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PM flags threat of weaponising tech

As global competition intensifies over strategic minerals and technology, PM calls for cooperation

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday cautioned BRICS countries against the weaponisation of technology and critical minerals, saying it could hinder shared growth and called for greater inclusivity in the adoption of new technologies.

Addressing the open session on the second day of the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi, PM Modi said rising geopolitical tensions, pandemics, climate-related disasters and disruptions to supply chains had demonstrated the need for greater resilience among member countries.

“The weaponisation of technology and critical minerals can create hurdles for common growth. Therefore, we have emphasised inclusivity in the adoption of technology,” the PM said.

The PM said BRICS had placed particular emphasis

on resilience in response to challenges that increasingly cross national boundaries. “Pandemics, climate disasters, and supply chain disruptions have shown that in today’s interconnected world, no crisis remains confined to a single region,” he said.

PM Modi said the grouping had reached a consensus on an integrated early-warning system for the prevention of and response to infectious diseases. Guidelines for integrating early-warning data for disaster management had also been formulated, he said.

On supply chains, the PM highlighted the BRICS Logistics Supply Chain Cooperation Framework, saying it would help make supply networks “more reliable and resilient”.

PM Modi also outlined initiatives under the innovation pillar of India’s BRICS presidency. He said the BRICS Incubator Network would connect start-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives at Bharat Mandapam on the second day of the BRICS Summit 2026, in New Delhi

tups and incubators across member countries, while India had proposed a BRICS Startup Innovation Fund to promote innovative and scalable solutions.

The PM also highlighted the BRICS Network on Digital Agriculture, under which artificial intelligence, geospatial technology and digital public infrastructure would be aligned with the needs of farmers. The warning on critical minerals comes against the backdrop of growing international focus on securing supplies of minerals essential for energy, manufacturing and advanced technologies. The New Delhi Declaration adopted by BRICS leaders has called for reliable, responsible, diversified, resilient, fair and sustainable critical-mineral supply chains, while reaffirming the sovereign rights of resource-rich countries over their mineral resources.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Putin pitches BRICS grain market

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Urging the BRICS grouping to adopt a holistic approach in combating pressing global challenges, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday proposed a new insurance mechanism and a collaborative initiative for a grain market among the BRICS nations.

“We have some promising initiatives going

Russian President Vladimir Putin attending the BRICS Summit in New Delhi

forward, such as creating an insurance mechanism and a grain market. These are Russian proposals, and we invite all other member states to make use of those,” he said without elaborating further.

Highlighting the importance of greater intra-BRICS economic cooperation, Putin said a common platform for better trade and investment ties will be helpful to all the member nations.

“We have great new horizons for investment and cooperation and partnership between markets. We’re talking about forming a joint platform for growth within BRICS that would combine the competitive advantages of all members of the group,” he said.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Chinese President Xi Jinping during a bilateral meeting with PM Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in New Delhi

Xi proposes open-source AI, manufacturing push

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday called for stronger cooperation among BRICS countries and the wider Global South, saying the principle that “might makes right” should have no place in international affairs.

Addressing the concluding session of the BRICS Summit in New Delhi, Xi urged member countries to strengthen ties with emerging economies and work together to protect global supply chains, expand markets and promote a more inclusive international order.

Xi said international rules should be based on fairness and developed with the participation of all countries. He stressed that nations should respect sovereign equality, avoid interference in one another’s internal affairs and seek peaceful solutions to disputes.

He also called on Global South countries to reject

what he described as “double standards” and emphasised that countries should have an equal standing regardless of their size, economic strength or wealth.

Xi urged greater support for multilateralism and the United Nations, along with reforms to international institutions to ensure developing countries have a stronger voice in global decision-making. He also backed changes to the international financial system to improve the representation of developing economies.

Alongside his call for greater political and economic cooperation, Xi presented a five-point plan aimed at expanding collaboration within BRICS.

The first proposal focuses on artificial intelligence. China plans to support the creation of a BRICS open-source AI community, with cooperation on large language models, specialised training programmes and the development of an open AI ecosystem.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

The Bystander

PIONEER IN SHORT

UCC IN 21 STATES BY 2029: SHAH

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said BJP-led NDA governments in all 21 states under their rule would introduce the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) before 2029. Addressing reporters while highlighting the Centre’s 12-year record and the BJP’s 25-year journey under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shah said the abolition of triple talaq had given Muslim women equal rights and that the UCC had already been introduced in several states. On national security, Shah said the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A had been achieved without bloodshed and asserted that Kashmir was now fully integrated with India. He also said the government had ended five decades of Naxalism.

INDIA RETAIN JUNIOR ASIA CUP

India retained the men’s Junior Asia Cup title with a commanding 4-1 win over Korea in the final on Sunday, securing a berth in the Junior World Cup. The victory gave India a record sixth continental crown, extending their status as the tournament’s most successful team. India had previously won the title in 2004, 2008, 2015, 2023 and 2024. Ajeet Yadav opened the scoring in the ninth minute with a deflected strike before captain Anmol Ekka doubled India’s lead four minutes later. Prabhdeep Singh made it 3-0 in the 21st minute with a fine finish, leaving Korea with a mountain to climb at half-time. India continued to dominate after the break and Ashu Maurya converted in the 50th minute to make it 4-0. Korea pulled one back four minutes later after captain Lee Minhyeok converted a penalty stroke, but India’s disciplined defence saw out the contest comfortably. Hockey India rewarded the champions with ₹3 lakh for each player and ₹1.5 lakh for every support-staff member.

Iran calls for trade in national currencies for resilience

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Iran President Masoud Pezeshkian exhorted BRICS must expand trade in national currencies and work towards an inclusive global economic framework, as excessive dependence on existing financial and trade systems has made emerging economies vulnerable to political shocks.

He also took a swipe at Western powers while being critical of “unilateral sanctions”, saying they are directly impacting global food security and people’s welfare as he

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian attends the BRICS Summit in New Delhi

pitched for expanding trade in national currencies and strengthening the New Development Bank to enhance the economic resilience of BRICS members. The Iranian President made these remarks at the concluding session of the

two-day BRICS Summit. The Iranian leader’s remarks came weeks after the US imposed new economic sanctions on Iran, tightening the squeeze on Tehran’s finances amid ongoing military hostilities between the two sides.

The Iranian president said BRICS had evolved beyond being merely a framework for cooperation among emerging economies and had become a manifestation of growing demand for a more balanced and inclusive world in which “no centre of power has the right to determine the destiny of others”.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Rahul, Rijiju clash over BRICS menu

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Serving an all-vegetarian spread at a gala dinner hosted for BRICS leaders and delegates has erupted into a political slugfest between the Congress and the BJP. While Rahul Gandhi said 80 per cent of Indians are non-vegetarians and Indian fare is delicious, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju hit back at the Congress for “making politics even on the food menu.” The leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha made the comment a day after an all-vegetarian spread was served at a BRICS Summit gala dinner hosted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Bharat Mandapam. The guests had non-vegetarian food at the

Union Ministers Kiren Rijiju and Arjun Ram Meghwal, and others, traveling to attend a banquet for visiting dignitaries of the 18th BRICS Summit, in New Delhi

hotels where they stayed. Rahul in posts on social media platforms X, Facebook and Instagram, said 80 per cent of Indians are non-vegetarians, and that Indian non-vegetarian food is as

delicious as his sister’s chole bhature. He also posted a picture of chole bhature on a dining table, but made no direct reference to the BRICS dinner.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Malaysian PM Anwar croons Kishore Kumar song, wins hearts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The mass appeal of Hindi film songs knows no boundaries or leaders, and was seen at the BRICS Summit in New Delhi this weekend. Despite a packed schedule, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim found time to sing a famous Kishore Kumar song. The video has gone viral.

Known for his fondness for Hindi film songs, the visiting Malaysian prime minister was seen singing the classic Hindi song *Khwab ho tum, ya koi haqeeqat* from the 1965 film *Teen Deviyaan*, at a Delhi hotel. Legendary music

director SD Burman had composed the music for the song penned by Majrooh Sultanpuri, with Dev Anand singing it on screen.

Dressed in a crisp grey suit, Ibrahim was seen singing to a piano tune being played by an accompanist. The clip is being widely shared after he shared the video on his social media handles on Saturday night.

The musical moment offered a glimpse into the Malaysian PM’s long-standing admiration for Hindi cinema and its music, an interest that has also found its way into his diplomatic engagements with India.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim singing the classic Hindi song *Khwab ho tum, ya koi haqeeqat*

He has previously showcased his fondness for Bollywood during interactions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During PM Modi’s visit to Malaysia, Ibrahim shared an official video montage of the visit set to *Bole Chudiyan*, the popular song from *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*. He is reported to be a great fan of Lata Mangeshkar and Kishore Kumar.

During his India visit, Anwar also praised the country for its civilisation, culture and history. Anwar’s current visit is his first to India since becoming Malaysia’s prime minister in 2022. During the visit, India and Malaysia elevated their

bilateral ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and signed several agreements, including in digital technology and tourism.

The relationship between India and Malaysia had faced strains in 2019 after then Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad criticised India’s decision to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Anwar’s visit marked a renewed effort to strengthen ties between the two countries, with the bilateral relationship receiving fresh momentum through the elevation to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and agreements in key areas.

Shah unveils PM Modi’s birthday drive

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ New Delhi/ Mumbai

Union Minister of Home Affairs, Amit Shah on Sunday said Narendra Modi-led Union Government had opened a new chapter of “politics of performance” by taking India away from corruption, casteism and dynastic politics. Shah was announcing the Seva Sankalp Abhiyan campaign, to be held from September 17 to October 17, mark Prime Minister Modi’s birthday and 25 years of his

Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses a press conference, in Mumbai

leadership in Gujarat and the Union Government.

The campaign’s slogan is *Jan Seva Hi Prabhu Seva* (public service is service to God). Shah said the goal is to encourage more people to help make India a developed country by 2047. He mentioned that in previous years, the party marked this occasion as *Seva Saptah* (service week) from September 17 to October 2.

“Very few leaders in this country have a record of serving the people continuously for 25 years as chief minister of a state and prime minister of the country,” Shah said.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Power Crisis Eases in Punjab as Rajpura, Talwandi Sabo Units Resume; 3,300 MW Restored

CUTS WITHDRAWN FOR INDUSTRY AND AGRICULTURE; STATE STILL DRAWS OVER 70% POWER FROM CENTRAL GRID AS DEMAND REMAINS AROUND 15,762 MW

MONIKA MALIK ■ Chandigarh

Punjab's immediate power crisis eased on Sunday with all units at the Rajpura and Talwandi Sabo private thermal plants returning to operation, restoring around 3,300 MW of generation and prompting PSPCL to withdraw the power cuts imposed on the industrial and agricultural sectors. The relief comes after industrial hubs such as Ludhiana, Jalandhar, and Mandi Gobindgarh faced cuts of up to 10-11 hours, even as state power demand remained high. However, the Centre's Coal Ministry has disputed inadequate coal supply as the cause of the crisis, saying coal availability at Punjab's power plants was around 114 percent of the normative requirement as of September 11.

The turnaround followed the restart of one shut unit at Rajpura and two at Talwandi Sabo, whose outages had triggered evening unplanned cuts. The disruption had also affected urban and rural consumers, with urban areas facing

three to four hours of cuts and rural areas around an hour. Farmers had complained of inadequate supply for running tubewells.

DEMAND STAYS HIGH, PUNJAB RELIES HEAVILY ON GRID

PSPCL's latest real-time figures put Punjab's maximum load demand at 15,762 MW, with daily demand during September remaining consistently above 15,500 MW. The state's own generation is currently around 4,626 MW, forcing it to draw about 11,138 MW from the central grid—more than 70 percent of its total requirement.

Of Punjab's own generation, private thermal plants account for 2,119 MW, including 1,129 MW from Talwandi Sabo and 990 MW from Rajpura. State-owned thermal stations are generating another 1,774 MW—799 MW from Lehra Mohabbat, 516 MW from Goindwal Sahib and 459 MW from Ropar.

The latest demand figures underline the pressure on the system. Demand touched 16,162 MW on September 1, 16,539 MW on September 2, 16,455 MW on September 3, 16,182 MW on September 4, and 16,254 MW on September 5—remaining above 16000-mark for five consecutive days. After recording 15,995 MW on September 6, the demand again rose to 16,219 MW on September 7, further to 16,505 MW on September 8,

16,518 MW on September 9, 16,432 MW on September 10, and maximum 16,619 MW on September 11, followed by 15,519 MW on September 12 and 15,762 MW on September 13 (Sunday).

MINISTER BLAMES SHORTFALL IN CENTRAL ALLOCATION

Power Minister Tarunpreet Singh Sond said Punjab was receiving around 1,051 MW less than its allocated share from the central power pool. He said the State Government had taken up the matter in writing with the Union Power Minister and that getting the full allocation could significantly ease the situation.

Sond stressed that uninterrupted supply was particularly important for Punjab because of its agriculture-dependent economy.

COAL MINISTRY: SUPPLY WAS ADEQUATE

The Coal Ministry, however, offered a different explanation for the reduced generation. It said coal supply to Punjab's independent power plants remained adequate and attributed lower generation to factors including low utilisation of PSPCL's own plants, reported breakdowns at private plants, and the delayed lifting of coal already offered by Coal India Limited.

According to the Ministry, Nabha Power's consumption averaged about 4.3 rakes a day over the three days

preceding its assessment, against average supplies of around five rakes. Talwandi Sabo consumed about 3.8 rakes a day while receiving around five. In September so far, supplies averaged 4.9 rakes daily for Nabha and 4.1 for Talwandi Sabo.

The Ministry also said coal from PSPCL's captive Pachhware Central Coal Mine could be supplied to private plants, including Rajpura and Talwandi Sabo, subject to statutory conditions, with such plants permitted to use up to 50 percent of annual mine production after meeting specified end-use requirements.

As of September 11, coal stocks at PSPCL plants were around 114 percent of the normative requirement. Pachhware mine production between April and September 11 had reached 83.67 percent of its annual target, while despatch stood at 68.44 percent.

As per information available, the plant-wise coal stocks currently stand at 12 days at Lehra Mohabbat, 17 days at Goindwal, 62 days at Ropar, five days at Rajpura and nine days at Talwandi Sabo.

The Ministry maintained that better utilisation of PSPCL plants, faster resolution of private-plant breakdowns, and timely lifting of CIL coal could further strengthen generation and help meet Punjab's power demand.

Haryana CM Slams AAP Over Punjab's Economic Slide

SAYS STATE NEEDS JOBS AND DEVELOPMENT, NOT JOKE AND PUBLICITY

PNS ■ Patiala/Chandigarh

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday attacked the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led government in Punjab, saying that people of the state want development, employment, security for industries and solutions to their problems, not jokes, publicity and advertisements. He said Punjab's people have never lacked ability or hard work, but policies, intentions and leadership that failed to give the state the right direction had pushed it behind in the race for development.

Saini, addressing a public meeting at Kakrala village in Patiala, said Punjab and Haryana may be separate states, but their roots, culture and heritage remain one. Paying homage to the land of Gurus, Pirs, and martyrs, he said people were now asking why Punjab had fallen behind despite its fertile land, hardworking population, and immense potential.

HARYANA PULLS AHEAD ON GROWTH, INCOME

Saini said Punjab was once counted among the country's most prosperous states, but Haryana, which came into existence nearly 19 years after Punjab, had today moved far ahead in economic progress.



In 2025-26, Haryana's real economic growth rate is estimated at 9.5 percent, against 6.1 percent for Punjab, making Haryana's growth 3.4 percentage points faster. Similarly, in 2026-27, Haryana's economy is estimated at around Rs 15.18 lakh crore, compared with Punjab's approximately Rs 9.81 lakh crore—a gap of nearly Rs 5.38 lakh crore.

He said Haryana's share in India's GDP was around 3.6 percent in 2023-24, compared with Punjab's 2.4 percent. Haryana's per capita income was estimated at 176.8 percent of the national average, while Punjab's was 106.7 percent. Saini said Punjab's per capita income was once nearly twice the national average, but the situation had changed, raising questions over why the state was unable to fully utilise its economic potential.

'MORE PUBLICITY THAN WORK'

Targeting the AAP Government, Saini said it had given Punjab "more publicity than work and

more advertisements than results". Repeating false claims, he said, could not strengthen an economy.

He said an economy becomes strong when industries get security, youth get employment, traders have confidence, farmers receive remunerative prices and government schemes reach people directly without discrimination. "Jokes work in cinema halls, but among the people, the discussion is about work, development, and solutions to public problems," he said.

Saini said the Congress had also made big promises to Punjab but failed to fulfil them, while the AAP too made numerous promises that remained merely promises, leaving people without relief from their problems.

In contrast, he said, the BJP government in Haryana was working to fulfil its commitments. Of the 217 promises made during the 2024 Assembly elections, 70 have already been fulfilled within 18 months of the

government's tenure.

FARMERS, DRUGS AND JOBS

Saini said Haryana had fulfilled its promise to farmers by procuring their entire crop at MSP. He claimed Haryana was the first state in the country where the entire crop of farmers was being procured at MSP, with payments reaching farmers' accounts within 48 to 72 hours. If payment takes longer than 72 hours, farmers are paid with interest, he said.

Targeting the Punjab Government over the drug menace and the future of its youth, Saini referred to an incident in which, he said, a person who raised his voice before the government to keep children away from drugs was harassed and an attempt was made to silence him. Hurt by this, the person ended his life, he said, adding that the incident raised serious questions about law and order, sensitive governance, and respect for ordinary citizens' voices.

He also alleged that injustice was being done to Punjab's youth in the name of employment. Referring to the recruitment of Excise Inspectors, Saini said it had come to light that people close to MLAs got jobs.

The people of Punjab, he said, now wanted work on the ground rather than announcements. Punjab, he added, could regain strong momentum by pursuing policies centred on development, good governance and public welfare.

UT Administrator Sets Sept 30 Deadline to Eliminate Drug Trade from Chd

PNS ■ Chandigarh

Punjab Governor and UT Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria on Sunday set September 30 as the deadline for the Chandigarh Police and UT Administration to completely eliminate the illicit drug trade from the Union Territory, warning that Station House Officers (SHOs) and field staff would face direct administrative action if illegal drugs continued to be sold in their jurisdictions after the cut-off date.

Kataria, addressing the first

anniversary function of the Senior Journalists Forum as the chief guest at the Law Auditorium in Sector 37, Chandigarh, said that illegal drug networks could not operate without some degree of police or civil connivance. He asserted that the administration would take steps to break the nexus between officials and criminals.

He said the UT Administration would deploy secret teams and independent informers to conduct ground-level

verification and identify those involved in the illegal drug trade. The exercise, he said, would focus on tracing networks rather than merely taking action against individual offenders.

Kataria emphasised that the fight against drugs could not be left to the police and administration alone and called for collective social responsibility. Referring to Punjab's history of sacrifices and the unity displayed by people during recent floods, he urged society to come together to protect the

younger generation from substance abuse.

He also stressed the need to focus on the rehabilitation of youth affected by drug abuse. Such youngsters, he said, should be brought back into the mainstream through sports, skill development, and employment opportunities in the private sector. Calling for greater public participation in governance, Kataria reminded citizens about his weekly Janata Darbars held every Wednesday, where people can directly raise their grievances and concerns.

