Today, vulnerability can exist anywhere along a complex chain-question preparation, digital storage, printing, transportation, examination centres, communication networks and organised intermediaries. Technology has made examinations more scalable and attacks more sophisticated. Artificial intelligence (AI) adds another dimension. AI can improve question-bank management, detect anomalies, strengthen cybersecurity and identify suspicious patterns. But the same ecosystem can amplify organised misconduct.

The answer cannot be technological retreat, nor can algorithms manufacture integrity. The principle for the AI era is clear: humans must set the rules; technology must strengthen their implementation. AI should be a value enhancer, not a value setter. An algorithm may identify an anomaly, but human institutions must determine what constitutes misconduct. AI may flag a suspicious pattern, but due process must decide culpability. Technology may strengthen surveillance and authentication, but society must determine the boundaries of fairness and justice.

For India, the consequential question is not what a perfect examination system looks like, but what is the fairest, most secure and humane system that can work reliably for millions of



people. National deployment must account for bandwidth limitations, power interruptions, language diversity, accessibility, geographical remoteness and digital preparedness. India must resist both the romanticism that technology can be avoided and the techno-utopianism that technology can solve everything.

A law intended to protect examinations

cannot depend only upon the severity of punishment. Deterrence also depends upon the probability and speed of consequences. But deterrence is not punishment alone; deterrence is consequence made credible. Speed must never replace fairness; it must support it. The amendment retains an appellate pathway to the High Court, including appeal against orders granting or refusing bail, while providing timelines for such appeals. Confidence comes not from severity alone, but from severity bounded by due process.

Every paper leak has consequences far beyond the leaked paper. It penalises the student who refused shortcuts, disadvantages families that invested scarce resources in preparation, damages confidence in merit and, when an examination is cancelled or repeated, disrupts preparation, travel, expenditure and emotional energy. Examination integrity is therefore fundamentally about protecting the honest candidate. The strongest message should not merely be, "Be afraid to cheat." It should be: "If you play fair, the system will protect your effort."

India now has the opportunity to move from examination security to examination resilience. Security asks how we prevent a question paper from leaking. Resilience

asks whether we can anticipate vulnerabilities, detect breaches early, contain their spread, establish responsibility quickly and recover without imposing disproportionate costs on innocent students. This requires secure-by-design infrastructure, controlled access privileges, cryptographic authentication, auditable chains of custody, intelligent anomaly detection, cybersecurity stress-testing and rapid-response protocols.

India is entering an era in which AI will increasingly participate in learning, assessment, administration and decision support. The question is therefore larger than whether examinations become more digital. It is whether they become more trustworthy while becoming more technological. The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Amendment Act, 2026 is an important step in that direction because it recognises that organised attacks on examination integrity require stronger deterrence, specialised investigation and time-bound adjudication. Its ultimate success should not be measured by how many people are punished, but by how rarely these provisions eventually need to be invoked. Ultimately, an examination is not a test of our technology. It is a test of our collective commitment to fairness.

FROM THE WORLD

CHINA

Climate change behind flood

The massive flash flood that struck the Tibet-Nepal border on August 26 has put China's numerous hydropower projects in the region, including the mega dam on the Brahmaputra River, under renewed scrutiny, as Chinese experts said global warming and accelerating glacier retreat may have contributed to the recent gigantic mudslide.

The disaster was likely the result of a combination of factors, including rising temperatures and accelerated glacier melt according to Chinese climate experts.

"According to our monitoring, we can see the short-time rain days, or the imbalance of the rain pattern and the rising of the temperature in Tibet," said Sun Xiaoguang, head of the Meteorological Observatory of the Tibet Autonomous Region. (AP)

PAKISTAN

Hate banners target Ahmadis

Extremist elements on Tuesday displayed banners carrying derogatory and hostile messages against Ahmadis outside a university in Punjab province, a day after UN experts expressed grave concern over continuing discrimination, violence and legal restrictions targeting the minority community. Several banners, displayed along Sargodha University Road, called for the exclusion and social boycott of Ahmadis.

Some described Ahmadis as "disloyal to Pakistan", demanded their removal from key positions and called for their complete boycott. "We hate Qadianiyat," read one banner, referring to the community. Jamaat-i-Ahmadiyya condemned the display of banners, saying that differences in religious beliefs must never become a basis for spreading hatred against any sect or community. (PTI)

Houthi attacks on Saudi ignite fires at oil facilities, 70 hurt

SAMY MAGDY ■ Cairo

The Iranian-backed Houthi rebel group in Yemen launched a wave of attacks on Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, wounding more than 70 people and igniting fires at oil facilities and utilities in the kingdom, authorities said.

The attack was a major escalation in renewed fighting between an important US ally and the Iranian proxy group. It also threatened to further destabilise a region rocked by nearly three years of wars and deliver a new blow to the global economy.

Weeks of clashes have



added pressure to limited global oil supplies as the Houthis target a shipping route Saudi Arabia has used to transport oil to world markets while the Strait of Hormuz is throttled due to the

US-Iran war. Tuesday's attacks hit Saudi oil facilities connected to the alternative route, the Bab el-Mandeb, a strategic waterway off the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula that connects the

Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

The conflict between Saudi Arabia, one of the US's closest Middle East allies, and the Houthis, a Shiite militant group armed and trained by Iran, goes back years.

The new fighting has threatened to reignite the country's civil war, which began in 2014 when the Houthis seized the capital, Sanaa, and much of northern Yemen and forced the Government into exile. A Saudi-led coalition intervened the following year to try to restore the Government to power. Fighting has greatly died down since a truce was reached four years ago. (AP)

Eiffel Tower shut as staff strike over Hindu group visit

ADITI KHANNA ■ London/New Delhi

The Eiffel Tower was closed for a day after its staff went on strike over female employees being "moved away" for a visit by a Hindu religious group, according to the iconic Paris monument's management and staff.

The incident that triggered the strike took place on Saturday during a visit by around 100 people associated with BAPS (Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam) Swaminarayan Sanstha, Euronews reported.

When asked about the controversy, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at a media briefing in New Delhi: "We are aware of the opening of a temple by the BAPS Sanstha in the Paris area. As to the particular issue pertaining to the Tower, this is a matter purely between the entities concerned."

Diane Davoine, a union representative in France, said in a statement that female workers had been "moved away from their workstations as the delegation passed by". Eiffel Tower employees condemned what they described as "professional instructions that led to female employees being sidelined, replaced and made invisible because of their sex", the report said.

In a statement issued by the CGT trade union, the staff condemned "workplace instructions that led to female employees being sidelined, replaced and rendered invisible on the basis of their



gender". "Some were asked to leave their posts and withdraw to other areas. In some posts they were replaced by men," according to the statement quoted by France24.

"And all female employees were instructed not to go through or cross certain areas while the delegation was present." The popular tourist hub in the French capital, which witnesses nearly seven million visitors a year, opened as usual on Tuesday, after the operating company, Societe d'Exploitation de la tour Eiffel (SETE), acknowledged that limited "interactions with women" had been requested by a BAPS delegation, and that the "conditions should not have been accepted".

Paris Mayor Emmanuel Gregoire said the Eiffel Tower staff's anger was legitimate, called the reported conditions unacceptable and said an investigation would be launched to establish what happened. "I am taking note of the anger expressed by the

employees of the Eiffel Tower, and I want to tell them that their discontent is legitimate," Gregoire said on X.

"It is not acceptable that such conditions can be tolerated. These are neither my values, nor those that the Eiffel Tower should uphold, where everyone - regardless of gender - should be able to move about and act freely, without distinction between women and men. It is urgent that full light be shed on the facts that led to this mobilisation." "Equality between women and men will never stop at the foot of four historical monuments, nor anywhere in this city.

It must be applied everywhere, for everyone," he added. "I will ensure this, everywhere and without exception. An investigation will be launched as quickly as possible." The BAPS Hindu temple in Paris has issued an apology and said it understood the concerns raised over the incident, adding that they took them "very seriously". (PTI)

Indian envoy Trivedi meets Bangladesh president

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dhaka

Indian High Commissioner Dinesh Trivedi on Tuesday met Bangladesh President Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, in his first meeting with the newly elected head of State, and discussed strengthening the "deep-rooted" and multifaceted ties between the two countries.

Alamgir was sworn in as President on August 21. Trivedi paid a courtesy call on Alamgir at Bangabhaban and conveyed warm greetings to the president, wishing him success in his continued service to the people of Bangladesh, the



Indian High Commission said in a social media post. "The discussion underscored the deep-rooted bonds of strengthening the bilateral partnership for the mutual benefit of the peoples of the two countries, the mission

and strong people-to-people relations," it said. They emphasised the importance of strengthening the bilateral partnership for the mutual benefit of the peoples of the two countries, the mission

said. Later in the day, Trivedi met Minister of Shipping, Railways, Road Transport and Bridges Sheikh Rabiul Alam. State Minister for Road, Highways and Railways Habibur Rashid was also present.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a range of issues of mutual interest relating to railways, shipping, connectivity and bilateral development projects.