Mass Shooting Bid Foiled in Ludhiana: Two Doni Bal Gang Shooters Killed in Encounter

PNS ■ Ludhiana

A suspected mass-shooting bid was foiled in Ludhiana on Sunday when two alleged shooters of foreign-based gangster Doni Bal were killed in an encounter with a joint AGTF-Ludhiana Police team near Atam Park Under Bridge. The duo was allegedly on its way to a blood donation camp, where they planned to target people. The suspects opened fire when intercepted and tried to flee, with two bullets hitting the police vehicle. The police retaliated in self-defence, killing both men. More than 25 rounds were fired during the encounter.

The deceased, identified as Karanjot Singh alias Nona and Sandeep Singh—both from Sultanwind Road in Amritsar—were allegedly in direct contact with Doni Bal and Shaganpreet and had arrived in Ludhiana the previous night to execute the attack. Police recovered three sophisticated automatic 9mm pistols and around 50 live cartridges



from them.

The blood donation camp, organised at Marryland Palace on Dugri Road, was being held in memory of Congress leader and former Khwajke village sarpanch Ravi Khwajke. Police said the planned attack was linked to an old inter-gang rivalry dating back to Khwajke's murder in 2016.

Ludhiana Commissioner of Police Swapan Sharma said the AGTF had received specific intelligence about the planned attack and shared it with Ludhiana Police. Acting on the input, joint teams laid a naka near Atam Park Under Bridge, about 900 metres from the camp, and intercepted the

suspects travelling on a black Hero Splendor motorcycle without a registration number.

When signalled to stop, the suspects allegedly tried to escape and opened indiscriminate fire at the police party. During the ensuing chase, they continued firing, with two bullets hitting the official police vehicle. The police returned fire in self-defence, killing both men on the spot.

ATTACK LINKED TO 2016 GANG WAR

CP Sharma said preliminary investigation indicated that the shooters had been assigned to target people at the camp as part

of an inter-gang rivalry. Khwajke was shot dead at Gill Resort in Ludhiana in 2016, in an attack attributed to the Davinder Bambiha gang. Bambiha was subsequently killed in a police encounter in Bathinda the same year.

Police suspect that after Bambiha's death, the gang came under the influence of Doni Bal, who operates from abroad. Investigators are probing the exact role of Doni Bal and his associates, including who brought the shooters to Ludhiana and who else was involved in planning the attack.

Karanjot alias Nona was a history-sheeter with two previous cases, including under the Arms Act, besides offences relating to robbery and the NDPS Act. Sandeep was facing one previous criminal case.

Police are tracing the duo's other accomplices and probing the backward and forward linkages of the gang. A case is being registered at Model Town police station under Sections 109, 221, 132, 62 and 111 of the BNS and Section 25 of the Arms Act.

Heroin Route Choked, Pharma Pipeline Opens: Punjab Faces New Drug Challenge

PAKISTAN-LINKED HEROIN SUPPLY HIT BY ANTI-DRONE CRACKDOWN; POLICE ESTIMATE NEARLY 80% OF PHARMACEUTICAL DRUGS NOW ENTERING PUNJAB FROM OTHER STATES

MONIKA MALIK ■ Chandigarh

Punjab's drug supply chain appears to be undergoing a major shift. An intensive crackdown on narcotics smuggled from across the Pakistan border has led to a sharp decline in the street availability of heroin. But, the squeeze on the traditional supply route has been accompanied by the emergence of a new challenge—pharmaceutical narcotics being smuggled into Punjab from other states. Police estimate that nearly 80 percent of pharmaceutical drugs available in the state are now coming from Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi, marking a reversal of the earlier pattern in which a similar proportion of drugs entered from across the international border.

The changing pattern has forced Punjab Police to broaden its anti-drug strategy beyond the border and focus increasingly on interstate networks involving pharmaceutical manufacturers, distributors and organised supply chains.

BORDER CRACKDOWN CHOKES HEROIN ROUTE

The decline in street heroin availability has been attributed to a multi-layered response by the Punjab Police and Border Security Force (BSF) against drone-based narcotics smuggling along the international border.

Punjab Police is deploying nine anti-drone systems, including three "BaaJ Akh" systems that have been

operational in Amritsar, Tarn Taran, and Ferozepur since August 2025. These systems provide early detection and jamming of rogue drones. Three Drone Sense D200 Pro units, described as long-endurance mobile drone-detection platforms, were deployed at strategic locations in border districts from September 3. The systems can detect and pinpoint drone-related activity and suspected drop locations, enabling police teams to reach the sites quickly.

The technology is backed by a sizeable ground-response network. As many as 52 Drone Response Teams, comprising 147 police personnel, are working in coordination with the BSF to respond to drone alerts, reach suspected drop points, search the locations and intercept people attempting to collect dropped consignments.

They are supported by 64 second-line defence nakas involving 600 personnel and 2,367 CCTV cameras installed at 585 locations.

Village Defence Committees in the border belt have also been integrated with the Drone Response Teams, with the police using these local networks as its "eyes and ears" for intelligence and surveillance.

CRACKDOWN HITS NETWORKS, FINANCES

The wider "Yudh Nashiyan Virudh" campaign has resulted in nearly 80,000 arrests since March 1, 2025, according to the police. A total of 486 drones have been recovered, while financial investigations targeting the economic base of drug networks have led to the freezing of property worth more than Rs 336 crore.

The police has also sought to encourage community participation

Punjab's Changing Drug Route

- Estimated 80% share of pharma drugs entering Punjab from other states
- 11.54 lakh pharma tablets/capsules seized since 2025
- 486 drones recovered during anti-drug crackdown
- Rs 336 crore+ drug-linked property frozen through financial investigations
- 9 anti-drone systems being deployed to choke Pak-linked narcotics smuggling

through a reward policy under which Rs 25,000 is paid for every recovered drone. Nearly Rs two crore has been disbursed under the policy during the current year.

Police said the combination of anti-drone technology, rapid response teams, BSF coordination, CCTV surveillance, depth nakas, community vigilance, intelligence-led arrests and financial disruption has contributed to the decline in the availability of drugs smuggled from across the border.

PHARMA PIPELINE EMERGES AS NEXT CHALLENGE

But the fall in heroin availability has not translated into the disappearance of the drug problem. Instead, the pattern of both supply and addiction is changing, with pharmaceutical drugs emerging as the most important challenge for drug-law enforcement in Punjab.

Seizure data analysed by the police shows that most pharmaceutical narcotics entering the state are manufactured outside Punjab. The source states include Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana,

besides Delhi.

Since 2025, Punjab Police has recovered 11.54 lakh pharmaceutical tablets and capsules from consignments linked to other states. Police estimates that around 80 percent of pharmaceutical drugs available in Punjab are now coming from Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi.

The figure is significant because it effectively reverses the earlier supply pattern, when around 80 percent of drugs entering Punjab were believed to be smuggled from across the Pakistan border.

FOCUS ON INTERSTATE REGULATION, ALONG WITH IB

The new pattern presents a fundamentally different enforcement challenge. While the earlier problem was centred on preventing cross-border consignments and drone drops, the pharmaceutical supply chain requires action against manufacturing, distribution, sale, purchase and transportation networks spread across multiple states.

Punjab Police has indicated that it will take up the matter with the concerned states, seeking better regulation of manufacturing units and continuous monitoring of the sale, purchase, and transportation of pharmaceutical drugs.

The objective will be to prevent legally manufactured pharmaceutical products from being diverted into the illicit drug market in Punjab.

The changing pattern thus presents a new test for the state's anti-drug campaign: having squeezed the heroin route from across the border, Punjab must now track and disrupt a pharmaceutical pipeline running through the country's domestic supply chain.

Martyrs Must Live in Public Memory: Mann; Road, Park Named After Col Manpreet

PNS ■ Chandigarh

Societies that remember their martyrs are the ones that progress, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said on Sunday as Punjab dedicated a 200-foot-wide road and a park in New Chandigarh to Shaheed Colonel Manpreet Singh, who was killed fighting terrorists in Anantnag on September 13, 2023.

The HR-2 road from Mullanpur Chowk to the T-Point has been named Shaheed Colonel Manpreet Singh Marg, while the park in Sector 5-A has been named Shaheed Colonel Manpreet Singh Park. Mann said the initiative was the state government's duty to preserve the legacy of the braveheart and inspire Punjab's youth to serve the nation selflessly.

Colonel Manpreet, born in Bharojian village in 1982, received his education in Mohali and Chandigarh and joined the Army as a commissioned officer in 2005, following his father. He was serving as Commanding Officer of 19 Rashtriya Rifles when he made the supreme sacrifice during an encounter with terrorists in Anantnag. The Centre posthumously awarded him the Kirti Chakra, the country's second-highest peacetime gallantry award, on August 15, 2024.

Mann: Punjab Will Be Made the Country's Sports Hub, Sporting Culture to Be Revived

SHER-E-PUNJAB T20 LEAGUE CONCLUDES

PNS ■ Mohali

Punjab will be developed as the country's sports hub and efforts to revive the state's sporting culture and reconnect youngsters with sports grounds will continue, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said on Sunday at the closing ceremony of the inaugural Sher-e-Punjab T20 League at the IS Bindra Stadium, Mohali. He said the league had demonstrated Punjab's vast cricketing talent, with 119 players getting a platform and early results already emerging with Naman Dhir and Prabhsimran Singh being selected for India A.

Mann said the two-week league, organised for the first time by the Punjab Cricket Association (PCA), was not merely a cricket tournament but an initiative to identify, nurture and promote talent from Punjab's villages, towns and cities. Several promising players who came into the limelight during the league, he said, could go on to represent Punjab and India in the coming years.

He said the state already had 21 players featuring in the IPL, while talent scouts and selectors from various IPL



franchises had attended matches during the league. This, he said, could open doors for several more Punjab cricketers to get IPL opportunities.

Pointing to Punjab's strong cricketing legacy, Mann said Indian men's and women's team captains Shubman Gill and Harmanpreet Kaur were both from the state. He expressed confidence that the new league would help strengthen this talent pipeline.

The Chief Minister congratulated the PCA, participating teams and players for successfully conducting the inaugural edition and said the performances had already begun producing results. He said Naman Dhir and Prabhsimran Singh's selection for India A showed how state-

level platforms could create a pathway to higher levels of cricket.

He also announced that the Player of the Tournament would be honoured with the Yuvraj Singh Award.

The final was contested between Amritsar Surmaaz and Ludhiana Lions. Six teams—Fazilka Falcons, Ludhiana Lions, Amritsar Surmaaz, Jalandhar Warriors, Mohali Kings and Bathinda Royals—featured in the league, led respectively by Shubman Gill, Arshdeep Singh, Abhishek Sharma, Prabhsimran Singh, Ramandeep Singh, and Gurnoor Brar.

Mann said the government's efforts to bring youth back to sports would continue "unabated", hoping the emerging cricketers would bring greater glory to Punjab and the country.

IN FOCUS



A woman rows a traditional country boat while a man gathers lotus leaves from Vellayani Lake in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday

Yogi Govt transformed UP: Rajnath Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Agra

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said Uttar Pradesh, once known for poor roads, insecurity and riots, has undergone a transformation under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and is now recognised for its 'One District, One Product' initiative.

Singh was here to attend the Khatik Garjana Sammelan organised by the All India Khatik Samaj in the Khandari area. Addressing the gathering, Singh said there was a time when the state was marked by bumpy roads and an atmosphere of insecurity, with riots taking place frequently.

"Earlier, there was 'one district, one mafia', but Adityanath has changed this picture. Today, Uttar Pradesh

is known for 'One District, One Product'," he said.

The defence minister said development was taking place across all sectors in the state. Singh was felicitated by members of the Khatik community, who presented him with a silver crown. He, however, asked them to donate the crown to a poor girl.

Calling for social unity and harmony, Singh said the Khatik community had always been at the forefront of protecting the country and religion.

"Khatik woh hai jo khauf ko hara de (A Khatik is the one who defeats fear)," he said in his speech.

Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday asserted that no one can harm India as long as the flag of Sanatan Dharma continues



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh being greeted during the Khatik Samaj Garjana Conference in Agra

PTI

to fly high, emphasising that the country's spiritual traditions preserved social unity and cultural consciousness even when foreign invaders attacked its sacred sites.

Speaking at a Shiv Mahapuran Katha held in Rae Bareilly, Adityanath said, "We did not limit 'Dharma'

merely to modes of worship; we embraced it as the vital life force of society, linking it to our duties and regarding it as the motivating power of the nation."

He explained that this was the reason that, even though political weaknesses forced the country to confront

foreign invaders during the medieval period, a time when they trampled upon India's sacred sites, the wisdom from the Vyas Peeths (traditional seats of spiritual discourse) continued to foster social unity while advancing India's cultural and spiritual uplift-

ment. Citing the example of Goswami Tulsidas (composer of Ramcharitmanas), Adityanath said the composer received an offer from Akbar's court to be inducted into the 'Navratnas'.

"When the proposal was put before him, he asked, 'Who is this Akbar?' People told him that he is the emperor of India. Tulsidas declared, 'I have only one king - Ram. Barring Ram, I do not consider any Akbar, a foreigner, as my king'. In that era, he challenged Akbar by asserting that Ram alone was his king."

Adityanath asserted that as long as the sacred 'kathaa' continues to resonate across India, the Sanatan Dharma flag will never bow. "And as long as that banner flies high, no one will be able to cause the slightest harm to India," he said.

Two killed in Manipur, CM urges unity, peace

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Asserting that his Government's priority is the restoration of peace, Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Sunday called for unity and mutual understanding among all 36 communities in the State. His comment came on a day when at least four people, including two women, were killed when suspected militants attacked their villages in Tamenglong and Noney districts.

"The present Government was formed during a period of severe crisis, and restoring peace and normalcy in the state remains one of its foremost responsibilities," the CM said. The task of bringing peace amid the prevailing situation was like "threading a needle through a torn cloth", requiring patience, careful efforts and gradual progress, he said. "We are all Manipuris. We have 36 communities, and we should never be apart," the chief minister said, stressing the need for unity and mutual understanding among all



communities of the State.

Singh made the remarks at the closing ceremony of the 3rd Singjamei Constituency Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Trophy State Level Open Chess Tournament 2026.

The CM also stated that he had held discussions and negotiations with various civil society organisations and stakeholders to facilitate the reopening of the route from Imphal to Guwahati.

It was through the spirit of understanding and sustained dialogue that progress had been made towards restoring movement along the route from Imphal to Guwahati.

Kishor tells Bihar Muslims to assert political voice

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Patna

Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor on Sunday called upon Muslims of Bihar to care for the community's representation in politics and refrain from becoming camp followers of any party.

The Bankipur MLA made the remark at a minorities convention held in Muslim-majority Sabzibagh locality of the State Capital, which falls under his Assembly constituency.

Kishor told the gathering: "I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your support during the recently held by-poll. Now we must strive to ensure a fair deal for the minorities, who must get due representation in democratic politics".

The city's Muslim population is said to have voted overwhelmingly for Kishor, instead of the RJD, which used to be their first party of choice, in the by-poll, which saw the debutant wresting the seat which the BJP had been winning on the trot since 1995.

The by-poll had been



necessitated after BJP president Nitin Nabin, a fifth-term MLA, gave up the assembly seat upon election to the Rajya Sabha.

Kishor said, "I say to all social segments in Bihar to care for the future of their own children instead of getting swayed by leaders claiming to champion their cause. That is my request to the minorities also. They must fight for their due share in politics, instead of becoming camp followers of any party".

Incidentally, the former poll strategist has been courting the minority community since his first foray into politics half a decade ago, when, as the then JD(U) national vice

president, he attacked the Narendra Modi Government at the Centre on the Citizenship Amendment Act.

Criticising the JD(U)'s equivocal stance on the issue led to Kishor's expulsion from the party, following which he floated his own political outfit, which failed to make an impact in the assembly polls last year, though he had promised "a good representation" to various segments of the society — women, minorities and the extremely backward classes.

Kishor, who has made it clear that the Jan Suraj Party will contest all eight seats of the legislative council where elections may be held next month, took potshots at the

RJD, the main opposition party, which recently tried to steal a march by coming out with names of six candidates for the polls.

"Does the list look like that of RJD leaders? It is full of turncoats. It seems the party has given tickets to whoever supplied them with money", alleged Kishor.

Significantly, one of the RJD candidates happens to be Rashmi Vinayak Gautam, whose husband Vinayak Gautam, a renowned doctor based in Sitamarhi, had earlier been with the Jan Suraj Party.

Talking to reporters later, Kishor also criticised suggestions from a section of NDA leaders that Bakhtiyarpur, the birthplace of JD(U) president Nitish Kumar, be named after the veteran leader who was the longest-serving chief minister of Bihar until giving up the post and entering the Rajya Sabha earlier this year.

"This is yet another sign of the fact that Bihar is now under BJP rule. There will be less substantial work and more noise of renaming places," the Jan Suraj Party founder said.

AAP blames Union Govt for Punjab power crisis

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chandigarh

Punjab Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader MLA Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal on Sunday alleged that the power crisis Punjab faced in the last 4-5 days was the result of the Union Government's "negative attitude and its policy of depriving the state of its rightful share."

Dhaliwal further claimed that because of the efforts of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Powercom officials, Punjab completely emerged from this crisis.

Punjab AAP's chief spokesperson Dhaliwal said the problem had arisen due to technical faults at private thermal power plants in Talwandi Sabo and Nabha, which have now been completely rectified. "Since 6 am on Sunday, uninterrupted electricity has been supplied across Punjab to agricultural, industrial and domestic consumers without any cuts," he said.

Punjab's own power generation has reached



MLA Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal

5,300-5,400 megawatts (MW), and all 10 thermal units in the state are functioning smoothly, while the total demand of 15,700 MW is being successfully met, he claimed.

Questioning the BJP Government, the AAP leader said whenever any state faces a technical crisis, it is the Centre's duty to support it.

"During such a difficult time, the Union Government abandoned Punjab. The 1,051 MW of electricity that Punjab was to receive from the central pool was stopped. Despite the Punjab power minister and officials repeatedly contacting the Centre and writing letters, they did not assist," he claimed.

PM flags threat of weaponising tech

PM Modi said India's BRICS presidency had focused on four pillars - resilience, innovation, cooperation and sustainability - and sought to translate the grouping's shared vision into practical outcomes.

He also called for broader participation in BRICS initiatives, saying cooperation should extend beyond governments to entrepreneurs, farmers, researchers, women, youth and ordinary citizens. "The strength of BRICS lies in our diversity and cooperation," PM Modi said, adding that the grouping's cooperation should ultimately benefit humanity.

Putin pitches BRICS grain market

"This platform must be built on the principles of openness and availability to not just the partners of BRICS, but to all of our friends," he said.

The Russian president also pitched for setting up a dedicated platform for economic growth with the BRICS amid crippling sanctions imposed by the Western powers on Moscow for its war on Ukraine.

The G-7 countries, the European Union, and the UK prohibited Western companies from insuring any ship transporting Russian crude unless the oil was purchased at or below a specified price cap. The sanctions relating to the insurance sector have adversely impacted Russian crude oil exports.

"We have independent routes for moving capital, labour and technologies. In fact, we can operate regardless of outside pressure," Putin said at the concluding session of the BRICS summit. Putin also complimented the functioning of the New Development Bank (NDB), saying it is handling projects worth \$140 billion. The NDB is a multilateral development bank established by the BRICS nations.