"They underscored the importance of strengthening connectivity between India and Bangladesh as a key enabler of economic engagement and closer people-to-people ties," the mission said in another post.

Flights to Indonesia's capital resume after volcano activity

NINIEK KARMINI/EDNA TARIGAN ■ Jakarta

Flights to and from Indonesia's Capital and nearby regions resumed Tuesday after ash from a volcanic eruption forced two days of airport closures that halted nearly 3,000 flights. Soekarno-Hatta International Airport and Halim Perdanakusuma Airport serving Jakarta and three other regional airports reopened just after midnight, Transportation Minister Dudy Purwagandhi said. Two resumed normal operations by late morning after one reopened Monday.

Purwagandhi said the airports were allowed to resume operations only after authorities determined conditions were safe for aviation. He said airport authorities and airlines were required to inspect all aircraft before flights resumed.

"Pilots and flight crews were also instructed to remain aware of restricted airspace zones established around areas affected by



volcanic ash," Purwagandhi said. Aviation authorities temporarily restrict aircraft from areas where ash has been detected because volcanic particles can damage engines and other critical systems.

The continuous eruption of Anak Krakatau with lava fountains and loud booms ended on Sunday but the volcanic island remained active Tuesday, with four eruptions recorded between dawn and midday. (AP)

Bangladesh SC warns ICT prosecutor over sub judice remarks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dhaka

Bangladesh's Supreme Court on Tuesday warned the chief prosecutor of the country's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT-BD) against making public comments on matters pending judicial review, a day after he said deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina had no scope to appeal against her death sentence.

"The apex court has warned the chief prosecutor (Aminul Islam) for speaking openly about a pending matter in the media, and he has been asked to refrain from commenting on it," a court official said.

Islam acknowledged the warning, saying, "I will not make any comments in advance from now on."

The warning came during the hearing of an appeal filed by death row convict Abul Kalam Azad, also known as Bachchu Razakar, against his conviction by the ICT-BD in absentia. A four-member bench of the Appellate Division adjourned the hearing for four weeks after a brief hearing, with Islam appearing for the state.



Rajnath arrives in Sri Lanka on three-day visit



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is welcomed by Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Santosh Jha upon his arrival at Bandaranaike International Airport, in Colombo, Sri Lanka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh arrived in Sri Lanka on Tuesday for a three-day visit aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and expanding cooperation in defence and regional maritime security.

"Looking forward to a productive engagement with the leadership of Sri Lanka during the visit," Singh said ahead of his visit to the island nation.

He will also be interacting with the Indian diaspora.

"Besides our longstanding partnership as well as deep historical and civilisational ties, Sri Lanka is one of our most important partners under the Neighbourhood First and MAHASAGAR initiatives," he added. Singh was received at the Bandaranaike International Airport by Sri Lanka's Deputy Minister of Defence Maj Gen (Retd) Aruna Jayasekara and Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Santosh Jha, the Ministry of

Defence said. He received a warm and traditional welcome from the Sri Lankan side, reflecting the close and enduring ties between India and Sri Lanka, it added.

According to the ministry, Singh is leading a high-level delegation comprising senior officials from the ministries of Defence and External Affairs. This is the first visit by an Indian Defence Minister to Sri Lanka in 38 years. Coinciding with his visit, the Indian Navy's INS Udaygiri, an advanced indigenous stealth guided-missile frigate, arrived at the Colombo port on Tuesday.

The frigate was received in accordance with naval traditions, the Sri Lanka Navy said.

Sri Lanka Navy personnel will also visit the frigate for capability familiarisation, knowledge sharing and onboard training, it said.

The crew of INS Udaygiri will participate in goodwill events with the Sri Lanka Navy and visit tourist and cultural sites.

Nepal death toll climbs to 1,357 as rescue efforts continue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kathmandu

The death toll from the devastating flash floods in Nepal rose to 1,357 on Tuesday as more bodies were recovered from the affected areas, authorities said.

Rescue teams continued to search for 5,326 people, while 13,583 people have been rescued so far, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) said on Tuesday.

The death toll from the devastating flash floods reached 1,357 after more bodies were recovered from different affected areas. The joint command of security forces have recovered 363 bodies from Chitawan district, 223 from Nawalparasi East, 222 from Nawalparasi West and 197 from Nuwakot. Similarly, 169 bodies were recovered from Rasuwa, 75 from



Gorkha, 70 from Dhading and 38 from Tanahu. So far, 102 bodies have been handed over to the family members after identification and fulfilling due legal formalities,

according to NDRRMA.

The floods, triggered by an ice-rock avalanche near the Nepal-Tibet border, sent the Bhotekoshi River raging downstream, washing

away homes, vehicles, roads and bridges and damaging hydropower projects across northern and central Nepal.

The disaster also killed at least 43 people on the Chinese side, while more than 500 people remain missing in Tibet, according to Chinese media reports.

Around 3,500 people were staying in Government-run holding centres across Rasuwa, Nuwakot and Dhading as of Monday, according to the NDRRMA. But many others displaced by the floods have sought shelter wherever they could, including schools, temples, monasteries, empty office buildings, community buildings and tents set up in forested areas.

Major rescue operations are also underway at hydropower projects in flood-affected districts, where 121 men are believed to be trapped in underground tunnels.

El Nino effect leaves over 115,000 in Sri Lanka facing drinking water shortage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

Over 115,000 people in Sri Lanka are facing drinking water shortages as an emerging El Nino condition, coupled with high temperatures and scant rainfall, intensified dry weather across parts of the island, officials said on Tuesday.

Meteorology Department Director General Ajith Wijemanna said an El Nino condition was developing and could be contributing to the prevailing weather pattern. El Nino, a periodic warming of the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, can alter tempera-



ture patterns across the region. Its development is being closely monitored for its possible impact on Sri Lanka as the dry spell continues.

The island nation, surrounded by the Indian Ocean, is likely to feel the effect more intensely, experts opine. According to the Disaster Management Centre (DMC), 115,586 people have been affected by the El Nino weather pattern across seven of Sri Lanka's 25 administrative districts.

The severe heat and lack of rainfall have affected many areas, creating serious challenges for the availability of water, it said in a

press release. Pragith Danansuriya, a DMC official, said 115,534 people are currently affected by the shortage of drinking water.

In the north-central Anuradhapura district, the water level in Eruwewa reservoir, which has a capacity of about 3,500 acre-feet, has fallen to around 1,000 acre-feet, irrigation officials said. Water levels have also declined in areas, including Matale in the central region and Nandikadal in the north-east, officials said.

The prolonged dry conditions are also affecting aquatic life and wildlife. Thousands of small fish have

been found dead in the Mullaithivu lagoon in the northeast, with officials attributing the deaths to the mixing of seawater and freshwater.

Natural water sources are drying up in several areas, forcing wild animals to move in search of alternative sources of water.

The drought has also affected agriculture, with crops including paddy, coconut, banana and guava facing damage due to lack of water.

Wijemanna said some rainfall could be expected from the end of September, raising hopes of relief from the prevailing conditions.

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Gold falls ₹2,150 to ₹1.58 lakh/10g; silver rises ₹600

Gold prices extended their losses for the second straight session, falling by ₹2,150 to ₹1.58 lakh per 10 grams, in the National capital on Tuesday amid a weak trend in global markets. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity depreciated by ₹2,150 to Rs 1,58,100 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes), according to the All India Sarafa Association. It had settled at Rs 1,60,250 per 10 grams in the preceding session. However, silver resumed its upward momentum after remaining flat for the previous two sessions, rising by ₹600 to ₹2,41,100 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). (PTI)

EV retail sales rise 53% in August to 2.98 lakh units

Electric vehicle retail sales in August grew 52.9 per cent year-on-year to 2,98,448 units, taking the overall EV penetration to 12.3 per cent from 9.5 per cent a year ago, Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) said on Tuesday. The growth in EV sales last month was led by the two-wheeler segment at 1,83,204 units as against 1,09,673 units a year ago, up 67.05 per cent, FADA said in a statement. Electric passenger vehicle (PV) retail sales were higher at 30,696 units last month as against 20,210 units in August 2025. The three-wheeler segment saw total retail sales of 79,846 units in August 2026 as against 63,736 units a year ago, up 25.28 per cent. Electric commercial vehicle (CV) retail sales almost tripled at 4,702 units last month from 1,631 units in August 2025, as per FADA data. (PTI)

RBI launches key surveys to get inputs for monetary policy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

The Reserve Bank on Tuesday launched three key surveys to gauge inflation expectations and consumer confidence in the country and gather key inputs for its monetary policy. The next bi-monthly monetary policy is scheduled to be announced on October 7. The September round of the Inflation Expectations Survey of Households (IESH) is aimed at capturing subjective assessments on price movements and inflation, based on individual consumption baskets, across 19 cities. The Urban Consumer Confidence Survey (UCCS) seeks qualitative responses from households about their sentiments on the general economic situation, employment

ment scenario, price level, households' income and spending. This study too will be conducted across 19 cities. The central bank also announced the launch of the Rural Consumer Confidence Survey (RCCS). It is aimed at collecting current perceptions and one-year-ahead expectations of households on the general economic situation, employment sce-

The Pioneer

BHUBANESWAR | WEDNESDAY | SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

India faces higher fuel costs as global crude oil prices soar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India faces the prospect of a higher oil import bill and renewed inflationary pressure after international crude prices surged on Tuesday, with Brent approaching \$100 a barrel as escalating West Asia tensions raised concerns about disruptions to global supplies. Brent futures rose more than 2 per cent to around \$99 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate crude gained almost 3 per cent to about \$94. The latest development followed attacks on Saudi energy infrastructure and heightened tensions involving Iran and the US, raising concerns about further disruption to oil flows. India, the

world's third-largest oil importing and consuming country, is particularly exposed to swings in international crude prices. It imports over 88 per cent of its crude — raw material for making fuels like petrol and diesel — requirements. A sustained increase in prices

raises the country's dollar-denominated import bill and can put pressure on the trade balance and the rupee, analysts said. Higher crude prices can also feed into domestic inflation through fuel, transport and other energy-related costs, they said, adding that

impact on consumers and the wider economy depends in part on how much of the increase is passed through to domestic fuel prices and how long international prices remain elevated. For now, retail petrol and diesel prices remain on freeze for over three months. Rates were last revised on May 25 when they were hiked by ₹2.61 a litre for petrol and ₹2.71 per litre for diesel. Those hikes were part of the revision in rates that happened in the second half of May in response to international prices rising due to the war in West Asia disrupting energy flows from the Gulf countries. In all, petrol price was raised by ₹7.35 a litre and diesel by ₹7.53 in four instalments.

Rupee falls 28 paise to close at ₹94.84 against US dollar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

The rupee fell 28 paise to close at 94.84 (provisional) against the American currency on Tuesday as geopolitical tensions in West Asia and rising Brent crude prices nearing \$99 per barrel weighed on investor sentiment. Forex traders said the Indian rupee declined on a surge in crude oil prices amid fresh attacks on Aramco's facilities by Yemen's Houthis. Moreover, rising geopolitical tensions in West Asia and a weak trend in domestic equities further pressured the rupee. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.49 against the US dollar. The local unit touched an intraday high of 94.49 and a low of 94.89. The rupee finally settled at 94.84 (provision-

Date	Rate (₹ per US \$)	Change
1	94.95	+0.27
2	94.73	+0.22
3	94.51	+0.22
4	94.43	+0.08
5	94.56	-0.13
6	94.84*	-0.28
7	94.84*	-0.28
8	94.84*	-0.28

*Provisional

al), down 28 paise from its previous close. On Monday, the rupee fell 13 paise to close at 94.56 against the American

currency. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on escalation of tensions in the West Asia and worries over rising crude oil prices. Risk aversion in global markets may also pressurise the rupee. "However, a weak dollar and foreign inflows may support the rupee at lower levels. Investors may now focus on inflation data from the US and India. Price is expected to trade in a range of 94.60 to 95.10," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 98.96, lower by 0.21 per cent. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading higher by 1.39 per cent at \$98.35 per barrel in futures trade.

Cost of home-cooked meals moderately higher in August, says report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

The cost of home-cooked meals rose moderately in August, a report said on Tuesday. The cost of a vegetarian meal increased 1 per cent year-on-year and month-on-month to ₹29.5 per thali, the monthly report by the research arm of domestic rating agency Crisil said. In the case of a non-vegetarian meal, a 10 per cent jump in broiler prices pushed

up the cost of a thali by 5 per cent year-on-year to ₹57.5, the report by Crisil Intelligence said. However, the price was 1 per cent lower from ₹58.3 in July. Compared with last year, elevated prices of onion, vegetable oil, rice and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) kept the thali cost high despite a decline in potato and tomato prices, it said in the 'Roti Rice Rate' report. Onion prices jumped 43 per cent in August 2026 to Rs 40 per kg, compared with the

year-ago period's ₹28 per kg, due to supply tightness caused by unseasonal rains and hailstorms in Maharashtra in March-April, it said, adding that there was an 11 per cent jump in vegetable oils and 10 per cent rise in LPG. However, a 12 per cent decline in potato prices and a 28 per cent fall in tomato price helped limit the overall increase in costs of the thalis, it added. "In the next 2-3 months, onion prices are expected to remain firm due

to tight rabi supplies and delayed kharif arrivals," its director Pushan Sharma said. Month-on-month, there was a 17 per cent jump in onion prices, but the impact of the same was limited by a 7 per cent decline in tomato prices, it said. The Shravan month, considered by the Hindus as holy, led to a 4 per cent decline in broiler prices, resulting in the 1 per cent month-on-month decline in the price of the non-veg thali, it said.

Only 22% Indian firms have AI governance: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Enterprise AI investment in India has surged by 119 per cent over the past year, surpassing the global average of 110 per cent, yet only 22 per cent of Indian organisations have established the necessary governance frameworks to manage the technology, according to a report. The 'ServiceNow Enterprise AI Maturity Index 2026' revealed a widening gap between rapid capital deployment and the foundational auditing, testing, and risk-assessment processes required to scale AI safely. The report, which surveyed 4,500 senior leaders, including 350 from India, projected that AI will account for more than 21.3 per cent of the average Indian IT budget by 2027, up from the current 16.6 per cent. However, the lack of good governance is already impacting operational depth. While 54 per cent of Indian organisations are deploying AI agents, only 11 per cent have transitioned to autonomous work-

flows. "India has proven it can commit to AI at a scale few markets can match. The next leap will be defined by how Indian enterprises pair that ambition with governance, connected data and workflows that let AI take on more consequential work. The organisations that build these foundations first will unlock AI's

next tier of value for India," said Kulmeet Bawa, Managing Director and Group Vice President, ServiceNow India and SAARC. The study identified several hurdles to AI adoption, with 60 per cent of respondents citing transparency and misinformation as top concerns. Regulatory and compliance complexity (55 per cent) and

data privacy and security (50 per cent) also emerged as significant concerns. Infrastructure remains another bottleneck. Only 18 per cent of Indian organisations have replaced fragmented legacy systems with integrated platforms. Consequently, India's overall AI governance score stands at 55 out of 100, trailing behind "APAC Pacesetters", who score 78 out of 100. These leading regional peers are reportedly achieving a 149 per cent return on investment (ROI) on AI today. "AI maturity is entering a new phase in India. As organisations scale AI across the enterprise, the opportunity is moving beyond individual use cases to reimagining workflows, decision-making and operating models. That requires equal attention to the foundations that make AI scalable and trusted, including data, talent, governance and accountability," Ashvin Vellody, Partner, Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer at Deloitte India, said.

Kharif paddy sowing lags 3.7% amid dip in Karnataka, Telangana

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Total area sown under paddy is running 3.71 per cent lower at 421.82 lakh hectares (ha) so far in the ongoing 2026 kharif season, against 438.19 lakh ha a year ago, mainly on account of lower coverage in Karnataka and Telangana, according to data released by the Agriculture Ministry on Tuesday. The biggest shortfalls were reported in Karnataka (4.28 lakh ha), Andhra Pradesh (1.91 lakh), Telangana (3.61 lakh), Jharkhand (1.38 lakh), Uttara Pradesh (1.84 lakh), Madhya Pradesh (1.75 lakh), Tamil Nadu (1.32 lakh ha) and Maharashtra (1.15 lakh ha). Assam (0.52 lakh ha) and Odisha (0.29 lakh ha), however, posted higher acreage. Experts said the lag

in paddy sowing has narrowed despite fears of an El Nino-hit monsoon, as most rice-growing states now rely heavily on irrigation, have shifted to short-duration varieties to cope with delayed

rains, and continue to benefit from assured Government procurement. Paddy, the principal kharif crop, will be harvested from October. The Centre has set a procurement target of 708.64 lakh tonnes

for paddy grown this kharif season. A marginal dip in coverage is unlikely to be a concern given adequate rice stocks with the Government. **PULSES, OILSEEDS IN FOCUS** The bigger worry, however, is the acreage under pulses and oilseeds, for which India depends significantly on imports to bridge domestic shortfalls. Pulses sowing has improved, edging past last year's level to 117.13 lakh ha as on September 4, compared with 115.30 lakh ha a year earlier. Tur acreage rose marginally to 45.66 lakh ha from 44.93 lakh ha, while urad area increased to 25.15 lakh ha from 22.46 lakh ha over the same period. Moong acreage, though, was lower at 33.19 lakh ha. The largest gains in pulses coverage came from

Uttar Pradesh (3.97 lakh ha), Jharkhand (0.98 lakh ha) and Telangana (0.90 lakh ha). Oilseeds acreage, on the other hand, slipped to 191.99 lakh ha from 193.06 lakh ha a year ago, with soyabean area trailing slightly at 121.82 lh. **CEREALS, COMMERCIAL CROPS** Among cereals, jowar and bajra acreage was marginally higher at 13.58 lakh ha and 64.86 lakh ha, respectively, while maize sowing declined to 91.09 lakh ha. Among commercial crops, cotton acreage held steady at 109.17 lakh ha, while jute/mesta area rose to 6.34 lakh ha. Overall, the area sown to all kharif crops stood lower at 1,086.31 lakh ha, compared with 1,104 lakh ha in the corresponding period last year.