"As global challenges keep surfacing, we should adopt a holistic approach to address both the symptoms and root causes," Putin said.

"Global South countries should jointly advance better (global) governance structure and tackle both traditional and nontraditional security threats," he said.

The Russian president also said that the global stature of BRICS is rising as it has been focusing on charting an independent course to combat pressing global challenges.

"The broad participation in today's meeting confirms that international interest in BRICS continues to grow. Many around the world find our core values and ideals appealing, including our commitment to charting an independent course and a desire to resolve problems collectively, guided by international law and the key provisions of the UN Charter," Putin said.

The concluding session of the BRICS summit was attended by the bloc's full member nations as well as its partner countries.

BRICS, originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, expanded in 2024 to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, with Indonesia joining in 2025.

Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam became BRICS partner countries last year. BRICS has emerged as an influential grouping as it brings together 11 major emerging economies of the world, representing around 49.5 per cent of the global population, around 40 per cent of the global GDP and around 26 per cent of the global trade.

Xi proposes open-source AI, manufacturing push

The second initiative aims to make trade and investment easier among BRICS members. Xi proposed establishing a BRICS special economic zone partnership that would facilitate policy coordination and create new opportunities for investment and economic development.

The third proposal targets the digital economy. China has suggested creating a BRICS digital ecosystem cloud platform to promote digital-skills training, technological exchanges and closer cooperation between industries.

The fourth initiative focuses on intelligent manufacturing. Xi said China was ready to assist fellow BRICS countries in developing smart factories and establishing standards to support the modernisation and upgrading of manufacturing industries.

The fifth proposal centres on science and technology.

China has proposed a BRICS engineer development alliance to support joint training and mutual recognition of professional standards. Xi also announced plans for a youth exchange programme focused on scientific and technological innovation.

Iran calls for trade in national currencies...

The BRICS now must play a greater role in building a more balanced, inclusive and just international order, the Iranian president said stressing that resilience, cooperation and sustainability should be translated into practical action.

He also reaffirmed Iran's readiness to contribute its capacities to BRICS cooperation, emphasising that resilience requires sustained cooperation, cooperation requires justice, and sustainability is impossible without peace and security.

"Let us turn BRICS into a platform for translating these principles into practical action," he said,

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adding that a future in which growth, security and development are possible for all is a shared responsibility toward future generations.

He highlighted Iran's geopolitical position and energy and transit capacities, saying they could contribute to the development of trade and energy corridors among BRICS members. The Iranian president said economic resilience could not be sustained without security, referring to what he described as the military aggression by the US and Israel against Iran.

He said the attacks on Iran's economic, energy and development infrastructure could have consequences beyond national borders, creating regional and global repercussions.

Pezeshkian said the Iranian people had paid a heavy price, with civilians killed and infrastructure built over decades damaged. The Iranian president said the international community has a responsibility to protect civilians and prevent the "normalisation of attacks on civilian targets".

Pezeshkian thanked India, its people and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for hosting the summit, saying its theme — Resilience, Cooperation and Sustainability — reflected the fundamental global needs at a time when the destinies of nations are increasingly interconnected.

He said the international community's challenge was not merely to manage current crises, but to build a system that strengthens nations against future crises and creates a fairer world.

On the situation in Gaza and Lebanon, Pezeshkian said the people of the region continued to face the consequences of "crimes and genocide". He called on BRICS to play a more effective role in defending national sovereignty, territorial integrity and the prohibition of the use of force.

Elaborating on global challenges, Pezeshkian said no country could address them alone and called for transforming the capacities of the Global South into shared capabilities.

On sustainability, he warned that development that increases inequality or transfers today's costs to future generations cannot be sustainable.

The Iranian president also flagged concerns over the environmental consequences of war, saying damage to energy and industrial infrastructure can affect natural resources beyond economic losses.

Pezeshkian identified knowledge and innovation as key elements of the BRICS agenda, stressing that artificial intelligence and emerging technologies should serve as tools for empowering nations rather than instruments of domination.

Rahul, Rijiju clash over BRICS menu

Rahul's remarks elicited a response from the BJP. Rijiju said that all guests "relished Indian vegetarian cuisine which are rich in flavor and nutritional variety with diverse regional traditions." "I can't believe that Congress party is making politics even on the food menu served to the leaders of BRICS nations. Our guests rel-

ished Indian vegetarian cuisine which are rich in flavor and nutritional variety with diverse regional traditions, Rijiju posted on X.

Without naming anyone specifically, Rijiju aimed at the Congress, accusing the party of turning the food served to BRICS leaders into a political controversy. "I can't believe that the Congress party is making politics even on the food menu served to the leaders of BRICS nations. Our guests relished Indian vegetarian cuisine, which is rich in flavour and nutritional variety with diverse regional traditions," Rijiju said.

Voicing support for Rahul Gandhi, Pawan Khara argued that India's culinary diversity included some of the finest non-vegetarian dishes in the world and asked why the government opted not to feature them. "The BJP's habit of imposing its dietary preferences on fellow Indians is already deeply problematic. Now, they have taken it a step further by imposing their own choices on dignitaries from across the world," he said.

Reacting to Gandhi's criticism, BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said, "When the Opposition has nothing except the food menu to criticise about the summit, it tells you how successful BRICS has been... Congress is sulking to see India emerge as a global consensus builder," he wrote on X. Another BJP national spokesperson, Tuhin Sinha, alleged that Gandhi's "petty and frivolous" remarks reflect his mentality as well as that of the Congress party. He said the remarks show why the Congress is "on the margins" today and has become a "fringe group".

"If there were any responsible or sensible Leader of Opposition in the country, he would have congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi and India today. What India has achieved through the New Delhi Resolution is historic. For the first time, all BRICS nations were seen standing united with one voice on all serious global issues. This had not happened before," he said.

Khandvi mille (a feuille steamed gram-flour roll), and khumb galouti (pan-grilled mushroom kebabs with mint pearls) were served as starters for the guests at Bharat Mandapam on Saturday - the first day of two-day BRICS Summit hosted by India. The main course offered paneer lababdar, gucchi marmik (Himalayan morel mushrooms and tender asparagus) and carrot bean poriyal. The other items on the menu included thakkali belle saaru, light lentil broth, millet pulao, beetroot raita, and assorted Indian breads. For the desserts, Old Delhi fruit cream with jalebi and shahitoot phirni wrapped up the menu for the VVIP guests.

Shah unveils PM Modi's birthday drive

Shah also said that PM Modi has helped the country move past policy paralysis, coalition pressures, and poor decision-making. Over the last 25 years, he said, Gujarat and India have seen major changes, especially in infrastructure and poverty reduction.

The campaign will have 12 main programmes. These will include blood donation and lamp-lighting events, painting and speech contests for young people, meetings with beneficiaries of Government schemes, and motorcycle journeys between Vadnagar, Modi's birthplace, and Varanasi, his parliamentary constituency. There will also be events to make sure welfare schemes reach everyone. Other highlights are Seva Ke Rang Rashtra Ke Sang, which Shah called the world's largest human-group rangoli, and the Seva First Innovation Challenge with five regional contests.

Talking about the economy, Shah said India has gone from being part of the Fragile Five to one of the world's top five economies. He pointed to 7.8 per cent GDP growth in the first quarter as evidence of progress. Shah also said that GST, the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile system, banking reforms, foreign investment, the Production Linked Incentive scheme, and Make in India have all helped boost manufacturing and overall growth.

He claimed 25 crore people had been lifted out of poverty. Among welfare measures, he listed free foodgrains for 81 crore people, 58 crore bank accounts, health cover of up to ₹5 lakh for 44 crore people, tap water connections to 16 crore households, ₹6,000 a year under PM-Kisan for 13 crore farmers, and toilets in 13 crore households. Ujjwala gas connections, housing and women's self-help groups were also cited.

Shah said infrastructure has grown quickly, including roads, railways, airports, metros, ports, waterways, and digital networks. The number of airports has doubled from about 75 to 150. He also mentioned dedicated freight corridors, Vande Bharat trains, and better border connections. Shah highlighted the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam, which gives 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament and state legislatures, and noted more women are joining the armed forces, police, science, startups, drones, and sports.

Shah said the government has promoted Indian languages, responded strongly to terror attacks, and addressed issues like Article 370, Left-wing extremism, and security in the Northeast. According to Shah, surgical strikes, air strikes, and Operation Sindoor have shown a policy of 'zero tolerance' for terrorism.

Shah said projects like the Ayodhya Ram temple, Kashi Vishwanath Dham, Mahakal Lok, and the redevelopment of Kedarnath show efforts to develop important religious sites. He also mentioned the new Parliament building, the Sengol, Chandrayaan-3, Aditya-L1, One Rank One Pension, and the creation of the Chief of Defence Staff.

On foreign policy, Shah said India's global position has improved through Vaccine Maitri, trade deals, and leading the G20 and BRICS. He said, "Whatever the problem in the world, the view of India's Prime Minister matters today." Shah also noted that Modi is the first prime minister in sixty years to be elected three times since the early years after Independence, saying this shows his 25-year record in public office.

GRAPEVINE

Govt fixing Tata Sons?

Recent bureaucrats' lunch at the India International Centre was abuzz with a possible Government nod to implement strict company and SEBI norms on Tata Group. A few days ago, RBI and SEBI are tightening on the need for the listing of Tata Sons, the controlling firm of Tata Group. The top bureaucracy, which always eyes on Tata affairs, is keenly watching the political directions in this regard.



BRICS pride in vegetarianism

The success of BRICS summit can be evaluated from the fact that it demonstrated internal cohesion within the expanded 11-member bloc (including regional rivals like Iran, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia). Hosted by PM Narendra Modi at Bharat Mandapam, the event featured prominent leaders including China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin with a galaxy of vegetarian cuisines from across length and breadth of India. "The success of BRICS summit and India's diplomacy can be established from the fact that the only criticism, even from the worst critics, is about the options in the food menu," quipped a member delegate.



Goof-up in courts?

For the past week across India, a large number of cases in trial courts and High Courts have been listed for mediation. According to the circular, this was as per Supreme Court Order. Many from the legal fraternity says AI was used to select mediation cases, and a huge blunder is happened. Many criminal cases not allowed in the media category are selected for mediation, and Judges are busy returning the cases.



PM Modi's warm gesture to Xi steals the show at BRICS summit



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses a session during the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping are also seen

RAJESH KUMAR
■ New Delhi

An innocent query at a global event, with world leaders in attendance, has hit the headlines. Addressing the BRICS summit, Prime Minister Modi paused shortly after noticing Chinese President Xi Jinping's discomfort and asked: "Is it okay?" Getting no immediate response, he repeated the question, and the visiting leader nodded. While the reason for the brief interruption was unclear, it could have been an issue with the mic or translation of Modi's speech. The Chinese President later skipped the dinner hosted for the BRICS leaders as he was tired after a packed schedule and time difference, sources said. Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed also did not attend the dinner.

The brief interaction, captured in footage shared by *Doordarshan*, took place

between the 4.40 and 5.11 marks of Modi's opening remarks. The moment came during Xi's first visit to India in seven years and added to several recent moments of interaction between the two leaders at the BRICS Summit.

While it might be a small incident, it was a telling moment of bonhomie between the two leaders. It appeared to reflect PM Modi's personal concern for the Chinese President at a time when both nations are looking to reset ties and move on from border disputes.

Later in the day, Xi skipped a dinner hosted by PM Modi. People with direct knowledge of the matter said the Chinese President missed the dinner because he was tired after travelling and was affected by the time difference. Despite skipping the evening event, Xi maintained a packed schedule during his visit. Xi on Sunday departed from New Delhi after participating in the Summit.

Declassified CIA files: bin Laden wanted to target India in 1998

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi

Newly released CIA files show that Osama bin Laden intended to carry out attacks in India as early as August 1998. They do not show that he had chosen Delhi, Mumbai, Srinagar, or any other Indian city.

That distinction is the core of the record. An August 28, 1998, President's Daily Brief titled "Bin Ladin Terrorist Network Still a Threat" listed India among the countries where the al-Qaeda leader intended to strike. The same sentence named Pakistan, Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Uganda and possibly Nigeria.

The brief was among 71 presidential intelligence products, covering more than 100 pages, released by the CIA on September 11, 2026, to mark 25 years since the attacks on New York and Washington. The collection was prepared for Presidents Bill Clinton and George W Bush. CIA Director John Ratcliffe called it the agency's largest release of presidential daily briefs.

The mention of India came after the August 7, 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, and the August 20 US cruise-missile strikes on camps in Afghanistan. Analysts informed the White House



CIA Director John Ratcliffe

AP

that bin Laden and other leaders had survived, their communications network was still working, training had restarted at some camps, and other camps were being relocated.

They reported that he could rely on people and allied groups in at least 60 countries. India is listed as a country, not as a group of cities. The visible text does not mention New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, or Srinagar. It also does not mention Parliament House, the Red Fort, the Bombay Stock Exchange, any consulate, airport, or hotel.

The file does mention a South Asian network connected to the unnamed Indian target. A February 24, 1998 assessment said leaders of the Pakistan-based Harakat ul-Ansar had signed bin

Laden's fatwa calling for attacks on US interests and civilians worldwide. Harakat ul-Ansar, later called Harakat ul-Mujahedin (HUM), was already active in Jammu and Kashmir.

A September 1998 brief stated that HUM was working with bin Laden to attack US, British, and French interests. The location of the planned attack is blacked out. It does not name Srinagar, Jammu, or any city in the Kashmir Valley. These passages describe the environment Indian agencies had warned about: Afghan camps used by Pakistan-based groups crossing the Line of Control, shared members, and common infrastructure after the anti-Soviet war.

These details still do not turn the August 28 list into a plan against any specific Indian city. Later events in

Indian cities are not covered by this brief. The December 1999 hijacking of Indian Airlines flight IC-814, which started in Kathmandu and ended in Kandahar, involved HUM. The December 2001 attack on Parliament House in New Delhi happened three years after the CIA note. Lashkar-e-Tayyiba was behind the November 2008 attack on Mumbai.

Other documents in the 2026 release focus on the United States: a September 1998 warning that al-Qaeda "may fly an explosive-packed aeroplane into a US city," a December 1998 note about possible hijackings, and the August 6, 2001 paper "Bin Ladin Determined To Strike in US." Nineteen hijackers attacked New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, killing nearly 3,000 people. For India, the newly released record is both bigger and smaller than some headlines claim.

It is bigger because a brief at the time told the US president that India was on bin Laden's target list in 1998, along with Pakistan and before 9/11.

The 1998 mention of India is part of this record. American intelligence believed bin Laden planned to attack in India, but did not tell the White House which city he meant to attack.

BSF rescues 10 Bangladeshis after boat capsizes in Ganga

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi

Border Security Force (BSF) personnel rescued 10 Bangladeshi nationals, including a weeks-old infant, two other children, and three women, after their engine-powered boat capsized in the Padma-Ganga on Saturday afternoon. The passengers were swept toward the Indian bank. Officials said the group was pulled from strong currents near the Khandua border outpost, received medical care, and was handed back to Bangladeshi authorities that same night.

The journey began around 5 pm on September 12 from Bakher Ali, also called Alimnagar Ghat, in Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila. The boat was headed to Jahurpur Bokripara in Narayanpur union, a short river crossing that locals use frequently. About 20 minutes into the trip, strong winds and a powerful mid-stream current overturned the vessel.

The passengers were thrown into the water and carried toward Indian territory along the Murshidabad-Malda border. Troops from the BSF's 71st Battalion, stationed near the Khandua border outpost in the Malda Sector, saw several people struggling in the river and in immediate danger of drowning.

The team sent a speedboat from the Taranagar area in Lalgola. They managed to bring all 10 people ashore despite high waves. The



BSF rescues 10 Bangladeshi nationals, including 30-day-old infant

XBSF

rescued group included four men, three women, and three children. Among them was an infant, about 30 days old, who the BSF said was in critical condition.

First aid was given at the scene, and the group was taken to a Government hospital. Officials later said the infant had stabilised and was in normal condition. Bangladeshi officials identified the 10 as Russel, 26; Ibrahim, 60; Sawdagar, 40; Ibrahim, 60; Sakhina, 45; Nilufa, 35; Tania, 22, and her infant; and two boys, Sanaullah, 9, and Al Amin, 9. All are residents of Jahurpur Bokripara.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) said the boat was carrying 12 passengers. One man, Wasim, about 25, swam back to the Bangladesh bank and was taken to the Bakher Ali BGB camp. Lieutenant Colonel Kazi Mustafizur Rahman, commander of BGB's 53rd Battalion, said another pas-

senger, Mostafa, 60, was still missing and that search efforts were ongoing.

A local ghat lessee said separately that no one was missing, so public reports did not confirm this. The BSF said the survivors told troops they were travelling from Chapai Nawabganj to Joharpur when the boat suddenly capsized, and the current pushed them onto the Indian side. The force treated the case as a humanitarian rescue, not an infiltration attempt. After medical checks and the required formalities, officials handed over the 10 to the 53rd Battalion of the BGB around 10 pm on Saturday at the Faridpur border.

The transfer followed a flag meeting between company commanders from the Khandua BSF camp and the Faridpur BOP. The BGB later reunited the group with their relatives in front of local public representatives.

West Bengal closes down 352 Madrassas, puts 100 on notice



West Bengal Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Kolkata

Weeks after Chief Minister Suvenudh Adhikari warned of action against unregistered Khadija Madrassas, the West Bengal Government on Sunday ordered the closing down of 352 of those Muslim educational institutions and put a hundred of them on notice after surveys showed a lack of requisite approvals and infrastructure facilities.

Sunday's decision came in consequence of a prolonged district-wise survey conducted by the State Minority and Madrasa Education Department officials; relevant minister Kshudiram Tudu said.

Surveys were conducted across 2396 Khariji Madrassas of the State. According to officials, "about one hundred Madrassas have been asked to show cause why these institutions will not be closed

down... if their explanation is not satisfactory then they too will face closure."

Out of the closed Madrassas, 35 were situated in North Dinajpur district, a little more than 40 were located in Malda, 32 in South 24 Parganas, and 25 each in Nadia and Murshidabad districts, sources said.

All these districts border neighbouring Bangladesh.

Presently, there were 2132 Madrassas operating with valid approval, while there were about 2396 unapproved Madrassas.

When contacted, the West Bengal Panchayat Minister justified the Government action, saying the Government had been receiving regular complaints against the erring Madrassas, adding, "some of these were even suspicious by their conduct as several terror moles who had been arrested in recent times were working as teachers in these institutions."

SUSPECTED MILITANTS KILL TWO WOMEN IN MANIPUR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Imphal

Two women were killed, and the husband and infant son of one of them were injured when suspected militants attacked their villages in Manipur's Tamenglong and Noney districts on Sunday, police said.

The Tamenglong incident occurred at about 4 am, while the one in Noney took place around 12 hours later.

A woman, identified as Lhingjangai Singait, was killed, and her husband Seineih Singait and infant son were injured in their residence when suspected militants attacked Tollen Kuki village, located near NH-37, which connects Imphal with Jiribam.

Following the incident, security forces reached the village and provided medical assistance to the injured, police said.

In the second incident, a woman was shot dead by armed militants at Longpi village under Nungba Police Station limits around 3:30 pm.

The deceased was identified as Julie Gangte, police said.