India leads global hiring confidence for October-December quarter: Report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India leads global hiring confidence for the October-December quarter of this year as a significant number of employers are planning to increase staffing during the period, a report said on Tuesday. According to staffing firm ManpowerGroup's latest Employment Outlook Survey, India's employment outlook strengthened in the last quarter of this year, driven primarily by expansion by companies, while expected decreases are led by automation, technology and economic challenges. The survey of 3,055 employers conducted from July 1 to 31 across India indi-

cated that the country's Net Employment Outlook (NEO) for Q4 CY2026 stood at 54 per cent. The Net Employment Outlook (NEO) is derived by taking the percentage of employers anticipating an increase in hiring activity and subtracting from this the percentage of employers

expecting a decrease in hiring activity. Around 65 per cent of employers in India plan to increase staffing between October and December, compared with 11 per cent anticipating reductions. Among the participants, 24 per cent expect staffing levels to remain unchanged.

DCC approves TRAI’s satcom spectrum recommendations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Digital Communications Commission (DCC), the apex decision-making body at the Department of Telecom, has approved most of the recommendations made by sector regulator Trai to allocate spectrum for satellite communications services, according to sources.

Elon Musk-led Starlink, Bharti Group-backed Eutelsat OneWeb and Reliance Industries Ltd's Jio Satellite Communications have received permission to start satcom services in India. The services, however, cannot be rolled out without spectrum allocation and the second stage of security clearance from security agencies. "DCC in its meeting held on September 3 has approved the majority of recommendations made by Trai on satcom spectrum," a source aware of the development said.

The Department of Telecom will now approach the Cabinet for final approval on the pricing and allocation process of radio waves for



the satellite communications (satcom) services. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) in May 2025 recommended that satellite broadband spectrum be allotted for five years, which can be extended by another two years.

The regulator had recommended a levy of 4 per cent of annual revenues as a fee on satcom service providers like Elon Musk's Starlink, but sources said that DoT was of the view to levy 5 per cent instead of 4 per cent suggested by the regulator. Elon Musk's Starlink and Amazon Inc's subsidiary Kuiper Systems had, during con-

sultations with the Trai, urged it to keep spectrum charge below 1 per cent of AGR with no other charges.

The four per cent of adjusted gross revenue (AGR) spectrum charge would be for both geostationary orbit (GSO) and NGSO (non-geostationary orbit) operators. These would be subject to a minimum annual spectrum charge of ₹3,500 per MHz.

Trai, in its recommendations to the Department of Telecommunications, had said that operators offering services in urban areas would have to shell out an additional ₹500 per subscriber annually. No addition-

al levy would be applicable to services in rural areas.

The regulator has also favoured a subsidy for satcom user terminals in unserved/underserved regions of rural and remote areas (typically one-time hardware cost ranges between ₹20,000-50,000). It said high cost could be a barrier to adoption, potentially impeding the adoption of such services in difficult-to-reach areas. Once approved, a single satellite constellation can offer just 10,000-20,000 connections in areas like Delhi against a requirement of 50 lakh broadband connections.

The satellite spectrum pricing as a percentage of AGR is for both non-geostationary satellite orbit (NGSO) and Geostationary satellite orbit (GSO) based fixed-satellite service (FSS) and mobile satellite service (MSS).

NGSO refers to satellites occupying either a low-earth orbit (LEO) or medium-earth orbit (MEO). Unlike geostationary GSO satellites, LEO and MEO satellites do not occupy a stationary position but move in relation to the Earth.

Coal output rises 4.5%, enough stocks for power plant, says G Kishan Reddy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Union Coal Minister G Kishan Reddy on Tuesday said India has witnessed 4.5 per cent year-on-year growth in dry fuel production and assured that there is no need to worry about the stocks for power plants.

However, he admitted that there were issues related to coal production due to weather conditions (monsoon) for around ten days, but now there is no problem.

"We have 123 million tonnes of coal available with us, which is (sufficient) for 51 days (reserve) in the country. Therefore, there is no problem with power plants having critical coal stock," he said on the sidelines of Coal India's CSR Initiative event.

About the coal gasification scheme, the minister told reporters that September 7 was the last day to submit bid and as many as seven applications were received.

According to a Coal Ministry statement issued on Tuesday, bids were submitted by NTPC, Adani



Enterprises, Talcher Fertilisers, Gallantt Ispat and Shyam Sel & Power.

He also informed that the coal companies have 100 million tonnes of coal in transit, and power companies have 23 days of coal stock. The production of coal has increased with a reduction in rains in the country, he added.

There is no need to worry about coal stock in the country as the ministry is monitoring the situation, along with dry fuel firms, Reddy noted.

Coal production can be increased further if the weather continues to be

favourable. There is growth of 4.5 per cent in coal production so far compared to last year, the minister said.

However, according to the latest report by the Central Electricity Authority on coal stocks at power plants, there are 58 plants with a critical stock situation.

These 58 plant include 53 (domestic coal based), four imported coal-based plants and one plan based on washery rejects. Thermal power plants are shown as critical (in the report) if coal stock is less than 25 per cent of normative coal stock.

The round 1 of the ₹37,500-crore Scheme for Promotion

of Surface Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects has closed with an overwhelming response from industry, with seven (7) applications received from some of India's largest corporate houses and premier public sector undertakings, decisively vindicating the Ministry of Coal's confidence in the scheme, the statement said.

The response underscores growing industry confidence in coal gasification as a key pillar of India's energy security, import substitution and industrial development strategy, it stated.

A request for proposal was issued on July 7, 2026.

These projects have the potential to contribute significantly to the development of a robust domestic coal gasification ecosystem, with eight gasification projects already under implementation under the earlier ₹8,500 crore Financial Incentive Scheme.

The Scheme for Promotion of Surface Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects was approved by the Cabinet on May 13, 2026, with a total financial outlay of ₹37,500 crore.

IGDTUW, DMA sign MoU for academia-industry collaboration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Indira Gandhi Delhi Technical University for Women (IGDTUW) and the Delhi Management Association (DMA) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), marking an important step towards strengthening academia-industry collaboration and creating greater opportunities for professional exposure, skill development, knowledge exchange and experiential learning for students.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Professor Ranjana Jha, Vice Chancellor, IGDTUW, and NK Sharma, President, Delhi Management Association. The occasion was also graced by Neelam Gupta, Vice President, DMA; Professor Brijesh Kumar,

Registrar, IGDTUW; and Meha Joshi, Head, Department of Management, IGDTUW, along with Deans and Heads of Departments, faculty members, staff and representatives of DMA. The department of Management spearheaded the MoU.

Welcoming the collaboration, Meha Joshi, Head, Department of Management, IGDTUW, highlighted the importance of translating partnerships into meaningful learning and professional opportunities for students. She expressed confidence that the DMA Student Chapter would create sustained engagement between students and the professional management community.

Professor Ranjana Jha, Vice Chancellor, IGDTUW, expressed her happiness at



the collaboration and extended her best wishes for the success of the DMA Student Chapter and the Department of Management. She emphasised that meaningful academia-industry partnerships should promote two-way learning and knowledge sharing, bringing together

industry's practical insights and contemporary challenges with academia's research, fresh perspectives and young talent.

NK Sharma, President, DMA, expressed his happiness at the collaboration and encouraged students to actively participate in DMA

initiatives and make full use of the opportunities offered through the association. He also invited students to attend an upcoming DMA seminar at the India Habitat Centre, providing them with an opportunity to interact with professionals and broaden their exposure beyond the classroom.

The MoU reflects IGDTUW's commitment to strengthening industry engagement and providing students with opportunities that complement academic learning. The collaboration will create avenues for expert interactions, professional development, experiential learning, and knowledge exchange and industry exposure, while fostering meaningful engagement among faculty, researchers and industry professionals.

Samsung India begins job cuts; trims workforce at senior level

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Noida

Samsung India Electronics, a leading player in the mobile phone and consumer appliances space, has laid off 8-10 mid-to-senior-level employees and plans to let go of another 40-50 staff in the coming weeks as part of a cost-rationalisation exercise amid rising input costs and muted consumer demand. The layoffs are taking place in the Consumer Electronics (CE) division of Samsung India, which houses its televisions, digital appliances, and home electronics businesses, said industry sources.

In the first phase, the company has laid off around



8-10 employees from the CE division, ranging from general manager, team lead and branch/area manager to even director level. In the second round, Samsung Electronics India may lay off another 40 to 50 people, industry sources told PTI.

The move is aimed at trimming the workforce and driving efficiency as

Samsung India faces stiff competition in the CE business from rival Korean and Chinese players, with competitive intensity running high in the segment. The team has around 500 to 600 executives. A query sent to Samsung India over the development remained unanswered till the time of filing of the story.

HDFC MF showcases Pharma and Healthcare Fund

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

HDFC Asset Management Company Limited (HDFC AMC), the investment manager of HDFC Mutual Fund (HDFC MF) and one of India's leading mutual fund houses, referred to the performance of HDFC Pharma and Healthcare Fund, which delivered a CAGR of 30.19% since inception and a return of 19.01% over one year, as of July 31, 2026. The fund was launched on October 4, 2023, and seeks to generate long-term capital appreciation by investing predominantly in equity and equity-related instruments of pharma and healthcare companies.

The fund is diversified across pharmaceuticals, hospitals, healthcare service



providers, biotechnology, and medical equipment and supplies. India's pharmaceutical and healthcare sector presents a structural growth opportunity, supported by rising domestic demand, increasing healthcare expenditure, expanding export opportunities, and India's position as a global pharmaceutical manufacturing hub. The sector is also witnessing opportunities across complex generics, biosimilars, speciality drugs, contract devel-

opment and manufacturing, hospitals, diagnostics, and medical technology.

Longer-term trends, including an ageing population, a rising incidence of lifestyle-related diseases, increasing per capita income, and growing insurance penetration, are further supporting healthcare spending and creating opportunities across the broader healthcare ecosystem.

Commenting on the fund's performance, Navneet Munot, Managing Director &

Chief Executive Officer, HDFC Asset Management Company Limited, said, "At HDFC Mutual Fund, our focus remains on identifying businesses that are well positioned to participate in these long-term trends. HDFC Pharma and Healthcare Fund follows a research-led, bottom-up approach that provides the flexibility to identify opportunities across the breadth of the healthcare ecosystem and across market capitalisations."

HDFC Pharma and Healthcare Fund is managed by Nikhil Mathur. The fund's performance underscores HDFC AMC's focus on identifying and offering investment opportunities across emerging and long-term structural themes.

CM Sukhu meets Manohar Lal, discusses key issues

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh Sukhvir Singh Sukhu met Union Minister for Power and Housing & Urban Affairs Manohar Lal in New Delhi on Tuesday and discussed several important pending issues concerning Himachal Pradesh's power sector. He urged the minister to facilitate their early resolution in the interest of the State.

The Chief Minister strongly raised the issue of providing Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) against Himachal Pradesh's free power entitlement. He said the State should receive due benefits against its free power share and sought necessary clarification and an early resolution in the matter.

He also raised the issue of nominating two Independent Directors from Himachal Pradesh on the Board of Directors of Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN) and urged that the process be completed at the earliest, keeping the



interests of the State in view. The transfer of the Shanan Hydropower Project to Himachal Pradesh was another key issue discussed during the meeting. The CM said necessary action should be taken keeping in view Himachal Pradesh's rights over the project and the interests of the State. The matter is presently sub judice.

The Chief Minister reiterated the State's demand for providing one per cent additional free power after commissioning as Local Area Development Fund (LADF) for Central Sector hydropower projects commissioned

prior to the Hydropower Policy, 2008.

He said that as per the assessment of the State Government, the proposed arrangement is expected to provide Himachal Pradesh a gross annual benefit of approximately ₹29.34 crore, while the estimated annual burden on other beneficiary states would be around ₹96.57 crore. He further raised the issue of land acquired by the Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) in Himachal Pradesh that is presently not being utilised.

Union Power Minister Manohar Lal assured him of positive consideration of matters concerning Himachal Pradesh's power interests. He also assured that necessary directions would be issued to the concerned officials and that all possible cooperation would be extended for the early resolution of the pending issues.

Chief Secretary Kamlesh Kumar Pant, Principal Advisor to the Chief Minister Ram Subhag Singh, Principal Secretary (Finance) Devesh Kumar and Secretary to the Chief Minister Rakesh Kanwar were also present in the meeting.

Ghaziabad development gets boost with property auction

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ghaziabad

Amid the rapidly expanding development activities and growing investment opportunities in Ghaziabad, the Ghaziabad Development Authority (GDA) has achieved a significant financial milestone through the auction of its properties.

The Authority conducted an auction of properties belonging to various categories on 7 September 2026 at Hindi Bhawan, Lohia Nagar, in which successful bids were received for a total of 10 properties.

The successful auction is expected to generate approximately ₹105.65 crore in revenue for the Authority. This achievement not only reflects the growing interest of investors in GDA properties but also clearly indicates the increasing demand for residential, commercial and institutional develop-



ment in Ghaziabad's rapidly evolving urban landscape.

The auction included one residential plot in Indirapuram Extension Scheme; one shop and one residential plot in Indirapuram Gyan Khand-3; one residential plot in Gyan Khand-2; one group housing plot and one primary school plot in Koyal Enclave; one community centre plot in Vaishali Sector-3; two shop plots in the UP Border (Chikamberpur) Scheme; and one constructed community centre in Brij Vihar Scheme.

The successful bids received for these properties

demonstrate the continued strengthening of investor confidence in residential, commercial and institutional activities across Ghaziabad's established as well as emerging growth areas. The entire auction process was conducted in a transparent, fair and competitive manner.

The GDA continues to work towards the effective and transparent disposal of its properties, while simultaneously focusing on the expansion of modern infrastructure and planned urban development across the city.

SBI plants 200 trees in Shahdara, Surajmal Vihar



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The State Bank of India's (SBI) Home Loan Centre East Delhi (15811) has planted 200 trees/saplings at CBD Shadara and Surajmal Vihar areas on Tuesday. It is one of the key focus areas under the Bank's CSR initiatives. Plantation has been done at suitable, identified places in coordination with DDA and local authorities.

Adequate arrangements for post-plantation care, including watering, protection and regular monitoring, have been assured by the respective authorities.

The event was graced by AGM Rao Anil Singh, Chief Manager Nidhi, Manju and all staff members of HLC East Delhi (Karkardooma) unit. The event was successfully organised by Chief Manager VPS Rawat.

Tata Power Solarroof crosses five lakh rooftop solar installations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Tata Power Solarroof has surpassed 5 lakh rooftop solar installations across India and facilitated over ₹8,500 crore in solar financing in the country. According to a statement on Tuesday, the company has completed 5,19,673 installations (as of July 31, 2026), representing a 14 per cent market share, and is targeting 30 lakh installations by 2029.

Tata Power Solarroof has so far facilitated financing worth over ₹8,500 crore through a network of more than 25 financing partners, helping more consumers and businesses access rooftop solar solutions, it added.

Tata Power Solarroof, part of Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd (TPREL), a subsidiary of Tata Power Company Ltd, has crossed the milestone of 5 lakh rooftop solar installations across India, marking a sig-



nificant step in the adoption of distributed renewable energy across residential, commercial and industrial segments.

With rooftop solar emerging as an increasingly attractive solution for reducing electricity costs and enhancing energy resilience, Tata Power Solarroof is expanding access through its nationwide ecosystem of over 700 channel partners and more than 250 authorised service partners.

This network enables the company to provide

localised support across the customer journey, from consultation and system design to installation, commissioning and after-sales service.

Under its 'Quality Lifelong' promise, Tata Power Solarroof combines high-efficiency solar modules with comprehensive warranties, financing options, insurance protection and service support.

Its solar modules come with 25/30-year performance warranties, while systems are backed by a minimum five-year warranty.

BRIEFLY

Junior hockey: India men beat South Korea in Asia Cup



Captain Anmol Ekka struck twice as the Indian junior men's hockey team ripped through South Korea's defences in a late surge for a 7-3 triumph that left it within touching distance of a semifinal berth in the Asia Cup here on Tuesday. The contest remained finely balanced for much of its duration, with South Korea matching India goal for goal, but the defending champions raised the intensity with a decisive three-goal burst in the final quarter.