BJP leader and former chief minister N Biren Singh and Naga Peoples' Front legislator Awangbou Newmal condemned the killing of Lhingjangai. In a social media post, Singh said the incident at Tollen Kuki village is "deeply disturbing and heart-breaking".

LG Saxena sanctions ex-gratia for 2025 Ladakh violence victims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jammu

Fulfilling its commitment to support the families affected by the tragic violence in Ladakh on September 24, 2025, the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Vinai Kumar Saxena, on Sunday sanctioned ₹15 lakh each to the next of kin of the four persons who lost their lives in the incident. An ex-gratia assistance of ₹3 lakh for persons who sustained major injuries and ₹1 lakh for those who sustained minor injuries has also been approved.

The total financial commitment of the UT Administration under the approved compensation measures will be ₹1.52 crore, comprising ₹60 lakh for the four deceased, ₹72 lakh for 24 persons with major injuries



and ₹20 lakh for 20 persons with minor injuries.

The incident had resulted in the loss of four lives, while 43 civilians sustained major or minor injuries. As the UT of Ladakh did not have a general policy prescribing compensation in cases of death or injury arising from incidents of public unrest or rioting, the Administration examined the matter with a view to extending appropriate humanitari-

an assistance to the affected families and individuals.

LG Saxena, after taking over in March this year, accorded priority to the matter and worked towards finalising an appropriate compensation package for the affected families and injured persons. The compensation is intended as a measure of support and solidarity with the affected families and individuals.

Ladakhi film *Birds on Ice* to premiere at Busan Film Festival

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

A Ladakhi feature film, *Birds on Ice*, showcasing the world of Ice Hockey in Ladakh, is set to have its world premiere at the 31st Busan International Film Festival in South Korea.

The film features Indian national ice-hockey player Padma Chorol in her acting debut. Chorol plays Paami, an ice-hockey coach and national-team player whose experiences are closely connected to the film's portrayal of the sport and its aspirations in Ladakh.

The film was shot over two months in Ladakh in demanding winter conditions and features a predominantly Ladakhi cast and crew.

The selection of *Birds on Ice* for Busan marks an important international platform for Ladakhi-language cinema, with the film set to introduce Ladakh's sporting culture, landscape and local voices to audiences from across the world.

The 31st Busan International Film Festival is scheduled to be held from October 6 to 15, 2026, in



Busan, South Korea.

Chief Secretary, Union Territory of Ladakh, Ashish Kundra, unveiled the official poster of the Ladakhi feature film *Birds on Ice* at PVR Leh.

The film, directed by filmmaker Sahil H Shah, has been selected for the A Window on Asian Cinema section of the 31st Busan International Film Festival and is set to have its world premiere in Busan,

South Korea, in October 2026.

Speaking on the occasion, producer and director Sahil H Shah shared the journey behind the making of *Birds on Ice* and the challenges involved in filming in Ladakh's harsh winter conditions. He spoke about the experience of working through sub-zero temperatures and the dedication of the cast and crew in bringing the story to the screen.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Secretary congratulated the producer, director, cast and crew of *Birds on Ice* for bringing a story rooted in Ladakh and its ice-hockey culture to an international platform. He appreciated the team's efforts in showcasing Ladakh's sporting spirit, local talent and unique winter landscape through cinema, and extended his best wishes to the entire team for the film's screening at the Busan International Film Festival.

He expressed hope that the film would further contribute to highlighting Ladakh's growing passion for ice hockey and its potential as a destination for winter sports and creative storytelling.

The event was attended by DGP, UT Ladakh, Anand Jain; Secretary, Education/Youth Services & Sports, Bhanu Prabha; Secretary, Tourism, Sanjeet Rodrigues; former Chief Executive Councillor, Tashi Gyalson; senior officers of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP); and other guests, along with members of the film's cast and crew.

CBI arrests Airtel SIM distributor in Bihar over cyber fraud probe

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation has arrested an Airtel area distributor from Bihar's Vaishali district for allegedly issuing SIM cards fraudulently and supplying them for use in an illegal SIM Box network tied to cyber-enabled frauds across India.

The accused, identified as Pankaj Kumar, 36, a resident of Mirzanagar under Mahua police station, was the Airtel distributor for the Mahua area. The investigators carried out synchronised searches at 10 sites in Vaishali district, Bihar, and Jagatsinghpur district, Odisha. The operation at his home began around midnight and continued into the early morning. Authorities seized mobile phones, laptops, SIM cards, and other digital devices containing evidence.

The case stems from an illegal SIM Box operation which was detected in the Supaul district of Bihar last year. After the Bihar Government handed over the case, the CBI took over the investigation and recovered more than 1,300 SIM cards from the house where



the SIM Box was being run. Data analysis linked those numbers to at least 73 cyber-crime cases reported from various parts of the country. In several of these cases, the so-called "digital arrest" method was used, in which callers pretended to be police, CBI officials, or others and forced victims to transfer money.

Investigators found that most of the SIM cards were issued in Bihar and Odisha; over 700 were traced to the arrested distributor, who is said to have misused the login details of more than a dozen Points of Sale in Vaishali to arrange bulk con-

nections. Many subscribers later told investigators they never knew their SIM cards had been issued in their names.

Authorities said this happened either by tricking people into completing several e-KYC authorisations. At the same time, they went to a retailer for a legitimate reason, or by improperly using biometric data previously collected for another service.

The agency is looking into cases of cheating, forgery, and extortion under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita; identity theft and computer-related offences under the

Information Technology Act; and breaches of the Telecommunications Act, 2022.

This operation shows how inadequate controls at the final stage of telecom distribution can contribute to organised cybercrime; using SIM boxes, criminals can route large numbers of calls while hiding both their location and identity, making it harder for victims and the police to trace the origin of fraudulent calls.

The CBI has once again emphasised that a "digital arrest" does not exist and has warned citizens not to send money or share their OTPs, Aadhaar details, or banking information when they receive calls claiming to be from law-enforcement agencies. It has also advised people to be on their guard against fraudulent investment schemes promoted by telephone.

The probe to identify other points of sale, intermediaries and end users of the illegally issued SIM cards is still ongoing, and the arrest is part of a broader initiative to dismantle the telecom infrastructure that enables large-scale cyber fraud.

Gunmen fire outside Punjabi singer Gulab Sidhu's house

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ Chandigarh/New Delhi

Three unidentified masked men opened fire on the home of Punjabi singer and songwriter Gulab Sidhu in Pharwahi village, in the Barnala district of Punjab, during the early hours of Sunday.

The police stated that the attackers fired at least six shots, the impact of which hit the main gate of the house. Nobody was hurt. Sidhu was in Australia performing at the time, and his parents, wife, and children were inside the house.

People said that they heard gunshots after midnight. CCTV footage from the house, which then spread widely, depicts three men in masks arriving on a motorcycle. The rider appeared to be recording the incident on a mobile phone while the other two fired before the group fled.

Barnala's SSP, Mohammad Sarfaraz Alam, confirmed the sequence of events and said a formal complaint (FIR) was being filed. SP (Investigation) Sanjeev Goyal and other officers visited the scene. The police formed several teams, began analysing CCTV footage and data from nearby mobile towers, and said they were taking steps to identify and trace the suspects.

The authorities noted that Sidhu had earlier come under threats and that, as a result of the perceived danger from gangsters, two security staff had been given to him. An audio clip supposedly belonging to the fugitive gangster Balwinder Singh, also known as Doni Bal and believed to be residing abroad, spread on social media. In the recording, the person in question took



responsibility and stated that Sidhu had attended wedding ceremonies of individuals connected with those accused in the 2022 murder of singer Sidhu Moosewala.

The clip said Sidhu had not replied to phone calls and that the firing was meant as a warning. The police said they were reviewing the audio but had not verified its authenticity or found any connection to a gang. Sidhu was a close associate of Sidhu Moosewala, who was killed in May 2022.

On his Instagram profile, it says "Justice for Sidhu Moosewala". He has released several popular songs, including Dera Sheran Da, Jatta Love You, Chill Maaro, Lahore, and 60 Pound. In October 2025, a song with lyrics referring to village sarpanches caused protests from the panchayat representatives in Barnala. Sidhu then apolo-

gised, met the people who had complained and had the disputed lines removed.

In January 2026, police arrested a sarpanch from a nearby village and two associates on the basis that they had planned an attack and an extortion attempt connected to the same controversy. This most recent incident is part of a pattern of threats aimed at Punjabi artists associated with Moosewala or involved in arguments over the lyrics and their public image.

The police said that they were looking into all possible aspects, including the possibility that extortion was involved, and that the family members who were there when the shooting took place had not been injured. As of Sunday evening, however, police had not identified the attackers, and the investigation was still ongoing.



Activist Manoj Jarange addresses a press conference over the ongoing Maratha quota agitation in Jalna district, Maharashtra

Mumbai Police have denied nod for stir, claims Jarange

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange on Sunday claimed Mumbai police had denied permission for his indefinite hunger strike in the metropolis from September 19 and accused Maharashtra Government of trying to suppress his agitation.

He also claimed the act of the Mumbai police was against the directives of the Bombay High Court. This is dictatorship and high-handedness, Jarange said as his hunger strike entered the 16th day on Sunday.

"Why do they (Government and police) assume we will violate the rules before the protest even begins? Under what law is this Government functioning?" Jarange asked.

Jarange said his legal team would challenge the police order.

On Friday, the Bombay High Court refused to pass any urgent order on a petition seeking to stop his fresh protest in the state capital.

The court said every person has the right to protest and no restraining order can be issued merely on the apprehension of law and order trouble.

Attacking Chief Minister

Devendra Fadnavis for "disturbing peace during Hindu festival", Jarange said he would go to Mumbai for the stir notwithstanding denial of permission by police.

The activist has called for the march during Ganapati festivities, to be held from September 14 to 25.

Rejecting talk that his stir could cause law and order issues amid the festive season, he said, "We also celebrate Ganesh festival. The Government and police are creating a conspiracy to prevent our peaceful and democratic protest. This is not the way a Government should function under the rule of law."

"We respect the Constitution and the judiciary, but we will not bow down to arbitrary Government directives. Our legal team will decide on the next steps," Jarange added. Reiterating that his march to Mumbai would begin as planned on September 15, Jarange said he would stop medical treatment and fluid intake in protest against the denial of police permission. Earlier in the day, the activist alleged a conspiracy to kill him and create trouble during his proposed march to Mumbai to press for Maratha reservation.

Nine die in dry Nagaland's Tuensang; deaths 'circumstantially' linked

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Tuensang

Nine people died in two days in dry Nagaland's Tuensang district recently, and the police on Sunday said that the deaths were "circumstantially" linked to the consumption of spurious liquor.

The deaths were reported in Tuensang town and Chendang Saddle village on September 10 and 11.

The district police, in a statement, said, "The deaths had been circumstantially linked to the consumption of suspected spurious or adulterated liquor," while making it clear that the connection had not yet been conclusively established.

Scientific and forensic pro-

cedures, including post-mortem examinations in most cases, are yet to be completed, and the mortal remains have been taken for further examination, the statement said.

The Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition Act, 1989 bans the possession, sale, consumption, and manufacture of alcohol across the north-eastern state.

Police received reports on Saturday about a pattern of deaths of people admitted to Tuensang Civil Hospital. Preliminary enquiries revealed that most of the deceased had reportedly consumed liquor prior to developing symptoms including blurred vision, severe headache, dizziness,



Representative image

nausea and vomiting.

One of the deceased was reportedly found hanging, and the case is being investigated as suicide, police said.

The suspected liquor consumption has also emerged in connection with three members of a family who lost their lives, with the liquor reportedly purchased

by one of the deceased from their premises.

The police said the suspected consumption of spurious liquor could not at this stage be scientifically and conclusively established.

Following the reports, Tuensang Police conducted search and raid operations throughout Tuensang town and the Chendang Saddle area, identifying and seizing suspected unauthorised or spurious/adulterated liquor.

During the operations, approximately 470 bottles of IMFL and beer cans were seized from different locations.

Police said widespread information dissemination and public awareness efforts

have also been undertaken to alert the public about the risks associated with consuming liquor from unknown, unauthorised or suspected adulterated sources.

The Tuensang Police are conducting a thorough investigation to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the deaths, the source and nature of the liquor consumed, and to pinpoint possible responsibility for the incident.

Police have advised the public to avoid purchasing or consuming liquor from unknown or unauthorised sources and to refrain from consuming liquor suspected to be adulterated or of doubtful quality.

Vijay unveils over ₹79,000 crore plan to modernise TN finances

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chennai

In its maiden budget and subsequent debates for grants for departments in the State Assembly, the Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay-TVK Government has rolled out a series of announcements committing a massive ₹79,219.06 crore from the State exchequer in a landmark legislative push.

Coming amidst fierce criticism from political parties that the fiscal trajectory will cause severe strain on the economy, the Government has also reiterated its commitment for fiscal prudence. It has formed a panel under veteran economist Montek Singh Ahluwalia to shore up an additional ₹15,000 crore this year, amid concerns of an increasing debt burden.

Much of the 17 mega-announcements across departments made under



Rule 110 in the Assembly during the 28-day budget session, which concluded on September 8, includes a transformative vision to modernise state infrastructure, secure energy independence, and deliver comprehensive agrarian relief.

The announcements are power sector/power transmission infrastructure

scheme of ₹33,066 crore, Thoothukudi Supercritical Thermal Power Plant at ₹20,800 crore, Infrastructure & roads/urban infrastructure push of ₹11,000 crore, Urban road repairs and junction modernisation of ₹1,850 crore, new Assembly-cum-Secretariat Complex for ₹1,200 crore, welfare and agriculture/annual schemes

including free electricity to people at ₹10,000 crore, cooperative crop loan relief expansion of ₹953.06 crore, among others. The cumulative amount is ₹79,219.06 crore.

It features a landmark integrated Assembly-Secretariat complex at Pattinapakkam in Mylapore here and an ambitious ₹55,628-crore power sector overhaul including a project in Chennai, over ₹8,500 crore in continuous yearly welfare expenditures — including milk procurement price subsidies, LPG relief, and expanded MLA allowances - with the opposition party leaders warning that the unprecedented outlay risks deepening the state's revenue deficit and pushing its existing ₹10.98 lakh crore debt burden past critical threshold limits.

The cumulative amount may amount to a far higher sum which the state

Government has not officially outlined so far.

The mega sports infrastructure - the launch of a world-class Olympic City and a dedicated MotorSports City capable of hosting international racing events like Formula 1, are also embedded within the Rule 110 announcement package.

According to a senior official in the Government, the announcements are split into structural capital investments and continuous operational spending — capital and infrastructure investments (one-time outlay of ₹57,703 crore), power and energy expansion: ₹55,628 crore overhaul including ₹20,800 crore for Thoothukudi Supercritical Thermal Power Station (on PPP model), ₹33,066 crore statewide transmission modernisation, and ₹1,762 crore urban power grid upgrades for Chennai.

UDHAYANIDHI DUBS VIJAY AS DUMMY AND UNCOUTH CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chennai

Leader of Opposition Udhayanidhi Stalin on Sunday termed C Joseph Vijay as a "dummy and uncouth chief minister" and accused the ruling dispensation of governance failures, including widespread power cuts and deteriorating law and order.



Addressing the wedding of a DMK Youth Wing functionary here, he alleged that the ruling regime had failed to deliver on any of its election promises during its initial four months in office.

"In Tamil Nadu's history, we have never witnessed such an uncouth and dummy chief minister," Udhayanidhi said, alleging that the Government came to power by luring MLAs from other parties.

He charged that the current administration was simply rebranding and "pasting stickers" on public welfare schemes initiated during the previous DMK Government rather than introducing new initiatives.

"Today, people across Tamil Nadu are grappling with daily crises, from frequent power cuts and surging prices of essential commodities like rice and pulses to worsening law and order. When questioned on these issues, the CM is unable to answer and instead resorts to spreading slander against our party and leadership," he claimed.

Mangroves must be conserved as living ecosystems: Bhupender Yadav

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Mangroves must be conserved as living ecosystems, given their importance for coastal biodiversity, fisheries, shoreline protection, climate resilience and livelihoods, Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said on Sunday.

The minister also emphasised restoration, scientific management, community participation and technology-enabled monitoring of mangroves.

Yadav made these comments while addressing the Workshop on Mangrove Conservation, Restoration and Sustainable Management held at Bhuj in Gujarat's Kachchh.

At the event, he released the Mangroves Atlas of



Gujarat and launched the Mangrove GIS (MGIS) Portal.

The minister stated that these would strengthen

science-based decision-making and monitoring of mangrove habitats across the State.

CPI welcomes BRICS push for global governance reforms, de-dollarisation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Communist Party of India on Sunday welcomed the BRICS declaration calling for global governance reforms and said the grouping should lead the push for a more representative, democratic and equitable international order.

CPI general secretary D Raja said the call for greater representation of the Global South in the United Nations, including reform of the UN Security Council, as well as reforms in the IMF and World Bank was an important step in that direction.

"The inclusion of India and other developing countries in decision-making structures must be pursued with greater urgency," Raja



said in a statement.

Raja also referred to the progress made in India-China relations on the sidelines of the BRICS summit, saying it strengthened the CPI's longstanding position that disputes between the two neighbouring countries

should be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy.

The CPI also welcomed the BRICS countries' "unequivocal concern" over continuing violence in West Asia and their call for restraint, dialogue and an immediate ceasefire in

TMC symbol war: ECI asks factions for more documents

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Kolkata

After the first round of hearing on Saturday, the Election Commission of India has asked both factions of the Trinamool Congress to submit more documents on September 16, following which it would give a second round of hearing if required before finally deciding on which faction of the outfit would own the party symbol — twin flowers popularly known as ‘Ghaas Phool’.

The TMC vertically fell apart into two factions post its colossal defeat in this year’s Assembly elections. One group is led by former Chief Minister and founding leader of the party Mamata Banerjee, and the other group is led by present Opposition Leader



Ritabrata Banerjee.

While the Mamata Banerjee group, popularly known as the Kalighat faction, has about 20 members to its side, the Ritabrata faction commands the support of about 60 MLAs.

According to reports, the ECI has asked for submission of some more documents by October 16 from both sides, following which it would give a

second hearing, if required, on October 17 before deciding finally as to which faction should own the party symbol.

The ECI decision comes amid preparations for two Assembly by-elections for Nandigram and Rejinagar seats in Bengal. While Nandigram was vacated by Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari himself who had won

from Bhawanipore seat too in the recently conducted State polls, Rejinagar was vacated by breakaway TMC leader Aam Janata Unnayan Party chief Humayun Kabir.

Even as both sides exuded confidence of getting the ECI order in their favour, the Kalighat faction said that they would go ahead with filing the nomination for both the seats with the original ‘Ghaas Phool’ symbol. “As there is nothing specifically said by the ECI about this matter, we are going to file our nomination with Ghaas Phool... if the order goes against us then we will see what can be done,” a senior TMC leader and advocate said. The last date of submission of nomination for the by-elections was October 16.

Congress steps up attack on Punjab Govt over Gulzar Singh’s suicide

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chandigarh

Punjab Congress president Amrinder Singh Raja Warring on Sunday launched a fresh attack on the AAP Government over the alleged suicide of Gulzar Singh, claiming that those who raise their voice against the drug menace in the state are being “intimidated and silenced”.

He said that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann can no longer keep on blaming the previous regimes for the drug problem as his government was there now for almost five years.