The victory took India's tally to seven points from three matches, including two wins and a draw. India will face Chinese Taipei in their last pool match on Wednesday, knowing that a victory will seal their place in the last-four stage. Anmol once again led India's scoring effort, netting twice to take his tournament tally to eight goals. The match was an even battle in the opening three quarters. (PTI)

Mumbai City FC rope in Lazar Cirkovic on one-year deal



Mumbai City FC on Tuesday roped in Serbia's Lazar Cirkovic on a one-year deal for the 2026-27 Indian Super League season. The 34-year-old defender has previously played for Chennaiyin FC and Jamshedpur FC in the Indian Super League, apart from spending time at various clubs in Serbia. Cirkovic began his journey at Serbian SuperLiga club Rad in 2010 and later on moved to Palic on a loan. In 2014, Cirkovic joined FK Partizan and went on to make his debut at the UEFA Europa League fixture against Tottenham Hotspur.

During his four-year stint at FK Partizan, Cirkovic was a member of the sides which won two Serbian SuperLiga titles and one Serbian Cup. He has also represented FC Luzern in Switzerland, Maccabi Netanya FC in Israel and Kisvarda FC in Hungary, before moving to India to play for two different ISL teams. (PTI)



There is perhaps no more difficult decision in sport than knowing when to walk away. For an ordinary athlete, retirement is often dictated by declining performance, injury or the emergence of a better player. For the truly great, however, the equation is considerably more complicated. When you have spent two decades redefining your sport, winning almost everything there is to win and becoming an institution rather than merely an athlete, when exactly are you supposed to say enough is enough?

Lionel Messi's decision to retire from international football brings that question sharply into focus. At 39, Messi has decided that his journey with Argentina is over, following a 2026 World Cup in which Argentina reached the final before losing to Spain. Remarkably, his decision does not come because he can no longer compete. Messi was Argentina's standout player in the tournament.

His international career once appeared destined to be defined by disappointment. He lost the 2014 World Cup final and the Copa América finals of 2015 and 2016. After the latter defeat, at just 29, he even announced his international retirement.

He returned, of course, and what followed transformed his legacy. Argentina won the Copa América in 2021, the World Cup in 2022 and another Copa América in 2024.

Knowing when to go: The hardest decision for sporting greats

At 35, Messi arguably produced the finest international tournament of his career in Qatar. Perhaps. It would have been a perfect ending. But Messi was still good enough to continue, and the desire to keep playing remained.

Four years later, at 39, he helped Argentina reach another World Cup final. His decision now is therefore less about an inability to compete and more about recognising that his journey with the national team has reached its natural conclusion.

Novak Djokovic finds himself facing a different version of the same dilemma. Djokovic has achieved virtually everything tennis could offer him. In 2023, at 36, he won his 23rd and 24th Grand Slam titles, establishing himself as the record holder for singles grand slam titles in the

Open era. In 2024, he finally added the Olympic singles gold medal that had eluded him.

Yet the last two years have been different. Djokovic has not won a Grand Slam since 2024, while his 2026 US Open ended in extraordinary fashion with a first-round defeat, his first opening-round loss at a Grand Slam since 2006. Physical problems have also increasingly become part of the story.

At 39, the question is no longer whether Djokovic can still produce flashes of his old brilliance. Of course he can. The question is whether he can sustain the physical demands required to win seven matches at a Grand Slam.

That is a subtly different question, and one that another sporting giant confronted more than a decade ago.

Before the 2011 World Cup, Sachin Tendulkar was

still one of the most complete cricketers in the world. He had recently scored his 50th Test century, an unprecedented landmark, and yet one significant trophy remained missing from his cabinet: the ODI World Cup.

The 2011 tournament provided what seemed like the perfect ending. Tendulkar was India's leading run-scorer and, on April 2, 2011, India won the World Cup in Mumbai, his hometown. A few days short of turning 38, Tendulkar had finally achieved the dream that had eluded him through five previous World Cups.

It would have been almost cinematic had he announced his retirement that night.

But he didn't. And who could really have told him to?

Tendulkar was still good enough to play international cricket. He continued for another two and a half years, scoring his 100th international century in 2012 before eventually playing his 200th and final Test in Mumbai in November 2013.

More than a decade later, the retirement question will increasingly confront India's two modern batting giants, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

Rohit is already 39, while Kohli turns 38 in November. Both have retired from Test and T20I cricket, leaving ODI cricket as their remaining international stage.

And, much like

Tendulkar in 2011, there is a major unfinished chapter ahead: the 2027 ODI World Cup.

Rohit has never won an ODI World Cup, while Kohli was part of India's victorious 2011 squad, albeit as one of its younger players, long before he became the batting giant he is today. The 2027 tournament (subject to selection) could therefore become their equivalent of Tendulkar's 2011 moment, a final challenge that makes continuing worthwhile.

What connects Messi, Djokovic, Tendulkar, Rohit and Kohli is not simply longevity. All were identified as exceptional talents remarkably young and have spent close to two decades operating at the highest level. Their longevity is a product not only of extraordinary ability but also of an almost obsessive competitive instinct.

And therein lies the paradox. The mentality that makes champions great can also make retirement almost impossible. They have spent their entire lives refusing to accept decline, constantly searching for another challenge, another record, another trophy.

For sporting immortals, the hardest part of retirement is not knowing whether they can still compete. It is knowing when they no longer need to.

The author 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.

Mandaviya asks hockey teams to target Olympic qualification

MONA PARTHSARATHI ■ New Delhi

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has asked the Indian hockey teams to focus on identifying and rectifying their shortcomings rather than dwelling on World Cup performance, with the Asian Games now the priority to secure qualification for the Los Angeles Olympics.

Mandaviya held a review meeting on Monday with men's team coach Craig Fulton, captain

Harmanpreet Singh, women's team coach Sjoerd Marijne and captain Salima Tete and Hockey India officials following India's campaign at the recently concluded FIH World Cup.

According to a ministry source, the meeting at the SAI headquarters lasted around an hour and was attended by captains and coaches of both teams. Sports Secretary Hari Ranjan Rao, Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey, secretary general Bholanath Singh, TOPS CEO NS Johal and senior officials of SAI were present. (PTI)



Women's hockey team departs for Asian Games



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

Fresh from a historic fifth-place finish at the World Cup, the Indian women's hockey team on Tuesday departed for the Asian Games in Japan, with their sights firmly set on winning the gold medal and securing a direct berth at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games.

Led by captain Salima Tete and coached by Sjoerd Marijne, India produced one of its finest performances in decades as the team finished fifth, its best World Cup result since the inaugural edition in 1974. The attention now shifts to the Asian Games, where the stakes are even higher.

Under the FIH's LA 2028 qualification system, the highest-placed eligible team in the women's hockey competition at the Asian Games will earn an Olympic quota place, provided it has not already qualified through another pathway.

"We are going into the Asian Games with a lot

of confidence, but we also know that every tournament brings a new challenge," said Tete, who has led India to the Nations Cup title and the historic World Cup fifth-place finish this year, in a release. "The Nations Cup and the World Cup have given us belief in what we can achieve together, and now our focus is on taking that one step further. "Our goal is very clear - we want to fight for the gold medal and earn direct qualification for the Los Angeles Olympics. We know it will require consistency, discipline and giving our best in every match, and as a team we are ready for that challenge," Tete said.

India has been placed in Pool B alongside Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, and Uzbekistan. The team will open its campaign against Uzbekistan on September 20, followed by matches against Indonesia on September 21, Thailand on September 23, Japan on September 25, and Singapore on September 27.

India enter quarterfinals with 7-0 win over Japan in Women's Junior Asia Cup



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Moqi (China)

The Indian junior women's hockey team continued their dominant run at the Asia Cup, cruising to a commanding 7-0 victory over Japan in their third elite pool match to secure a place in the quarterfinals here on Tuesday. With nine points from three matches, India currently sit at the top of the Elite Pool. They will face China on Wednesday in their final pool match, which will determine the top position in the pool. China currently have six points from two matches.

Having opened their campaign with a 4-1 win over Korea before registering an 11-1 victory against Malaysia, India carried their attacking momentum into the clash against Japan and took control of proceedings right from the start.

India's early pressure was rewarded in the fifth minute when Krishna Sharma found the back of the net for a 1-0 lead. India doubled their advantage in the ninth minute after a foul by a Japanese defender inside the circle resulted in a penalty stroke. Supriya stepped up and made no mistake from the spot to put India 2-0 ahead.

India continued to dominate proceedings and

added a third goal just before the end of the opening quarter. Purnima Yadav scored a field goal in the 14th minute as India finished the first quarter with a commanding 3-0 lead.

Japan came out with greater attacking intent in the second quarter as they looked to find a way back into the contest, while India continued to search for opportunities to extend their advantage. However, neither side was able to add to the scoreline, and India went into the half-time break with a comfortable 3-0 lead.

Japan began the third quarter with renewed attacking intent, looking to register their first goal of the match. However, the Indian defence remained resolute and effectively nullified Japan's attempts. India then shifted the gears once again, scoring three goals in the space of five minutes. Geeta Yadav smashed a field goal in the 41st minute to make it 4-0 before completing her brace in the 45th minute, further strengthening India's commanding position.

India added another goal just a minute later. Purnima found the back of the net in the 46th minute to complete her brace and take the lead to 6-0 at the end of the third quarter. (PTI)

DAILY SUDOKU

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

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 (8.9.26)

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

DOUBLE CROSSWORD

WEDNESDAY | SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

1			2		3		4		5		6
					7						
		8		9							
10						11		12		13	
			14			15		16			
17	18				19		20				
					21						
				22				23	24		25
26		27					28				
29							30				
							31				
32											
							33				

ACROSS

1 On the road, it's an honour to be in a car (6)

7 There's nothing Oriental about it (8)

8 Attorney given thanks for the facts (4)

10 Out to succeed, Ted was a twister! (6)

11 Hate having only half a side for a match (6)

14 Give extra publicity to the grand finale (3)

16 Drive the enemy out! (5)

17 As expected, rather like Julie (4)

19 A heady trophy (5)

21 Take over (5)

DOWN

1 Took a broken crate to the trading centre (6)

2 Drink that goes snappily with a biscuit (6)

3 Dora's eccentric way (4)

4 At night, is seen to be a bright little thing (7)

5 No, and that's final (5)

6 Stipulate the condition (5)

8 Face the possibility of being laid up (4)

9 Just the chap to make hay? (3)

12 It's best worn above the waist (3)

13 Hit ten again? (5)

15 For which cars can be broken up - at a parking place? (5)

18 Such guerrillas are less than urbane (5)

19 Understand the sense (3)

20 Member of a popular movement (3)

21 Spot that's a bit ticklish in a permissive way (7)

22 Every brazen hussy has one (3)

23 Sailor whose crime is serious (6)

24 To the House? (4)

25 Are their tails specially hairy? (6)

26 The nothing we get from America (5)

27 Pieces written in difficult times? (5)

28 It may fly somewhat furiously (3)

30 An outstanding leader (4)

SOLUTION (8.9.26)

ACROSS

1. Pleas

6. Bingo

9. Sh-opp-ed

10. Hussy

11. SE-N-SE

12. Knots

13. Florins

15. He-M

17. Eyot

18. Can-Ada

19. Damon

20. Le-ere-d

22. A-ire

24. Sa-d

25. Jousted

26. SI-MO-n

27. Stea-L

28. Put in

29. Iron out

30. Truly

31. Penny

DOWN

2. Loudly

3. Assert

4. Shy

5. O-pens

6. Best man

7. I'd-ES

8. G-ashed

12. Knead

13. F-els

14. O-ozed

15. H-AB-it

16. Ma-te-d

18. Colon

19. D-evil-ry

21. E-aster

22. Ast-u-te

23. Region

25. Joint

26. Sail

28. Pup (rev.)

Duleep Trophy final: Shami, Mukesh lead East Zone's charge, restrict South to 242/6

G UNNIKRISHNAN ■ Chennai

Veteran pacer Mohammad Shami's decisive blows while operating in short spells helped East Zone close in on the Duleep Trophy title, reducing South Zone to 242 for six on the third day of the final here on Tuesday.

Skipper Tilak Varma (56, 133b) and CV Milind (0) were batting at stumps after Shreyas Gopal (26) got out in the closing minutes of the day. South still trail by 466 runs and overhauling East's humongous 708 is nearly impossible from this point.

Shami's three spells on the day were - 3-2-1-0, 4-1-10-1 and 4-1-6-1 - for an overall 11-4-17-2 and the short bursts were, perhaps, prompted by the humid Chennai conditions.

While the numbers do not look intimidating, they offered ample evidence of Shami's control over his craft and the ability to crank up when it mattered.

When the South Zone bowlers struggled for impact in the first two days on a docile pitch, Shami bowled a lovely stump-to-stump line, bringing back the memories of some of his remarkable Test match spells.

The right-arm pacer was incredibly persistent with his lengths, seldom



giving any room for batters to play their shots.

Shaik Rasheed (29) and Devdutt Padikkal (62) were involved in a 56-run stand for the third wicket, looking good for something bigger.

But Shami intervened at that juncture, trapping Rasheed in front of the wicket with a peach which came in that little bit to avoid the forward prod

of the batter. The 36-year-old was summoned 20 overs later by Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, who wore the captain's band for a while in the absence of Ishan Kishan, and made an immediate impact.

The pacer jettisoned Ravichandran Smaran, whose partnership with South skipper Tilak had swollen to 45 by then.

The set up was impeccable. Shami started with a fuller delivery on the stumps and then followed it up with two deliveries that came in to the left-hander.

The fourth one moved away from Smaran, who feathered it to stumper Kumar Kushagra, who nudged Sooryavanshi into taking the DRS and the TV umpire upheld the appeal for a caught behind. Before that Padikkal looked set for another big knock while tackling East bowlers with characteristic solidity.

Fresh from his fruitful tour to Sri Lanka, the Karnataka batter cruised to a fifty in 65 balls, reaching the little landmark with a drilled four through third man off pacer Mukesh Kumar.

But the Bengal pacer had his revenge very soon. Mukesh bowled one on the pads of Padikkal, knowing the left-hander's penchant to play the pick-up flick.

He indeed played that shot but did not time it that well, only to give substitute DP Das an easy catch in the deep.

(PTI)



Important season for me: Mukesh after impressing in Duleep Trophy

G UNNIKRISHNAN ■ Chennai

Mukesh Kumar has boosted his India comeback efforts, taking 11 wickets so far in the ongoing Duleep Trophy and the pacer said the upcoming domestic season carries a lot of "importance" for him.

The Bengal pacer's last appearance in India colours was in 2024, quietly getting pushed behind in the rush of some new-gen pacers like Prasidh Krishna and Gurnoor Brar.

"This is a very important season for me because the Duleep Trophy is the first tournament of the season, and we are currently playing the final. To prepare for this, I arrived at the BCCI CoE some four days ahead of the Duleep Trophy," East Zone's Mukesh said after the third day of the Duleep Trophy final against South Zone here.

"I was focusing on how I wanted to bowl, training with the red ball, and working on fitness. Hopefully, the upcom-

ing Ranji Trophy season goes well too," he said.

That red-ball preparation did not go in vain as Mukesh victory over Central Zone in the semifinal at the Centre of Excellence grounds, taking seven wickets. He carried that form onto the title clash here as well, already plucking the important wickets of in-form Devdutt Padikkal and Narayan Jagadeesan.

"Yes, the plan against Devdutt was to bowl stump-to-stump because if I bowled outside off, we knew he was coming off two centuries in Sri Lanka. On wickets like this, if you offer width to batters, runs will leak. "Our plan as fast bowlers was to stay as consistent as possible and bowl dot balls, letting them take the risks. They would try to force the pace and get out because they need to score runs," he said. The South Zone pacers were trying to purchase wickets through short-pitched deliveries but that strategy did not yield any results as East piled up 708 runs in their first innings.

(PTI)



Mandhana strengthens her position in T20 rankings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

India opener Smriti Mandhana on Tuesday strengthened her position inside the top five of the ICC T20 rankings after producing a remarkable 124 against Hong Kong in the ongoing Women's Asia Cup.

Mandhana's 64-ball innings not only helped India secure a 137-run victory and a place in the semi-finals but also saw her become the all-time leading run-scorer (10,880 runs) in women's international cricket across all formats, surpassing Mithali Raj (10,868).

The innings was also her 18th international century, moving her clear at the top of the women's international centuries list.

Mandhana is ranked fifth in the standings. India all-rounder Deepti Sharma has also made notable progress in the T20I rankings.

Her contributions with both bat and ball have lifted her two slots into sixth position among the leading bowlers and she remains strong in fifth place among the all-rounders, underlining her continued importance to India's success in the tournament.

United Arab Emirates captain Esha Oza continues to underline her status as one of the leading Associate Member players, moving to 39th among the T20I batters and remaining just outside the top 20 in the all-rounders' rankings.

Cricket Australia approves privatisation in BBL, Melbourne Renegades up for sale

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Melbourne

Cricket Australia on Tuesday approved private investment in its flagship T20 event, the Big Bash League, clearing the decks for Melbourne Renegades sale in full even though the country's players' body said "significant issues remain unresolved" in the new plan. CA announced that it would invite bids from private owners for a 100 per cent stake in Melbourne Renegades.

But the Australian Cricketers Association (ACA) CEO Paul Marsh said the two bodies remain a "long away apart on a new agreement" which includes a renegotiated pay deal with the players.

The new ownership in the franchise will be in place for the 2027-28 Big Bash League and Women's Big Bash League seasons, and the sale process will have no impact on the upcoming seasons of the BBL and the WBBL this Australian summer, reported cricket.com.au. The Melbourne Renegades is being run in a caretaker mode by CA.

The body will also consider putting the other clubs for sale under the "self-determination" model, "which allows each state to make its own



decision if and when to sell stakes in their BBL clubs," the report added.

Hobart Hurricanes, Perth Scorchers and Melbourne Stars are the other clubs believed to be interested in private investment.