Punjab Congress president Amrinder Singh Warring

Warring also said the Congress will hold a massive protest in Chandigarh under the leadership of party general secretary in-charge of Punjab, Sachin Pilot, to seek Finance Minister Harpal Cheema’s dismissal

and arrest in the suicide case. Gulzar, who hailed from Dirba in Sangrur, died on September 7 after allegedly consuming poison, with his family alleging that he was harassed and subjected to casteist slurs for questioning Cheema about the drugs in his area during an event.

Warring claimed that the incident was part of a wider pattern in Punjab where people questioning the government’s handling of the drug problem were being “targeted and intimidated”.

He said people are now seeking answers and are not prepared to listen to excuses.

Tejashwi slams Union Govt for stepmotherly attitude towards Bihar in providing flood relief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Patna

Bihar’s Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday accused the Centre of adopting a “stepmotherly” attitude towards the state in providing flood relief as he slammed Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary and Union ministers for “failing” to secure aid for people hit by the deluge.

More than 48 lakh people in 15 districts remained affected by the floods, even as waters have started to recede in most rivers. The worst-affected districts were Patna, Bhojpur, Saran, Vaishali, Bhagalpur, Begusarai, and Araria.

Addressing a press conference here, the RJD working president said, “Whenever

there are floods in Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi gives quick assurances of relief, talks to state leadership and directs deployment of relief forces, including the Indian Air Force. “However, there is a stepmotherly treatment towards Bihar, where he comes during election campaigns and eats ‘litti chokha,’” Yadav alleged.

Asserting that Bihar was among the states worst-hit by floods, the RJD leader said he wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 7, demanding that the floods be declared a “national disaster” and immediate financial assistance of Rs 5,000 crore be provided.

“Not doing anything for Bihar in 20 years, Amit Shah had asked for five more years



Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav addresses a press conference at his residence in Patna, Bihar on Sunday

before the state elections to stem flood-related vagaries. Let alone visiting Bihar during the floods this year, he hasn’t even talked about any assistance,” Yadav said.

“The engines of the ‘double-engine’ Government in Bihar have failed. I am not aware of

how often the chief minister talks to PM Modi, and wonder why he has not been able to secure central assistance. There are many Union ministers from Bihar, but none has the influence to bring central help to the state,” he said.

Yadav claimed he has not

received any response to the letters he wrote to Modi and Choudhary. “Just like the PM has ignored Bihar in times of flood, people will ignore him in the future,” he said.

The RJD leader alleged that the ruling NDA “bought votes” by distributing Rs 10,000 each to women ahead of the 2025 Bihar assembly elections, putting a strain on the treasury.

“Ahead of the floods in Bihar, in June, the state Government used contingency funds to pay social security pensions. The state’s treasury is almost empty. Now as floods are sweeping across Bihar, we are facing paucity of funds,” Yadav said.

The RJD leader highlighted former Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar’s promise that disaster-affected people would

have the first right on the resources of the state, which, he said, “now stood forsaken.

Taking a dig at Chirag Paswan, a Union minister whose Hajipur Lok Sabha constituency overlaps with his assembly constituency, Yadav said that “mere casual visits of flood-affected regions” won’t solve any problem.

“Chirag Paswan j visited the flood-affected region, which is a good thing. However, he should strive to get the Central Government to provide relief funds to Bihar. I also visited Raghupur several times to take stock of riverbank scouring, but since I am not part of either the state or the Central Government, my party has limited avenues for providing direct assistance,” he said.

When pointed out by a

journalist that Bihar CM Samrat Choudhary was not among the chief ministers who attended the BRICS Summit, the RJD leader quipped, “Perhaps he was not eligible to be invited. The invitees knew that he was there; he could have asked Putin not to become restless. If he could ask that to the speaker of the Bihar Assembly, then he could do it to anybody.”

Yadav was alluding to a 2021 showdown between the then assembly speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha and Samrat Choudhary, who was then a cabinet minister. Reacting to an intervention by the speaker, Choudhary had commented, “vyakul nahi hona hai” (there is no need to be restless”).



MP hooch tragedy: Wanted accused caught after encounter



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Sagar (MP)

A man wanted in connection with the hooch tragedy in Madhya Pradesh’s Sagar district that claimed 16 lives was apprehended after a brief encounter with police early on Sunday, officials said.

The 21-year-old accused, Shivanjay Rajput, who was carrying a bounty of ₹30,000, suffered a gunshot wound to his leg during the face-off, they said.

With this, the number of accused arrested in the spurious liquor consumption case has gone up to 19, police sources said, adding that FIRs have been registered against 30 persons.

Rajput allegedly fired three rounds at a police team during a search operation near Kathua Nala forest area under Bahrol police station. The security personnel fired two rounds in retaliation, hitting him in the leg, police said.

The accused was subsequently arrested and taken to

a hospital for treatment. His condition was stable, Sagar police control room in-charge sub-inspector RKS Chauhan told PTI over the phone.

Rajput, a resident of Chhapri village under Banda police station in Sagar, had been absconding since the spurious liquor incident earlier this month. He was involved in brewing the liquor, and a reward of ₹30,000 was offered for information leading to his arrest, according to police.

A country-made .315-bore pistol, three live cartridges, three empty cartridges, a mobile phone and a motorcycle were recovered from his possession, a police statement said.

Police received information early on Sunday that Rajput, who allegedly has three criminal cases registered against him and was previously involved in liquor smuggling, was in the forest near Kathua Nala and might pass through the Dhamoni-Bahrol road on his way home in Chhapri.

BMS unions slam bank strike as politically motivated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Strongly condemning the nationwide bank strike called on September 11, 2026, by banking organisations affiliated with the ‘INDIA’ alliance, banking unions affiliated with the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) — specifically the National Organisation of Bank Officers (NOBO) and the National Organisation of Bank Workers (NOBW) — have termed the agitation as “untimely, unnecessary, and politically motivated.”

In a joint press statement, NOBO and NOBW asserted that the strike prioritises



political considerations over national interest and public service. The unions highlighted that the timing of the strike coincides with the high-profile BRICS Summit hosted by India, where representatives and world leaders from

approximately 21 nations — representing roughly 41 per cent of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) — are gathering.

“At a time when the nation is showcasing its economic strength, financial stability, and global leadership, any disruption in banking services sends an unfortunate and avoidable message to the international community,” the joint statement issued by NOBO, NOBW, and BMS affiliates stated. The organisations alleged that anti-India banking outfits were staging the strike at the behest of their political masters to tarnish the country’s image globally.

Shivakumar accuses BJP of misusing Hindutva

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday accused BJP of using Hindutva for political purposes and alleged that money and materials donated for Ram Temple were misused, while attacking Union Government’s Ujjwala scheme over rise in LPG prices.

Speaking at the Congress office here during an event where some former BJP leaders joined the party, Shivakumar said Congress believed in serving people irrespective of their caste or religion. “Some people do this theatrically in the name of religion,” he said.

“They took the money



Karnataka CM DK Shivakumar meets state Bharat Scouts and Guides' Chief Commissioner and former Minister PGR Sindhya at Home Office

meant for Rama and misappropriated it. You sent bricks from here, you sent money, and they misused it. We will not do that.” Shivakumar said Congress’ welfare schemes were meant for people across communities and accused the BJP of unnecessarily crit-

icising the party’s five guarantees.

“Five guarantees? The BJP people are the ones who criticise them. They are the ones who say they are impossible. What, are only Congress people getting the benefit of the five guarantees?” he asked.

Bhopal reports first H1N1 death as cases surge to 65

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The state capital has reported its first death due to H1N1, commonly known as swine flu, this year, amid a sharp rise in infections over the past two weeks. An 80-year-old man, identified as Ram Singh, died at a private hospital after developing a severe respiratory illness along with H1N1 infection. He was also suffering from pre-existing health conditions, including heart disease, hypertension and Type-2 diabetes, which placed him in a high-risk category.

So far, 65 H1N1 cases have been reported in Bhopal this

year. Of these, 45 cases — nearly 70 per cent of the total — have been detected in just the past 12 days, indicating a significant recent increase in infections. At present, H1N1 testing in Bhopal is being carried out only at AIIMS, while routine testing facilities are yet to become operational at Gandhi Medical College.

Health authorities are prioritising testing for patients showing severe symptoms. So far, 232 patients with serious respiratory symptoms have been tested for the infection. Doctors have attributed the recent increase in respiratory illnesses to changing weather conditions, higher



humidity and cooler temperatures. Dr Lokendra Dave, superintendent of RIRD at Gandhi Medical College and a pulmonologist, said such conditions often lead to an increase in viral respiratory infections, including H1N1.

He said patients with influenza-like symptoms have been reporting to hospitals for nearly three months, but the current situation is not considered unusual or epidemic-like.

According to Dr Dave,

nearly 95% of influenza cases are self-limiting, and patients recover without serious complications. Not every person suffering from a cold, cough or fever requires an H1N1 test. Doctors decide whether testing is necessary based on the severity of symptoms, medical history and overall clinical condition.

However, elderly people and those suffering from heart disease, diabetes or other serious illnesses face a higher risk of complications. In some cases, influenza can lead to pneumonia and severe respiratory distress.

Patients experiencing breathlessness, falling

oxygen levels or rapidly worsening symptoms have been advised to seek medical attention immediately. Those developing hypoxia may require hospitalisation and intensive care support.

Doctors have also advised symptomatic patients to isolate themselves from others, take adequate rest and consume sufficient fluids. Wearing a mask and washing hands regularly can help reduce transmission.

Health experts have cautioned against self-medication and advised patients not to directly purchase medicines from pharmacies without consulting a doctor.



Editor's
TAKE

BRICS comes of age in New Delhi

BRICS summit demonstrated that the grouping's growing relevance lies not in a challenge to the West, but in its ability to bridge deep differences

When eleven leaders gathered at Bharat Mandapam on September 12-13 and unanimously adopted the New Delhi Declaration, the achievement lay less in what was said than in the fact that anything was agreed at all. Twenty years after BRICS foreign ministers first met in 2006, the grouping now runs from Brazil to Indonesia, accounting for roughly 40 per cent of world GDP and over a quarter of global trade. Getting Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE to sign one sentence on West Asia – agreeing only to voice regret over unprovoked hostility in general terms – took Sherpas working through the night. That the declaration survived intact rather than being watered down is itself evidence that BRICS is maturing.

The substance backs this up more than sceptics expected. Gone is talk of a single BRICS currency; in its place sits a narrower, more workable agenda – greater use of national currencies in intra-BRICS trade, interoperable cross-border payment systems, and early conversation on linking central bank digital currencies. This is de-dollarisation by increment rather than by declaration, and it is more credible for it. Alongside sits a familiar BRICS wishlist, now with more institutional backing: reform of the IMF, World Bank and UN Security Council to reflect where economic weight actually sits; a Partnership on the New Industrial Revolution pushing Industry 4.0 cooperation; a digital public infrastructure repository; and a shared, if vague, push for trustworthy AI governance that keeps rule-making out of Western hands alone. Counter-terrorism language – an India priority since the Pahalgam attack – was reinforced, alongside Delhi's own proposal for a Seafarers' Emergency Support Network: modest, but genuinely useful rather than symbolic.

The subplot mattered as much as the text. Xi Jinping's arrival – his first visit to India in seven years, with a delegation reportedly twice the size of his 2019 trip – turned the summit into cover for an India-China reset neither side could easily stage alone. That Modi and Xi could meet, agree their differences must not be allowed to harden into disputes, and still sit under one declaration alongside Washington's rivals and partners, is precisely the kind of ambiguity BRICS exists to hold.

Yet the caveats are real. BRICS still cannot agree on Ukraine, still has no enforcement mechanism for its own declarations, and still leans on studied vagueness to keep eleven governments with barely reconcilable worldviews inside one tent. China's economy still dwarfs the rest of the grouping combined, keeping alive the old question of whose bloc this really is. A single currency remains, sensibly, off the table.

What New Delhi has shown is not that BRICS has arrived as a rival to the G7, but that it has learned to do something more useful: hold together its own contradictions long enough to get practical work done. That is not dominance. It is maturity of a limited but real kind – and for now, it may be the only kind on offer.

NEP 2020: From promise to classroom reality

Six years after the National Education Policy 2020 was unveiled, India needs to look beyond enrolment numbers and infrastructure to ask a more fundamental question: has education actually become more equitable, creative and learner-centred? The answer will determine whether NEP's ambitious vision can translate into meaningful change in the classroom



JS
RAJPUT

Practically every learned deliberation on education today makes reference to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, its well-articulated mission, vision, objectives, and goals. In its second paragraph, the Policy refers to its being in total sync with the UN's global education development agenda, reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. The NEP 2020 also expects education to move towards "less content" and greater emphasis on learning how to think critically and solve problems. It asserts that learning must primarily focus on nurturing critical thinking and sharpening analytical skills. It then goes on to list several related expectations, taking note of the swift changes taking place all around us, particularly in areas such as data science and creativity, while emphasizing multidisciplinary, integrated, learner-centred, discussion-based, discovery-oriented, flexible, and enjoyable learning. Having been associated with education policy formulation and implementation for over five decades, one invariably recalls both the achievements and the persistent drags that have impeded the realization of stated goals in several areas.

Six years after the NEP 2020, an extensive yet swift national-level review would therefore be in order. Such a review could bring forth the corrections and strategic changes that are needed and, where necessary, even provide the basis for a fresh formulation of certain aspects of the Policy.

The positives have indeed been overwhelming. Beginning with a literacy rate of barely 12 per cent and extending educational access to more than 80 per cent in the face of a population increase of more than a billion, India's educational expansion is an unmatched achievement in the post-independence era. India successfully envisioned the future national needs and aspirations of its people and created institutions of higher learning. Yet, whenever large-scale and inevitable expansion takes place in any system-particularly in education-quality can suffer, as can work culture. This is one of the fundamental issues before the Indian education system and its policies today. The rise in enrolment in schools and universities, as well as the increase in the numbers of teachers required, deserves appreciation. But does this expansion necessarily indicate an enhancement of quality? It remains the constitutional responsibility of the State to ensure that everyone is included in education. Increased numbers are, therefore, fully justified



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The author is an educationist,
a Padma Shri awardee, and
works in religious amity and
social cohesion

as evidence of India's onward march towards becoming a fully literate nation. They also indicate that India is conscious of its rising population and the consequent responsibility to prepare it and ensure the benefits of the demographic dividend. Things are to be examined in light of the fact that a wide gap exists in the Indian education system that impedes the education of a large number of young persons because of their economic positioning. The challenge before the nation can therefore be understood through a fundamental question: Is India providing every learner with adequate opportunities to nourish and nurture talent, refine skills, and prepare to make creative contributions to society in every relevant area, including emerging sectors?

In an age when cognitive capital is increasingly taking precedence over fiscal capital, nurturing talent becomes one of the most valuable fundamental entitlements of every child. It is, obviously, a prime responsibility of a welfare state. Unfortunately, the condition of government schools, even after six years of NEP 2020 implementation, remains far from encouraging. These schools are often the only alternative available to those who stand 'last in the line'.

The media frequently report the persistent lack of basic amenities in government schools. Such reports, however, have increasingly become routine and rarely stir the conscience of those who have the authority and capacity to make a difference. Even minor positive changes are welcomed by the public. Teachers, for instance, have appreciated reports indicating that the proportion of schools with computer facilities rose from 57.2 per cent to 69.9 per cent, while those with internet facilities increased from 53.9 per cent to 67.4 per cent. Such increases are certainly welcome. One can only hope, however, that the computers are functional, that trained teachers are available to use them effectively, and, most importantly, that the facilities are genuinely accessible to every learner. Could schools also be authorized to extend the use of such facilities to children in the neighbourhood who may not be

enrolled in that particular school? Such an arrangement could become a small but highly meaningful step towards reducing the digital divide. The major concern before the nation is quality enhancement. One is reminded of what Albert Einstein observed more than a century ago: "To me the worst thing seems to be for a school principal to work (chiefly) with methods of fear, force and artificial authority. Such treatment destroys the sound sentiments, the sincerity and self-confidence of the pupil. It produces the submissive subject." Having seen and observed educational processes closely, one could argue that the visible change in this regard remains, at best, minimal. Einstein had something more to say about the purpose of education: "Personally, I never clutter up my memory with facts I can easily find in an encyclopaedia. One should never cram young minds with facts, names, formulae.... Education should be used only to teach young people to think and to give them this training, which no textbook can replace." The NEP 2020 is, in essence, reiterating the same fundamental principle when it calls for a shift towards critical thinking and analytical skills. The challenge is not in restating this principle on unmet occasions, but in translating it into everyday classroom practice.

The availability of essential financial and professional resources in government schools can provide children from weaker sections with opportunities that might otherwise remain beyond their reach. But resources alone cannot transform education. The teacher matters most. India has unmet examples of committed and competent teachers who have transformed their schools, often with little more than professional commitment, community goodwill, and local support, taking them to levels of achievement that were previously considered impossible.

From schools to higher education institutions, teachers are, at one stage or another, subjected to excessive bureaucratic control. For more than five decades, the creation of a much-needed professional cadre of educational administrators has remained a neglected requirement. The absence of professionally prepared educational administrators has serious consequences for educational governance, institutional autonomy, academic leadership, and accountability. The education system cannot be transformed merely through policy declarations. Nor can the objectives of NEP 2020 be realized simply by expanding enrolment, constructing infrastructure, distributing devices, or introducing new curricular frameworks.

Education policy implementation must ultimately translate into pragmatic practices in classrooms, outside the classrooms, in the shape of better institutional cultures, visible emphasis on values, empowered teachers, and improved learning outcomes.

Daiv Vani

WISDOM FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE

The Obstacle He Broke With His Own Hand

Today is Ganesha Chaturthi. Ganesha, the remover of obstacles, receives the first puja, invoked before any undertaking begins, so that the path ahead is cleared before the first step is even taken.

Yet the most striking story about him is not one where he clears an obstacle from someone else's path, but one where he becomes the obstacle-breaker in his own. When sage Vyasa sought a scribe to record the Mahabharata as it poured from him without pause, only Ganesha agreed, and on one condition: Vyasa must recite without ever stopping. Midway through the epic, Ganesha's pen broke. Rather than halting the sacred work, he snapped off his own tusk and continued writing, unwilling to let a personal loss interrupt something larger than himself. The obstacle that day was not external.

It was his own broken tool, his own incompleteness, easy to be embarrassed by, easy to pause over. Ganesha simply used what remained of himself, without hesitation, and kept writing. We often wait for obstacles to be cleared before we begin, wanting the right resources, the right conditions, our own limitations resolved first. Ganesha's example asks something braver of us, to keep moving with whatever we have, even if it means offering a broken, imperfect part of ourselves. This Ganesh Chaturthi, don't wait for every obstacle to disappear before you begin. Pick up your own broken tusk, whatever incomplete resource or ability you have, and start anyway.

The question Akhilesh Yadav must answer



BHAVESH
PANDEY

2ND OPINION

Akhilesh Yadav now speaks of protecting a journalist's right to ask questions. If a reporter cannot put a question, he says, a press conference should not be called a press conference at all; it should be called a "press monologue." The line is agreeable to the ear. The question it cannot evade is what the condition of journalists was when Akhilesh Yadav was Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. Did reporters then enjoy the full freedom to ask?

Were those who put the government to an uncomfortable question safe?

Did the conduct of the government and the party organisation towards the press, under the SP regime, resemble the speeches Akhilesh Yadav now delivers? One need not travel far back for an answer. Shahjahanpur in 2015, and the journalist Jagendra Singh, remain before Akhilesh Yadav



a question that no oration on press freedom can discharge.

The Burning Alive of Jagendra Singh and the Defence of the Accused Minister

In June 2015, Jagendra Singh, a journalist from Shahjahanpur, was burned alive in his home. His offence was that he had written persistently about allegations of illegal mining, land seizure and corruption linked to Ram Murti Singh Verma, then a minister in the SP government. The minister did not take the reporting kindly. The matter did not end there. While Jagendra Singh lay in hospital, fighting for his life, the minister's influence was again used to have him attacked in the hospital itself. Jagendra Singh later died. Thereafter Ram Gopal Yadav, the Samajwadi Party's national general secretary, went so far as to argue against the minister's removal from the Cabinet. It was not, he said, a matter large enough to require that a min-

ister be stripped of office.

Reporters Beaten at the Press Conference Called in Their Name

In Moradabad, Akhilesh Yadav held a press conference. Journalists attended. One of them put a question that was not to his liking. Akhilesh's supporters then began beating the reporters. Several were seriously injured. Stories of his anger towards journalists are not one but many. At times he brands them agents of another party; at times he asks their caste in order to humiliate them. At times he says openly that he will have them thrown out; that he will administer another kind of treatment; that he will have a throat cut with a sword.

A Lecture on Liberty Must First Answer a Record of Intimidation

If Akhilesh Yadav wishes today to speak of journalism, he must also attend to his own bearing. He must recall how he issued direct threats to reporters and levelled direct charges against them. What followed, in his government, when a question was asked is a question that must now be put to him. Pointing a finger at others will not absolve him of his own acts. If the values of journalism are to be invoked, the further question will arise: what, in fact, did you do to defend them?

The author is an advocate at the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court. He writes on political and social issues

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MP's liquor tragedy demands accountability

The deaths of 18 people after suspected consumption of illicit liquor in Sagar district have raised serious questions about the functioning of the administrative machinery in Madhya Pradesh. More than 80 people have reportedly been affected, while several arrests have been made and the State Government has suspended officials and ordered a judicial inquiry. But the larger question is how such a trade was allowed to continue despite allegations that the authorities were aware of its scale.

If illegal liquor was being sold openly and extensively, why were licences not cancelled and why was timely action not taken? The tragedy cannot be dismissed as merely a failure of law and order. The nexus between illicit liquor, administrative lapses and political influence must be examined impartially. Questions have also been raised about whether revenue considerations may have weakened enforcement. If officials or political actors knowingly facilitated the trade, they must be held accountable. A judicial inquiry should establish the facts without fear or favour. Families who have lost loved ones deserve justice, while those responsible must face the full force of the law.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

BRICS must turn consensus into actions

The adoption of the BRICS declaration despite differences among member countries over the West Asian conflict is a significant diplomatic achievement. It demonstrates that nations with divergent political and strategic interests can still find common ground on issues affecting global peace and stability.

The continuing violence in West Asia remains a matter of grave concern. Prolonged conflict can disrupt energy markets, international trade and supply chains while imposing an enormous humanitarian cost on civilians. The immediate priority must be to prevent further escalation and create conditions for meaningful dialogue and negotiations. India's policy of strategic autonomy, coupled with its consistent advocacy of dialogue and peaceful solutions, can make a constructive contribution to BRICS deliberations. New Delhi should continue to encourage restraint, respect for sovereignty and diplomatic engagement among the parties to the conflict. The declaration translates into meaningful action. BRICS has growing economic and political influence and can use its collective weight to promote dialogue, humanitarian cooperation and a more balanced international order. At a time of widening geopolitical divisions, the world needs diplomatic bridges rather than deeper confrontation.

RUKMA SHARMA | JALANDHAR

Ganesh Chaturthi: Protect the eEnvironment

Ganesh Chaturthi is among India's most cherished festivals, bringing together families and communities in devotion and celebration. Homes are decorated, modaks are prepared and Lord Ganesha is welcomed with joy. Yet, as the festivities begin, we must also ensure that our celebrations do not harm the environment. Many idols are made from plaster of Paris, plastic and thermocol, which do not dissolve easily and can pollute rivers, lakes and other water bodies during immersion. Artificial colours and chemicals can also damage aquatic ecosystems and affect fish and plants. Fortunately, celebrating responsibly does not require giving up tradition. Devotees can choose natural clay idols and decorate homes with flowers, leaves, diyas and reusable lights instead of plastic and thermocol.

Puja offerings can rely on natural materials such as fruits, coconuts, mango leaves, tulsi and flowers. Reusable bags can further reduce plastic waste. Home immersion in a bucket or suitable container is another practical alternative to immersing idols in natural water bodies. Every small step matters. By adopting eco-friendly practices, we can honour Lord Ganesha while protecting the rivers, lakes and natural world that future generations will inherit.

JUBEL D'CRUZ | MUMBAI

PICTALK



Women hold eco-friendly idols of Lord Ganesha ahead of Ganesh Chaturthi festival, in Bengaluru, Karnataka

PHOTO: PTI

Land justice cannot run on a 1908 clock

Land disputes are among India’s most enduring legal battles, often stretching across generations. The problem is not merely judicial delay. A land-justice system built around the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, is increasingly out of step with today’s digitised records, modern surveying technologies and the need for faster, more precise adjudication.



VIVEK KUMAR SINGH

India does not merely need faster courts for land disputes. It needs a different procedure for deciding them. Land and property disputes account for roughly two-thirds of all civil litigation in India. Behind these numbers lie disputes over boundaries, inheritance, sale deeds and possession that can become a family’s engagement with the courts for a generation. Land remains locked, investment is postponed and relationships deteriorate. By the time a decree arrives, possession may have changed, physical features may look different and original witnesses may no longer be available.

Judicial vacancies and heavy dockets are part of the explanation. But there is a deeper structural problem. The Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 still supplies the basic architecture for land litigation. The question is whether a general procedure devised more than a century ago should govern land disputes in substantially the same way when both landholding and the State’s capacity to identify land have changed dramatically.

The CPC came into force in a world without digitised Records of Rights, geo-referenced cadastral maps, satellite imagery, electronic registration databases or interoperable government records. Even where surveys and settlement records existed, establishing the identity, boundary, possession and history of a parcel could require painstaking reconstruction through paper registers, field measurement, local knowledge and oral testimony.

A procedure allowing commissioners, witnesses and substantial judicial discretion was therefore understandable. Facts that can now often be technically verified then had to be laboriously proved. There was yet another fundamental difference. The legal relationship between people and land in 1908 was not the same as it is today. British India did not have a uniform conception of individual, parcel-based ownership. Agricultural land in different provinces was governed by distinct revenue and tenancy regimes. From the Bengal Tenancy Act, 1885 and the Punjab Tenancy Act, 1887 to the tenancy regimes of Oudh, Agra and Chhota Nagpur, the law reflected a landscape in which rights could be distributed among zamindars or other intermediaries, tenure-holders, occupancy raiyats, tenants and actual cultivators.

Proprietary interest, possession, cultivation, rent liability and rights of transfer or succession did not necessarily vest in the same person. The CPC was therefore not designed as the procedural arm of a modern, integrated, parcel-based land-title system. Courts often had to reconstruct layered rights from settlement records, rent rolls, possession, custom and oral evidence. A slower and more elaborate fact-finding process had a historical logic.

Post-Independence Zamindari and many intermediary interests were abolished. Tenants and cultivators acquired stronger or more direct rights under different State laws. The relationship between the State, the recorded holder and the parcel became more direct. Land administration consequently became increasingly concerned with identifying the current legally sustainable claim to a defined parcel, rather than merely recording layered tenurial relationships. The information environment has been transformed. Computerised Records of Rights, digitised and increasingly georeferenced cadastral maps, computerised registration and digital survey technologies have changed what a court can know before oral evidence begins. But still, the procedural architecture through which such claims are adjudicated remains substantially rooted in 1908. Civil procedure can therefore begin where the old procedure often ended, i.e., with identification of the land. Every land suit may be accompanied at filing by a parcel dossier, the parcel identifier, current and historical Records of Rights, cadastral and, where available, georeferenced maps. Registered instruments can be relied upon, along with mutation history, relevant survey or settlement entries, and a concise statement of actual possession. At the first substantive hearing, the court ought to know what land is in dispute and whether the controversy principally concerns title, record, map, possession, inheritance, transaction or encroachment. That change could narrow litigation enormously. Today the true dispute may emerge only after pleadings, local inspections and cross-examination. A parcel-first procedure would require the controversy to be defined before it expands. The written statement should then have a real outer limit. In ordinary civil litigation, procedural deadlines have proved elastic.



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

POST-INDEPENDENCE LAND REFORMS ALTERED THAT LANDSCAPE PROFOUNDLY. ZAMINDARI AND MANY INTERMEDIARY INTERESTS WERE ABOLISHED. TENANTS AND CULTIVATORS ACQUIRED STRONGER OR MORE DIRECT RIGHTS UNDER DIFFERENT STATE LAWS. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STATE, THE RECORDED HOLDER AND THE PARCEL BECAME MORE DIRECT. LAND ADMINISTRATION CONSEQUENTLY BECAME INCREASINGLY CONCERNED WITH IDENTIFYING THE CURRENT LEGALLY SUSTAINABLE CLAIM TO A DEFINED PARCEL, RATHER THAN MERELY RECORDING LAYERED TENURIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The writer is an ex-IAS officer and is presently Chairman, RERA Bihar. He served as Principal Secretary, Department of Revenue and Land Reforms, Bihar

This is the first article in a three-part series on land reforms. The subsequent articles will be published over the coming week in this space.

Parliament has already accepted firmer discipline for commercial disputes. A citizen litigating over a home, farm or inherited plot has no lesser claim to timely justice.

Interim injunctions also require redesign. They are sometimes indispensable to prevent construction, alienation or destruction of the subject matter. But an interim order that survives for years becomes the practical allocation of property without adjudication. Land injunctions may therefore carry a review date and automatically trigger an accelerated schedule for deciding the core dispute.

The same logic applies to evidence. Oral testimony remains necessary where fraud, intention, oral partition, family arrangement or personal conduct is genuinely in issue. But objective facts can ordinarily be proved objectively. Boundaries ought to come primarily from authenticated maps and coordinates, registration history from official records, and physical change, where relevant, from reliable geospatial or time-stamped material.

The local commission could likewise become a technical exercise rather than a second trial. Neutral, trained survey personnel using prescribed reference points, modern equipment and digitally reproducible measurements can replace ad hoc reconstruction through conflicting private maps and oral identification. A court need not ask a commissioner to rediscover information the State has already surveyed and stored. Adjourments must carry consequences. In land litigation, delay itself can have economic value, and a party enjoying possession may benefit from elapsed time. Nominal costs do little to change behaviour.

Most importantly, a land decree must end the dispute. Under the present architecture, a successful litigant may spend years proving title and then begin another struggle to obtain possession. Record correction, map correction and delivery of possession can generate further proceedings before different authorities. A decree declaring ownership but leaving the successful litigant to separately fight for the land, the map and the record, is justice only on paper. A new land procedure should strive to integrate adjudication and execution. Once a decree becomes executable, consequential mutation, map correction and delivery of possession should flow from it through an electronic interface between the civil court and land administration.

This also requires a firmer jurisdictional line between civil courts and revenue authorities. Mutation and fiscal records should not provide parallel forums for re-litigating questions already decided by competent courts. Equally, routine record correction, survey discrepancies or map errors should not require a full civil trial where an effective revenue court can resolve them. Jurisdiction needs to follow the nature of the dispute.

None of this means replacing fairness with speed. Notice, hearing, cross-examination where necessary, appeal and judicial review remain essential. The reform required is for better-structured justice, fewer procedural stages, where facts can be objectively verified and stricter consequences built-in where delay is intentional. India has spent decades modernising its land records, while leaving the procedure for resolving land disputes anchored to an earlier informational age. That mismatch now needs correction. The case is, therefore, for more than just mere amendment to the CPC. Land disputes justify a specialised civil procedure. It must have parcel identification at its core and documentary evidence as the default.

Case-management timelines, limited interlocutory detours, clear civil-revenue jurisdiction and execution built into the decree itself, could further tighten the procedure. The test of a procedural law is not how long it survives, but how effectively it delivers justice under the conditions in which it operates. The CPC of 1908 responded to the land relations, records and technology of its time. India in 2026 has different land relations, vastly better land information and entirely different technological capacity. Its land justice system should finally reflect that change.

Modernise EV rules, preserve physical guardrails



RK MISRA

The draft notification retains key conditions for exemption, including motor power, maximum speed, braking, reflective fittings and motor cut-off behaviour. However, it drops another significant condition: unladen weight, previously capped at 60 kg for exempt vehicles. On the surface, this looks like a simplification. In practice, it removes a safeguard that matters.

The problem with power and speed alone

Defining low-speed EVs through motor power and top speed may seem logical. However, both of these are governed by software. An unscrupulous company or operator can tamper with a controller, bypass a speed limiter and unlock a motor’s power output without changing the vehicle’s physical components. Until now, India’s policy framework has anchored the exemption to a physical, difficult-to-manipulate specification: weight. Removing the weight ceiling eliminates a reliable enforcement proxy that regulators and traffic officials can use to distinguish compliant vehicles from illegal or tampered ones. Heavier E2Ws with more powerful motors increasingly resemble motorbikes rather than bicycles. Allowing unlicensed, unregistered riders to operate such vehicles could create safety challenges rather than solve them. In a country already facing a significant road-safety burden, removing a physical weight limit - whether 60 kg or another appropriate threshold - deserves careful consideration.



A weight limit cannot substitute for testing, certification and enforcement. But it can provide an additional, tamper-resistant layer of regulatory clarity.

Protecting inclusive mobility

The original intent of the low-speed EV exemption was to widen mobility access and enable people to pursue livelihood opportunities, particularly those who may not be able to afford conventional EVs or easily obtain a driver’s licence. This includes women and younger people entering mobility work for the first time. Without a weight ceiling, heavier vehicles with larger frames and dual-seat capacity could qualify for the same licence-free, registration-free exemption. That risks moving the category away from the specific use case it was designed to support. Feedback from women riders, in particular, highlights a practical advantage of lightweight vehicles: they are easier to manoeuvre, park and control in Indian traffic conditions. Heavier vehicles have an important role in the mobility ecosystem, but they serve a different purpose and user base. Regulation should, therefore, define exemptions around the vehicle type and the specific need they are intended to address.

The 60 kg limit is not a design constraint

Would retaining a 60 kg ceiling constrain innovation? Our experience suggests otherwise. Yulu’s fleet, designed in-house and manufactured with Bajaj Auto, is built within this exact limit and operates at scale across Indian cities today. It demonstrates that a well-engineered, world-class electric two-wheeler is possible within a 60 kg unladen weight ceiling. The 60 kg limit has not been an obstacle. Instead, it has encouraged manufacturers to engineer vehicles more intelligently while providing a clear physical boundary for the category.

A workable way forward

The real question is not whether 60 kg is sacred. It is: What physical safeguard should define the boundary of licence- and registration-exempt E2Ws? Regulators are considering other guardrails, including single-seat or no-pillion restrictions and physical verification at the point of sale. These are good ideas. But if the objective is to establish clear, objective and enforceable boundaries, they should complement a weight limit rather than replace it. As India’s EV sector grows, regulation must evolve with technology and new use cases. But modernising the rules should not mean discarding the guardrails that make them practical to implement. The goal should be a framework that gives innovation room to grow while keeping the boundaries of licence-exempt mobility clear, objective and enforceable.

The writer is co-founder of Yulu

Extradition: How India is closing the escape route for fugitives



SANJAY KUMAR JHA

For a long time, leaving India could mean putting the law on hold. Once an accused person crossed an international border, the case could disappear into diplomatic delays, unfamiliar legal systems and poor coordination between agencies. India’s extradition framework remained limited, with treaties covering only 37 countries. Between 2004 and 2013, the country extradited an average of just four fugitives a year while over a hundred requests remained pending. Crossing a border was therefore not simply a means of escape. It could become a way of buying time. Over the past decade, that equation has begun to change. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the pursuit of fugitives has steadily moved from the margins of criminal justice to the centre of national security policy. Once that political direction was established, the challenge shifted from intent to execution. It needed institutions that can sustain it, agencies that can work together and legal frameworks that can withstand scrutiny in foreign courts. It is here that Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s role deserves closer attention. Less as the face of individual extraditions and more as the chief architect of a

framework intended to make India’s pursuit of fugitives more systematic and credible.

The return of 274 fugitives from 36 countries between 2019 and July 2026 has understandably attracted public attention. But the number only tells part of the story. Every successful repatriation depends on a chain of institutions, police forces, intelligence agencies, courts and foreign governments working in sequence. If even one link weakens, the process stalls. The more meaningful question, therefore, is not how many fugitives have returned, but why India is now able to pursue them more consistently than before.

The answer lies in the Union Home Minister’s institution building. For years, India’s extradition system struggled with limited treaty networks, inconsistent documentation and poor inter-agency coordination. There was also no dedicated law to deal with economic fugitives and their assets. The Fugitive Economic Offenders Act of 2018 changed that, while from 2020 onwards, efforts to bring fugitives back was pursued in “mission mode.” The problem was structural and the architecture to address it did not emerge through one sweeping reform. It was assembled piece by piece. BHARATPOL, launched in January 2025, created a national platform for coordination and information-sharing with INTERPOL, connecting more than 1,400 units of central and state agen-



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

cies. Information sought by the CBI is now generally shared within 10 to 20 days, and in some cases within just 3 to 10 days. Operation Trishul added a technology-driven layer to fugitive tracking, using satellite inputs, surveillance and digital footprints to locate individuals who had changed their names or identities abroad. Neither change would have transformed India’s record on its own.

Together, however, they altered the way the system functions. INTERPOL Red Corner Notices have risen sharply with 401 notices issued against fugitive criminals over the last three years. Extradition requests are now prepared in a more professional and standardized manner, with written assurances tailored to the documentary requirements and legal expectations of indi-

vidual countries.

A Standing Focus Group within the Intelligence Bureau’s Multi-Agency Centre was constituted in January 2026 to prioritise fugitive cases, standardize dossiers and maintain follow-up with foreign partners.

Legislative reforms, including provisions for trial in absentia under Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, mean that remaining outside India need not automatically bring judicial proceedings to a halt. Individually, these may look like administrative or legal measures. Collectively, they represent a significant re-engineering of how India pursues fugitives beyond its borders. It is worth remembering that extradition is among the most demanding forms of international cooperation. Foreign courts are not obliged to accept India’s case because New Delhi considers someone guilty. Every request must satisfy the legal standards of another sovereign jurisdiction. Every document is scrutinized. Every procedural lapse can become grounds for delay. This is why institutional capacity matters so much. It is also why Shah’s emphasis on professionalising extradition requests, improving coordination and deepening engagement with INTERPOL matters beyond the politics of any individual case.

The implications extend beyond the return of

individual criminals. Whether the accused are terrorists, organized crime figures or economic offenders, every successful extradition strengthens the credibility of the Indian state. The financial dimension matters too. Between 2019 and 2026, assets worth ₹17,874 crore belonging to fugitive criminals were attached, while ₹18,762 crore was restituted in cases involving fugitive economic offenders. It tells financial offenders that geographical distance is no longer the insurance policy it once appeared to be.