But others such as Sydney Sixers, Sydney Thunder, Brisbane Heat, and Adelaide Strikers, are not interested in private investment at the moment. Cricket Australia chairman Mike Baird said the governing body will continue to have control over international scheduling, availability of the players, salary caps as well as media rights.

While CA will retain power

to approve or veto investors and set reserve price, any changes to club names, colours and branding would need approvals. In case of Melbourne Renegades, CA will be the approving party while for other teams, the same would be the relevant state body. "By opening the door to private investment in the Big Bash Leagues, Cricket Australia is taking a deliberate step to strengthen and secure the long-term future of the game, accelerate growth and ensuring we can keep investing in community cricket and grassroots participation, domestic and international pathways and elite level," Baird added.

Warner captain of Australia Champions in WCL Season 3



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Melbourne

David Warner was on Tuesday named captain of the Australia Champions team, now owned by Ricky Ponting, for the third season of the World Championship of Legends.

Ponting was also revealed the owner of the franchise along with Puneet Singh as the team unveiled a new identity ahead of the third season.

Warner was named as the latest marquee addition to the squad in an event here. "There's nothing better than getting back out there, playing alongside some

greats of the game and giving the fans plenty to cheer about," Warner said in a statement.

Ponting said, "I'm excited to be part of Australia Champions and the World Championship of Legends. With Puneet and the team, and David leading from the front, we have a great opportunity to build something special for Australian cricket fans." Puneet Singh expressed, "Having Ricky join us and David take on the captaincy gives us incredible experience, leadership and firepower. We're ready to build something truly special."

NZ batter Chapman opts for casual contract but open for India series



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Auckland

New Zealand batter Mark Chapman has opted for a "casual contract" instead of a formal central deal with New Zealand Cricket to "pursue an opportunity" in the Australian Big Bash League but will remain available for the upcoming home series against India. New Zealand Cricket announced Chapman's decision with a statement on Tuesday.

"Black Caps batter Mark Chapman has made the decision to shift to a casual contract with New Zealand Cricket for the 2026-27 season to pursue an opportunity in the Australian Big Bash League.

"Chapman remains available for selection for the upcoming India tour of New Zealand alongside the four other casually contracted players in Finn Allen, Lockie Ferguson, Adam Milne and Tim Seifert," the NZC stated.

The 32-year-old has been playing for New Zealand since 2018.

The Hong Kong-born player, who qualified for national selection through his father, has appeared in 37 ODIs and 113 T20 Internationals, including some games for the country of his birth.

Japan to field Asian Games squad in one-off T20I against India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

Japan's leading run-scorer Kendel Kadowaki-Fleming will lead his country in the historic one-off T20 International against India on September 22 in Sano with the hosts opting to field the same squad that will play in the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya.

Ibrahim Takahashi and Declan Suzuki-McComb are the other two players with the experience of more than 50 T20Is, stated the International Cricket Council (ICC).



To be played under the banner of the Suzuki Cup, it will commemorate the 75th anniversary of India-Japan diplomatic relations.

"As part of their Asian Games preparation, the side have opted not to include players who are eligible to play T20Is under ICC

regulations but ineligible under Asian Games rules," it added.

The 30-year-old Kadowaki-Fleming has appeared in 55 T20Is and scored 1871 runs at a strike rate of 139.41. He has two hundreds and 12 half centuries to his credit.

The Asian Games begin on September 19. The men's cricket competition will get underway from September 24. Ranked No.1, India are the reigning T20 World Cup champions, while Japan are placed 41st in ICC T20 rankings.

Real Madrid faces Inter Milan in Champions League as Mourinho aims for another title

JAMES ROBSON ■ Madrid

Real Madrid kicks off its Champions League campaign against Inter Milan on Tuesday, with new coach Jose Mourinho aiming to win the trophy for a third time.

Mourinho is back at Madrid for a second spell after last managing the club in from 2010-13. He won a league title and the Spanish cup during that time, but not the Champions League. Since then Madrid has gone on to dominate European club soccer's biggest trophy, winning it six more times and extending its record to 15 titles.

And while another Champions League



would see Mourinho join Pep Guardiola, Luis Enrique, Zinedine Zidane and Bob Paisley on three wins, he doesn't feel the need to make up for the fact that he was unable to lift the trophy when he was last at Madrid.

"I finished my work here in 2013. We won what we won, and we lost what we lost. We gave everything, but it's a closed chapter," Mourinho said. "This

has nothing to do with the past - absolutely nothing. These are two different moments in Real Madrid's history.

"In 2010, they hadn't reached the quarterfinals in years, nor had they played

a semifinal in many years. Now, it's a Real Madrid that has won in the last 10 years. These are two different moments, but it doesn't change my way of thinking. If you ask me if I'm excited about winning the

Champions League with Real Madrid, obviously yes, but completely separate from any context of not having achieved it previously." Madrid hosts Mourinho's former club Inter at the Santiago Bernabeu.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF DISTRICT MEDICAL & PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER CUM DMD, BOUDH. (DISTRICT TUBERCULOSIS CENTRE, BOUDH)

Advt. No. 607...../DTC/2026 Dated: 03.09.2026

Tender for selection of Agencies/Firms for operation & Management of Hand Held X-Ray for screening of TB

Sealed proposals are invited from interested eligible agencies/Firms for operation & Management of Hand Held X-Ray for screening of TB under TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan in Boudh District. The eligible criteria, the detail requirement and the formats for submission of proposals are set forth in the following Request for Proposal(RFP)document which can be downloaded from the website: www.boudh.odisha.gov.in.

Interested agency/firm filling the eligibility criteria may submit their proposal (s) separately as per application format. The details of proposal (s) completed in all respect & super scribed with "Tender for selection of Agencies/Firms for operation & Management of Hand Held X-Ray for screening of TB under TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan in Boudh District". The agencies have to submit their proposals to the office of the CDM&PHO cum District Mission Director, Boudh which should reach on or before **21.09.2026 till 05.00 P.M.** through Speed post / Regd. Post/Courier only. Incomplete application in any form is liable for rejection. The undersigned reserves the right to reject any or all the proposals without assigning any reason thereof.

CDM & PHO-Cum-DMD, Boudh.

Sd/-
Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer
Boudh

Caption No-10001/526/2627
OIPR-10001/10107/1/26-27/0014

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BHANJANAGAR
e-mail: eerwbnp@gmail.com

"e" Procurement Notice for Building Works
Identification No. Online Tender /07/ RWDBNJ/2026-2027
No. 2378 Date: 25.08.2026

1.	Name of the work	::	Building Works
2.	Total Number of works	::	2 (Two) Nos.
3.	Estimated cost	::	34.40 Lakhs
4.	Class of Contractor	::	'C' & 'B' Class of Contractor
5.	Period of Completion	::	03 (Three) Calendar Months
6.	Other details	::	

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No	Availability of tender online for bidding
		From To
Superintending Engineer, R.W.Division, Bhanjanagar	Online Tender/07/ RWDBNJ/2026-2027	11.09.2026at 10.00 A.M. 24.09.2026 at 5.00 P.M.

Further details cfn be seen from the website:- www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Caption No-25001/1093/2627 Sd/-
OIPR-25001/25174/1/26-27/0011 Executive Engineer
R.W. Division, Bhanjanagar

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
BARPALI IRRIGATION DIVISION, BARPALI
E-mail id :- es.barpali.canal@gmail.com
Tender Call Notice No.BID-03(01-01)/2026-27(Online)

1.	Nature of Works	:	Engagement of different categories of personnel on outsourcing basis for operation and maintenance of Hirakud System for Barpali Irrigation Division, Barpali under Additional Chief Engineer, Canal Circle, Burla for the year 2026-27 (From 01.10.2026 to 31.03.2027).
2.	Nos. of works	:	01 (One)No.
3.	Amount Put to Tender	:	Rs. 44.21,586/-
4.	Period of Completion	:	As per D.T.C.N.
5.	Date and time of availability of Bid Document in the Portal	:	DT: 10.09.2026 at 11.00A.M. to Dt:19.09.2026 upto 05.00P.M.
6.	Last Date/Time for receipt of Bids in the Portal	:	DT:19.09.2026 upto 05.00 P.M.
7.	Date of opening of Bid	:	DT:21.09.2026 at11.00A.M.
8.	Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	:	DT:19.09.2026 upto 02.00 P.M.
9.	Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	:	Superintending Engineer, Barpali Irrigation Division, Barpali A/P/Pro- Barpali, Pin-768029 Dist.-Baragada EmailId :- es.barpali.canal@gmail.com

1 Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said Website.
2 Further details can be seen from Government Website-<http://tendersodisha.gov.in>

Caption No-32001/836/2627 Sd/-
OIPR-32001/32413/1/2627/0002 Superintending Engineer
Barpali Irrigation Division, Barpali