Cases such as the extradition of Tahawwur Hussain Rana are important not only because of the individual involved, but because they demonstrate the patience, diplomatic engagement and legal persistence that modern extradition demands. The 274 returns include fugitives wanted in cases ranging from murder and organized crime to terrorism, narcotics, sexual offences and financial crimes. Under Prime Minister Modi, extradition acquired political priority and under Union Home Minister Amit Shah, it acquired institutional shape. The achievement, therefore, is not merely that more fugitives have returned to India. It is that the Indian state has begun building the capacity to ensure that crossing an international border is no longer seen as the easiest way to outrun Indian law.

The author is a former Special Director General of Police, Madhya Pradesh.



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Order Order

Justice V Kameswar Rao takes oath as chief justice of Patna HC



Justice V Kameswar Rao was sworn in as the chief justice of the Patna High Court on Sunday by Bihar Governor Syed Ata Hasnain. The oath-taking ceremony at the Lok Bhavan was attended by Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary and other dignitaries.

Born on August 7, 1965, Justice Rao did his graduation with honours in Geography and LLB from Delhi University in 1987 and 1990, respectively. He was enrolled as an advocate in March 1991 with the Bar Council of Delhi and practised in the Supreme Court, Delhi High Court, and Central Administrative Tribunal's principal bench in New Delhi. He was designated a senior advocate by the Delhi High Court in 2010. He was elevated as an additional judge on August 17, 2013 and became a permanent judge on March 18, 2015. He completed his law course from Delhi University.

In June 2024, Justice Rao was transferred to the Karnataka High Court, where he also served as its acting chief justice before his return to Delhi in July 2025. (PTI)

Delhi HC to pass order on Vimal Elaichi makers' plea



The Delhi High Court will pass on Monday its order on the point of jurisdiction to entertain a plea by makers of Vimal Elaichi seeking to quash show-cause notices issued to their brand ambassadors, Shah Rukh Khan, Ajay Devgn and Tiger Shroff, by the Maharashtra FDA for alleged misrepresentation of the product in their advertisement.

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma, who has reserved the order on the issue whether the Delhi High Court has territorial jurisdiction to hear the matter, is scheduled to deliver the order on September 14. In its petition, PB Agro LLP said it engages services of reputed actors for promotion of the cardamom product under the brand Vimal and its endorsement agreements with them, and the company assures that the advertisement campaign is in full compliance of the applicable laws.

It said regulatory notices were issued by the Maharashtra Food and Drug Administration (FDA) alleging that advertisements for Vimal Elaichi amount to surrogate promotion of Vimal Pan Masala, a chewable product banned within Maharashtra. The plea said the Maharashtra FDA had directed the actors featured in Vimal Elaichi advertisements to provide documentation demonstrating that Vimal Elaichi is a product different from banned pan masala products. It also called for a halt on the promotional campaign and for the withdrawal of related materials from digital platforms.

The counsel representing the petitioner had argued that the August 11, 2026 FDA notice was sent only to the actors and not to the company itself despite the fact that the company alone is going to suffer irreparably due to any action taken by the state regulator. (PTI)

Delhi court convicts parents for abandoning premature, vulnerable infant

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A Delhi court has convicted a couple for abandoning their premature and medically vulnerable infant in a hospital, rejecting their contention that leaving the infant in a specialised medical facility showed an intention to provide treatment rather than abandon her.

Additional Sessions Judge Sunil Kumar convicted Hareena Ray alias Reena and her husband Jeetu Kumar under Section 317 (exposure and abandonment of child under 12 years by parent or person having care of it) read with Section 34 of the IPC.

Under IPC Section 317, the punishment for exposing or abandoning a child under the age of 12 years by a parent or caretaker is imprisonment for up to seven years, a fine, or both. In an order dated



September 10, the court said, "The circumstances proved on record, when appreciated cumulatively, establish the act of leaving the child was accompanied by the requisite intention of wholly abandoning her, which is the essential ingredient of Section 317 IPC."

The court noted that the girl was born prematurely at Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital on December 12,

Noida NSA case: Allahabad HC ruling sparks debate on bureaucratic accountability and citizen rights



RANJIT KUMAR SINHA

The Allahabad High Court delivered a judgment with far-reaching consequences on September 2, 2026. Five days later, the details of the verdict were made public. The judgment related to the slapping of the National Security Act (NSA) on an activist who held widespread protests demanding better wages, fair hours, and basic living conditions for garment and industrial labourers in Noida (Gautam Buddha Nagar) in April 2026.

The verdict quashed the NSA detention order against a Delhi University woman student and directed that ₹5 lakh in compensation be recovered from the salary of the Gautam Buddha Nagar (Noida) District Magistrate and other responsible officers.

The student, a 24-year-old history graduate and activist, was jailed. The Uttar Pradesh Police and Gautam Buddha Nagar District Magistrate accused her of conspiring to incite violence and slapped the stringent NSA—a preventive detention law—against her.

The High Court reviewed the case and found zero evidence or video proof showing that she incited violence or rioting. The court noted that the police dossier contained only speculative opinions, and the District Magistrate signed off on the detention casually without applying her mind.

The two judges also caught discrepancies, proving the police fabricated official paperwork to show a later arrest date to cover up detaining her early. Calling the detention a "sham," the High Court ordered her release and ruled that the compensation money must be paid directly out of the pockets (salaries) of the DM and the responsible police officers.

The detailed written verdict made public on September 7-8, 2026, revealed the High Court's strict warnings against arbitrary bureaucratic overreach.

Now, the Uttar Pradesh Government has announced it will challenge the judgment. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta stated in the Supreme Court on September 9, 2026, that the authorities are filing an appeal against the High Court's decision to quash the NSA detention and penalise the Noida district officials.

The Supreme Court acknowledged the submission, paving the way for the formal challenge to be heard



in the coming days. Since it was only an oral mention by the top law officer, the High Court judgment remains in operation until any order is passed by the SC.

The hearing in the SC will be watched closely, and it remains to be seen whether the State succeeds in getting a stay order or if the SC prefers a detailed hearing before giving a final verdict.

Though the focus has shifted to the Supreme Court, the High Court's directions will impact governance. Whether the High Court judgment is ultimately sustained or not, it has sent a strong message to the bureaucracy and police administration.

Across the country, law enforcement agencies and authorities will have to think twice before slapping stringent provisions of law and arresting citizens. This High

Court judgment is a wake-up call for executives and the police administration at a time when the country is witnessing protest movements on several pressing issues.

Further, the findings of the High Court are a strong reminder. There must be a clear boundary between administrative action and political directives. Law enforcement and bureaucrats must remain neutral and never act merely on political pressure. Authorities cannot abuse preventive detention laws anymore or jail young citizens without solid proof.

Beyond high-handed detentions, this principle of personal accountability holds immense significance for a broader spectrum of administrative apathy and governance failures. From tragic

urban infrastructure disasters like sudden building collapses, bridge failures, and waterlogging deaths to systemic civic negligence in public health and safety, civil servants routinely escape liability behind the shield of institutional immunity.

When bureaucrats and municipal authorities turn a blind eye to corruption, illegal constructions, and safety violations, ordinary citizens pay the ultimate price. Extending personal financial liability and strict judicial scrutiny to everyday administrative negligence can force officials to take their statutory duties seriously.

This High Court judgment on the Noida incident underscores a critical systemic evolution in institutional checks and balances. The apex court will examine the reasoning of the High Court judgment threadbare, but the High Court's directive will remain a strong reminder for all government departments.

Administrative bodies across the country handle massive workloads every day. Officers process thousands of files, project approvals, and safety clearances. Often, speed overtakes careful verification. When systems rush to meet targets or follow informal pressure, corners get cut.

This creates gaps in governance. Simple oversights can turn into major civic failures, whether in public safety,

urban planning, or law enforcement. A culture of caution is vital. Officials must review every file with personal care and independent thought.

Hopefully, broader guidelines will evolve from the Supreme Court. Clear rules help everyone. They protect honest officers who want to do their jobs right. At the same time, clear frameworks stop arbitrary actions against citizens.

Good governance requires a delicate balance. Officials need the freedom to implement public policy effectively. Yet, that freedom must never cross into carelessness or unfair targeting.

When courts set clear boundaries, it helps build a healthier administrative culture. Bureaucrats learn to value due process above all else. Ultimately, strong accountability safeguards democracy and protects the rights of every ordinary citizen.

The final fate of this Noida case rests with the apex court. No matter what the Supreme Court decides, the core message remains clear: bureaucrats and law enforcement personnel will be held personally accountable for bad faith actions, systemic apathy, and administrative failures.

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

Noida DM moves SC against Allahabad HC order reprimanding her

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Gautam Buddh Nagar District Magistrate (DM) Medha Roopam has moved the Supreme Court against an Allahabad High Court order which directed that a compensation amount of ₹5 lakh be deducted from her salary over the detention of a student under the National Security Act during the Noida workers' protest in April.

On September 2, the high court quashed the detention of Akriti Chaudhary, a 25-year-old Delhi University history graduate, who was taken into custody under the National Security Act in



connection with the Noida workers' protest in April.

Allowing Chaudhary's habeas corpus petition challenging her arrest, the high

warranted in any other case. It had strongly criticised the manner in which the detention order was passed by Roopam and warned that continued "despotic" conduct by "errant" bureaucracy could reduce Uttar Pradesh to an Orwellian dystopia.

It also awarded ₹5 lakh compensation to Chaudhary and directed that the amount be recovered from the salary of Roopam, who passed the detention order, as well as other officers responsible right down to the SHO.

On September 9, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the Supreme Court that an

appeal would be filed against the high court decision quashing the detention order. Chaudhary was arrested in connection with cases arising from the Noida workers' protest in April 2026 and the Uttar Pradesh Police subsequently invoked the NSA against her and activist-journalist Satya Verma on May 13.

They were among several activists arrested in cases relating to the peaceful protest seeking higher wages.

In the order, the high court also made several significant observations on the roles of the bureaucracy and the police. It said officers are

entrusted with immense powers because they bear responsibility for upholding the constitutional and legal rights, dignity, honour and welfare of citizens.

However, the court stressed that bureaucrats must remember that their "loyalty is towards the constitution and not the political executive". It further said that officers are servants who serve the people, who are "the masters in a democracy".

It directed that the High Court's displeasure against the DM and police officers involved in preparing the dossier be recorded in their service records. (PTI)

SC asks murder accused to be produced in court after victory procession over bail

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Taking a stern view of a murder accused taking out a "victory procession" on being granted bail by the high court, the Supreme Court has directed Haryana Police to produce him before the court.

A bench of justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta also recorded in its order that despite a non-bailable warrant being issued against the accused, he has not been produced in custody.

It took note of the submission of counsel for the complainant that the accused, Vishal, had taken out a "victory procession" after being granted bail by the Punjab and Haryana High Court and had threatened



witnesses.

On September 8, when the matter was taken up for hearing, the bench noted that the accused was represented through his counsel.

The bench directed the

accused to surrender and then seek bail, pulling him up for taking out the "victory procession" on being granted bail.

"We will hear you once you surrender and then seek bail.

Taking out a victory procession on bail is not right," it said.

The bench noted that the non-bailable arrest warrant issued in August has not been executed and the accused

has not been arrested by the police. It added that the warrant could not be executed for reasons which the court was not going into at present.

"However, we direct the superintendent of police, district Charkhi Dadri, Haryana to ensure that a non-bailable warrant is executed and respondent no 2 is produced before this court on the next date, which is being fixed as September 21, 2026," the top court ordered. It directed the registry to forward a copy of the order be forwarded to the SP within 24 hours by email and other modes.

The high court granted bail to the accused in the murder case on April 23.

The incident took place on October 27, 2022, following

which Vishal was arrested and kept in custody for over three years.

The altercation between the accused and family members of complainant, Rajbala, took place after Vishal allegedly started constructing tin sheds on a disputed plot of land.

During one heated exchange, Vishal allegedly hit several people with lathi and axe, grievously injuring several persons belonging to the complainant's side, one of whom died.

The high court rejected the bail petition of Vishal four times but accepted it the fifth time after it was pointed out that material witnesses have been examined in the case and he has spent over three years in custody. (PTI)

Insurer ordered to pay ₹8.06 cr to Swiss firm subsidiary in 2019 fire claim dispute

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Seven years after a blaze destroyed the customs bonded warehouse of Victorinox India Pvt Ltd, a subsidiary of a Switzerland-based firm, a consumer commission here has directed an insurance company to pay over ₹8.06 crore for unfairly repudiating its fire insurance claim. The company's legitimate claim was rejected "solely on technical ground in a mechanical manner," the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission held in its order passed on September 2.

The complainant firm is a wholly owned subsidiary of Switzerland-based Victorinox AG. It deals with export, import and distribution of travel bags, knives, luxury



watches, cutlery and other consumer products manufactured by its parent company in India. The firm had taken a Standard Fire & Special Perils Policy from New India Assurance Company.

"The insurance company's repudiation based solely on procedural non-compliance, in the absence of any substantive disagreement or

fraudulent intent, was legally unsustainable," the consumer panel remarked.

The insurer thus adopted an unfair trade practice and committed a deficiency in providing service to the complainant, Victorinox India, the commission said.

As per the complaint, a huge fire broke out on February 16, 2019, at the firm's custom bonded warehouse – a secure, government-regulated storage facility where imported goods can be held.

The complainant said that all immediate and prompt measures were taken by the staff present at the warehouse to douse the fire.

However, as the fire raged on, services of the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) Fire Services were sought.

FROMTHE

WORLD

NEPAL

Army chief visits China

Nepal Army chief Ashok Raj Sigdel left for Beijing on Sunday on a week-long official visit to China at the invitation of the Chinese Government, during which he will attend the 13th Beijing Xiangshan Forum, according to an official statement. Sigdel is scheduled to be in China from September 13 to 19, the Nepal Army headquarters said in an official statement. The visit is expected to strengthen military ties between Nepal and China and contribute to Nepal's foreign policy through military diplomacy, the army said. Pradeep Jung KC, the Chief of Staff of the Nepal Army, will assume charge as acting chief of the Nepal Army during Sigdel's absence. The 13th Beijing Xiangshan Forum will be held from September 15 to 17 at the Beijing International Convention Centre. (PTI)

INDONESIA

130 missing in shipreck

Indonesian rescuers say about 130 passengers and crew are missing after a ferry carrying more than 240 people sank in bad weather in the Java Sea on Sunday. At least 107 people were rescued and the bodies of six passengers were recovered as the search operation expanded in waters around the vessel's last known position. The ferry was travelling from Surabaya in East Java to Banjarmasin in South Kalimantan province, officials said. The vessel's captain had earlier reported rough seas with waves up to 10 feet before issuing a distress message, saying the ship was listing, said I Putu Sudayana, who heads Banjarmasin Search and Rescue Office. Authorities later received information indicating the vessel had overturned and then sunk. (AP)

Houthis claim new attacks on Saudi Arabia

SAMY MAGDY ■ Cairo

Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen overnight claimed new attacks on neighbouring Saudi Arabia, as Yemen's Saudi-backed government described the rebels' swift advance along the Red Sea coast as a "painful" development in a new front in the Iran war. The Houthis' capture of a key port city and an island on the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a crucial shipping alternative to the Strait of Hormuz, in recent days has alarmed markets and Yemeni civilians who fear a return to devastating civil war. Overnight, the Houthis claimed more attacks with missiles and drones on Saudi Arabia, which supports Yemen's internationally recognised government that's been fighting the rebels. A Houthi military spokesperson,



Yemeni Houthi rebels keeping weapons in their hand during a mobilization campaign in Sanaa, Yemen on Sunday. AP

Brig Gen Yahya Saree, claimed in a statement that they targeted a military base in Sharurah province in Saudi Arabia's Najran region. He didn't provide evidence or say when the attack occurred. The Saudi civil defence overnight said a projectile fell in al-Tawwal governorate near the border with Yemen along the Red

Sea, injuring two people and damaging a mosque and several other buildings. The statement blamed the Houthis. It also said sirens went off in Sharurah province but didn't report casualties or damage. There was no Saudi statement on Sunday on any new attacks targeting the Houthis, who have been hitting Saudi oil infrastructure and shipping as part of a recently declared blockade. While the rebels have said there is no threat to other commercial shipping, markets remain wary, and oil prices have risen again. A senior government official in Yemen said its forces will return to the Red Sea coast and fight back, after people fleeing the Houthi advance told The Associated Press they saw forces withdrawing and urging people to run. Sultan al-Arada, a member of

the ruling presidential council, described the collapse of government forces in the port city of Mokha and elsewhere on Yemen's west coast as "painful and regrettable." Al-Arada, also governor of central Marib province, said in the televised interview aired late Saturday that forces "are currently regrouping and will return to the battle in one form or another." On Friday, a senior military official with Yemen's internationally recognised government blamed "lack of coordination" between Yemen's army and multiple allied militias, saying it gave the Houthis "a priceless opportunity." The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't allowed to speak to the media, also said they were stunned that the Saudi air force didn't act to prevent the capture

of Mokha, about 80 kilometres from the strait. The rebels' rapid advance has been a major setback both to Yemen's internationally recognised government and Saudi Arabia, which have been battling the Houthis for 12 years. The latest escalation threatens a 2022 cease-fire. The advance also puts the Iran-backed rebels just 32 kilometres from the US military base in Djibouti, on the other side of the Bab el-Mandeb. It's the main US base in Africa and one of several foreign military bases in Djibouti, including those of China, France and Japan. The small Horn of Africa nation is already seeing the arrival of Yemenis making the perilous crossing of the strait. More than 2,000 people have reached Djibouti, the International Organisation for Migration said Sunday. (AP)

Iranian commercial ship hit near Strait of Hormuz



ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Cairo

An Iranian commercial vessel was struck early Sunday off Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz, with one person killed and four wounded, Iranian state media said, a day before Tehran seeks to brief regional countries on its contested efforts to manage shipping traffic there. State-run IRNA news agency quoted the Qeshm governor as blaming a "terrorist enemy." He also said the person killed was among the cargo vessel's 10-member crew, and that authorities had not yet identified the projectile. Separately, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations monitor reported a vessel was hit by a projectile while transiting the strait, later adding that a fire had broken out and local authorities were evacuating those on board. There was no immediate comment by the US military, which previously has struck Iranian-flagged vessels as it keeps up a blockade of Iranian ports -- while facing a new threat in recent days from Iranian ballistic

missiles launched at its warships. Qeshm Island, located about 22 kilometres from the port city of Bandar Abbas, is key to Iran asserting control over traffic through the strait. Hours before the attack, Iran's government remained defiant. "Our people can't be bullied into submission. Iran won't surrender," President Masoud Pezeshkian said in a US-aimed social media post. Monday's meeting returns regional attention to the Strait of Hormuz days after Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen applied new pressure to a key shipping alternative, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait at the southern end of the Red Sea. While the Houthis say they are targeting only neighbouring Saudi Arabia, which backs Yemen's internationally recognised government fighting the rebels, markets are wary. Global prices of oil, natural gas and related products have been sent even higher. Commercial ship traffic remains low on the Strait of Hormuz as attacks continue on what was seen as an international waterway before the US and Israel launched the war on February 28.

India sends Bailey bridge components to flood-hit Nepal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kathmandu

India has sent the first consignment of components for a 70-metre Bailey bridge to Nepal to help restore connectivity in the flood-affected Betrawati area, the Indian envoy in Kathmandu said. The consignment was handed over to Nepal's Road Division in Hetauda on Saturday, India's Ambassador to Nepal Naveen Srivastava said in a post on X, adding that more consignments of the bridge components would arrive in the coming days. "This

bridge will help restore connectivity in Betrawati area that was affected by the recent flash flood in Nepal," the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu said in a post on X on Saturday. A Bailey bridge is a portable, pre-fabricated modular steel truss bridge that can be assembled quickly by hand without needing heavy machinery or special tools. The latest assistance on Saturday is part of India's ongoing humanitarian support to Nepal following the devastating flash floods that struck the northern and central regions of the



India has sent a first consignment of components for a 70-metre Bailey bridge to Nepal

Himalayan nation on August 26, killing nearly 1,400 people and leaving more than 5,000 missing as of Sunday. India has sent more

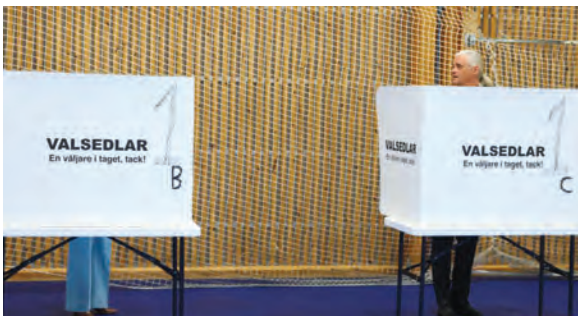
than 130 tonnes of relief material and deployed 54 expert personnel to support Nepal's rescue, relief and forensic operations, accord-

ing to the Ministry of External Affairs. New Delhi has also provided specialised tunnel and mud-rescue equipment, DNA kits and forensic equipment, along with essential supplies such as temporary shelters, blankets, hygiene kits, solar lamps and medicines. The Indian Air Force has operated at least eight special flights to deliver relief supplies, while an Indian tunnel rescue team has been working with the Nepal Army in search operations and a forensic team has been assisting Nepali authorities in identifying the mortal remains of victims.

Swedish voters go to elections to choose new parliament as hard right bids for role in Govt

KOSTYA MANENKOV ■ Stockholm

Voters in Sweden will head to the polls on Sunday for an election that will determine whether a conservative leader remains in charge and a hard-right party wins ministerial jobs for the first time, or whether the centre-left returns to power. Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson is seeking a second four-year term at the helm of the European Union nation that is also NATO's newest member. Meanwhile, his predecessor hopes to win the job back. Experts say the campaign has been fragmented



and incoherent, with policy questions such as how healthcare should be organised drowned out by questions about which parties will be able to put together a government. "Crime has come down, inflation has come down. So

these topics are not really what people discuss," said Zeth Isaksson, a sociologist in electoral behaviour at Stockholm University and a political scientist at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. "People discuss who is going

to be in government, and that's what the election is about." Kristersson has led Sweden since 2022 with a three-party centre-right coalition. It relies on outside support from the Sweden Democrats, an anti-immigration party that has far-right roots but has moved toward the political mainstream, for a parliamentary majority. If the right is reelected, it can expect Cabinet posts this time. He's up against Magdalena Andersson of the centre-left Social Democrats, a party that more often than not has led Swedish governments since World War II. (AP)

Pak PM to meet Donald Trump on sidelines of UNGA on September 23



Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif

SAJJAD HUSSAIN ■ Islamabad

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is scheduled to meet US President Donald Trump on September 23 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session, according to a media report. The US president and First Lady Melania Trump will host a reception dinner for heads of state and government attending the UNGA at the Lotte New York Palace Hotel on Madison Avenue on the evening of September 23. The News reported on Sunday, citing high-level sources, that Sharif has received an invitation to the dinner, which will be attended by several world leaders. The gathering will provide him an opportunity to interact with other heads of state and government as well, sources told the publication. Sharif's meeting with Trump would be their latest face-to-face interaction since the inaugural Board of Peace meeting in Washington in February. The two leaders had also met at the White House in September 2025 and at the Sharm el-Sheikh Peace Summit in Egypt in October last year. Sharif is scheduled to land in New York a day before the reception dinner and is scheduled to address the UN General Assembly on September 25. In his address, the Pakistan prime minister is expected to raise the issue of India's putting the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, sources said. The 1960 Indus Waters Treaty, brokered by the World Bank, governs the sharing and use of the waters of the Indus river system's six rivers by India and Pakistan. India put the treaty in abeyance in April 2025 after the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 civilians were killed, saying it would remain so until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably ended its support for cross-border terrorism. Islamabad has denied involvement in the attack and rejected India's allegations. (PTI)

2 killed as Ukraine, Russia exchange drone strikes

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Kyiv

Civilians were killed and injured overnight as Russia and Ukraine continued to attack each other with waves of drones. Two people were killed in Russia's Tatarstan, according to local officials, while Ukrainian authorities reported Russian drone attacks on the Black Sea port of Odesa and a fire near a border crossing with Poland. Russia has ramped up its air campaign in recent weeks, using ballistic missiles and jet-powered drones to pierce Ukraine's defences and capitalise on Kyiv's dwindling stock of missile interceptors. Moscow's attacks have targeted Ukraine's power grid ahead of winter in what offi-



cials say is meant to demoralise civilians. Two people were killed and 12 more injured on Sunday as Ukrainian drones struck Nizhnekamsk, a city in Tatarstan, according to the office of regional head Rustam Minnikhanov. The two civilians died after a drone slammed into a tree near their parked car, the statement said.

Nizhnekamsk houses a key cluster of oil refineries and petrochemical, rubber and polymer plants, including some of Russia's largest facilities of their kind. Mayor Radmir Belyaev said that a fire had broken out "at one of the city's enterprises," without giving details. Ukraine's recent long-range strikes have targeted Russia's

oil and gas industry, which Kyiv says both funds and directly fuels its war on Ukraine. The Ukrainian drone campaign has caused fuel rationing across Russia, despite the country being a key oil and gas exporter. Other Ukrainian strikes targeted major Russian online retailers, bringing the war ever closer to the public. Ukraine also claimed on Sunday to have hit a major oil refinery in Sloviansk-on-Kuban, in Russia's Krasnodar region, across from Crimea. The Defence Intelligence of Ukraine (DIU) agency said its drones struck a key oil processing unit and the refinery's tank farm overnight, sparking a massive blaze visible from dozens of kilometres (miles) away.



INS Sudarshini, set sail from Livorno, Italy, on completion of a successful port call.

PTI

Nepal flood to cost estimated \$4.7b in recovery and reconstruction needs: Govt report

SHIRISH B PRADHAN ■ Kathmandu

Nepal's recent devastating flash flood has led to an estimated \$ 4.7 billion in recovery and reconstruction needs, according to a government-led assessment. The Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) for the Rasuwa-Bhotekoshi Flood 2026, released by the government on Saturday, estimates a total damage of around \$2.7 billion, with physical damage at \$1.81 billion and economic losses at \$883.32 million. The assessment, led by Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority, said the larger recovery figure does not represent simply the cost of



replacing what was damaged. Recovery needs include reconstruction as well as disaster-risk reduction and resilience measures. The RDNA covers Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Dhading, Gorkha and

Chitwan districts and combines sector submissions, administrative records, satellite imagery, drone surveys, geospatial data and census information. Where direct inventories were incomplete, the

assessment used estimates based on mapped exposure, statistical relationships and costing assumptions. Flash floods, triggered by an ice-rock avalanche in the high Himalayas near the Nepal-Tibet border on August 26, devastated towns and villages in northern and central Nepal, killing around 1,400 people, while more than 5,000 remain missing. The Bhotekoshi River, which flows south from the Himalayan border region, carried the floodwaters downstream, sweeping away homes, vehicles, roads and bridges and damaging hydropower projects. The assessment estimates energy-sector physical damage at \$889.21 million and economic losses at \$107.91 million. It also

estimates an annual hydropower generation loss of 2,520 GWh. The report cautions, however, that generation baselines, outage periods and other assumptions require further verification. Infrastructure accounts for 65.47 per cent of total recovery needs. The road assessment records 69 km of damaged road, with 55 km on the Betrawati-Rasuwa section classified as completely damaged and 14 km across other assessed sections classified as partially damaged. Road recovery needs are estimated at \$364.28 million. The assessment said the immediate road-recovery programme includes debris clearance, reopening tracks, temporary

diversions, alternative-route maintenance and emergency slope and bank protection. The report also records 68 affected trail bridges, with a combined length of around 10,671 metres. It cautions that a crossing register is needed to resolve geographic inconsistencies and substantiate repair and reconstruction costs. The devastating floods damaged 37 motorable bridges completely. The assessment includes \$625.52 million for disaster-risk reduction. This is a recovery provision rather than an additional estimate of damage. It includes \$2.31 million for a multi-hazard early-warning system and \$623.21 million for longer-term works. (PTI)

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FPIs withdraw ₹13,138 crore from equities in September

Foreign investors pulled out ₹13,138 crore from Indian equities in the first half of September, as heightened global uncertainty pushed crude oil prices higher, while rising US bond yields and a firm dollar weighed on risk appetite.

The latest outflow comes after Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) turned net buyers in July and August, infusing ₹20,200 crore and ₹29,630 crore, respectively, according to data from the Central Depository Services (India) Ltd (CDSL).

Before that, FPIs remained net sellers for four consecutive months from March to June.

With the latest withdrawal, the total outflow from Indian equities by FPIs has climbed to ₹2.37 lakh crore so far in 2026, surpassing the ₹1.66 lakh crore withdrawn during the entire year 2025, the data showed. According to NSDL data, FPIs withdrew Rs 13,138 crore from Indian equities in the first two weeks of September, till September 11.

Vedant Gupta, Co-Founder and CEO of investment platform Trackx, said the September selling was driven more by global factors than domestic concerns. (PTI)

Jindal steel earns Guinness World record for slag road

Jindal Steel has received recognition from the Guinness World Records for constructing the world's longest road using steel slag aggregates.

Steel slag is a waste by-product of the steel manufacturing process.

Jindal Steel Limited, in collaboration with CSIR-Central Road Research Institute (CSIR-CRRI), has achieved a Guinness World Records title for constructing the longest road built exclusively with processed steel slag aggregates at Raigarh in Chhattisgarh, a company statement said Saturday.

Around 2 lakh tonnes of processed steel slag has been used to build the 1.85-km four-lane road, replacing natural aggregates and reducing dependence on quarrying. Naveen Jindal, Chairman, Jindal Steel Limited, said: "The achievement shows how science, technology and industry can transform industrial co-products into valuable resources for nation-building." (PTI)

Fed decision, inflation may drive markets in coming week: Analysts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The US Fed interest rate decision, domestic inflation data, crude oil prices and developments in West Asia would be the major drivers for stock market movement in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said.

Equity markets would remain closed on Monday for Ganesh Chaturthi.

"Globally, developments in the US-Iran conflict and movement in Brent crude will remain critical market drivers. This week will be dominated by the US Federal Reserve's monetary policy

decision and commentary on the future path of interest rates," Ajit Mishra, SVP of Research at Religare Broking,

The Pioneer

CHANDIGARH | MONDAY | SEPTEMBER 14, 2026

India's semiconductor sector draws \$1.4 billion in funding

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

India's semiconductor sector has attracted \$1.4 billion in all-time equity funding across 281 funded companies, with nearly half of this amount — \$ 701 million — raised since 2025 alone, according to data from Tracxn. The findings come days ahead of SEMICON India 2026, the country's flagship semiconductor conference and exhibition, which will be held from September 17-19 at Yashobhoomi in Dwarka, New Delhi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the fifth edition of SEMICON India 2026 on September 17, a mega-event set to bring together global semiconductor industry leaders, government officials, state representatives, and sector experts as India builds

on the momentum of its growing semiconductor ecosystem.

India is home to 3,557 companies in the sector, of which 142 have raised equity funding, out of 281 funded companies. The sector recorded \$228 million in funding in 2026 year-to-date (YTD), according to Tracxn. Tessolve

Semiconductor leads the sector in cumulative funding at \$213 million to date, followed by ILJIN Electronics (\$198 million) and VVDN (\$129 million). Electronic Manufacturing Services has led the sector's funding, securing \$313 million since 2025.

Embedded Hardware ranked second, with \$51.9

million raised since 2025 — entirely within the trailing 12 months — while Power Management Integrated Circuits and Fabless Semiconductor Manufacturers were among the other leading business models by funding.

According to the report, the sector's funding rose from \$49 million in 2021 to \$ 473 million in 2025. The five-year funding compound annual growth rate (CAGR) stood at over 36 per cent.

Bengaluru remained the dominant hub, home to 626 of the sector's 3,557 companies—about 18 per cent of the total — and accounting for 40.1 per cent of all equity funding raised to date. It was followed by Noida (16.4 per cent), Gurugram (10.7 per cent), Kochi (8.8 per cent) and Hyderabad (6.2 per cent) in terms of funding share.

Smoother payments key to boosting BRICS trade: EEPC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kolkata

The country's apex engineering exports promotion body, EEPC India, on Sunday called for eliminating non-tariff barriers and having a smooth payment mechanism among BRICS nations to boost trade.

EEPC India Chairman Pankaj Chadha said an agreement on non-tariff barriers between BRICS nations is the need of the hour.

"Around 75 per cent of the problems faced by exporters can be solved by eliminating non-tariff barriers and having a smooth and efficient payment mechanism in individual national currencies," Chadha said.

"We can have a common agreement on non-tariff barriers between

BRICS nations and agree to a set of standards. While we have been discussing this for a while now, it is time to move to its execution," he said.

IBBI seeks stronger safeguards for personal guarantors

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The insolvency and bankruptcy regulator has proposed changes to the norms governing the insolvency resolution process for personal guarantors to corporate debtors, including the exclusion of related parties of the guarantor from voting on the repayment plan.

Besides, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) plans to make valuation of a personal guarantor's assets mandatory during the resolution process, as well as put in place the framework for recording creditors' deliberations on the repayment plan.

In the proposed amendments to the rules to strengthen safeguards in the insolvency resolution process for personal guarantors to

corporate debtors, IBBI has also called for identification and reporting of avoidance transactions (preferential, undervalued, fraudulent, and extortionate credit transactions) in the insolvency resolution process.

The proposals come against the backdrop of the insolvency case involving Essel Group chairman Subhash Chandra, wherein under a settlement plan it was proposed that creditors could recover just about Rs 6.5 crore from his personal estate against claims of roughly ₹22,006 crore.

On September 1, a five-member special bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) barred Chandra from alienating his properties and issued notices to all parties in the case.

The case is now also before

the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), after dissenting lenders challenged the repayment plan.

In a discussion paper on September 12, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) proposed calibrated amendments to the insolvency process regula-

tions on the exclusion of related parties of the guarantor from voting on the repayment plan.

Currently, an associate of a personal guarantor is barred from voting on the repayment plan.

IBBI has suggested that a related party of the guaran-

India secures steel export quota to EU under FTA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

India will get country-specific Tariff-Rate Quotas (TRQs) totalling 1.64 million tonnes annually for exporting steel products to the European Union, of which 6,94,853 tonnes will be under the free trade agreement, according to the draft text of the pact released by the EU.

The total country-specific quota of 16,41,470 tonnes comprises 9,46,616 tonnes under the MFN (most favoured nation) component and 6,94,853 tonnes under the FTA component.

The quotas cover a wide range of steel products, including non-alloy and alloy hot-rolled sheets and strips, cold-rolled sheets, metallic-coated sheets, organic-coated sheets, tin mill products, stainless steel products, merchant bars and light sections, rebars, wire rods, pipes and tubes.

India at present exports about four million tonnes of steel per year to the EU.

The TRQs follow the European Union's Steel

Overcapacity Regulation, which came into force on July 1 this year. It is aimed at ensuring protection for the EU's steel industry against the effects of global overcapacity. It sets free-of-duty quotas at 18.3 million tonnes, with a 50 per cent duty for out-of-quota imports and a melt-and-pour regime to enhance transparency.

According to the text, the largest country-specific quota is for non-alloy and other alloy hot-rolled sheets and strips at 5,09,605 tonnes, comprising 2,99,197 tonnes under the MFN component and 2,10,408 tonnes under the FTA component.

This is followed by cold-rolled sheets with a total quota of 2,18,658 tonnes and metallic-coated sheets with 1,97,860 tonnes.

Other major quotas include 1,86,038 tonnes for organic-coated sheets, 1,81,835 tonnes for non-alloy and other alloy quarto plates, 85,157 tonnes for another category of metallic-coated sheets and 79,278 tonnes for stainless steel bars and light sections.

Govt nod mandatory to use Indian patent office logo

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

No person, business entity, digital platform, trademark or patent agent, or legal practitioner can display, replicate, or use the official logo of the Indian Patent Office in any medium without prior approval from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, according to a DPIIT public notice.

It has come to the attention of the Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade

Marks (CGPDTM) that various individuals, agencies, corporate bodies, online legal

tech platforms, and unauthorised service providers are unlawfully utilising the official logo, emblem, and design of the Indian Patent Office (IPO) on their websites, social media accounts, marketing collateral, stationery, and paid digital advertisements.

The logo, it said, is an official government identifier representing the statutory authority under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Russia imports record fuel from India as Ukraine strikes hit refineries

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Russia imported a record 172,000 tonnes of oil products in August, including gasoline refined from Russian crude at a refinery in India that is partly owned by Russia's Rosneft, as Ukrainian drone strikes disrupted Moscow's domestic refining capacity, according to a report by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA).

India supplied 70 per cent of Russia's oil product imports in August, including 120,000 tonnes of gasoline worth 78 million euros, CREA said in its monthly analysis of

Russian fossil fuel exports and sanctions. The volume of Russian fuel imports was more than seven times the previous monthly record and three times the total imported during all of 2025.

All of the gasoline from India was loaded at the Vadinar refinery and sold by EU-sanctioned Nayara Energy to Rosneft, CREA said. Rosneft owns 49.13 per cent of Nayara Energy, while Vadinar sourced all of its crude from Russia during the first eight months of 2026, compared with 81 per cent for all of 2025, according to the report.

"Russia is therefore paying a refinery that it partly owns to process its own crude into

fuel it can no longer produce domestically, before shipping it back halfway around the world," CREA said.

The shipments underscore the impact of a sustained Ukrainian drone campaign against Russia's oil refineries and energy infrastructure, which has reduced domestic fuel production and contributed to shortages, according to CREA.

Each cargo of gasoline exported from Vadinar to Russia was transferred between vessels in a ship-to-ship operation off Egypt before being unloaded at Russia's Arctic port of Beloe More, the report said. All the vessels involved were sanc-

tioned tankers, while four of the six had previously operated under false flags, CREA said. Russia's gasoline imports surged even as the country, historically one of the world's largest exporters of refined petroleum products, faced declining exports. Gasoline accounted for 74 per cent of its total oil-product imports in August, compared with just 6 per cent on average between 2023 and 2025.

South Korea supplied a further 18,000 tonnes of oil products to Russia in August, mostly gasoil, while Egypt exported 25,000 tonnes of diesel worth 16 million euros, CREA said.

Russia's seaborne oil-

product exports fell 21 per cent by volume in August, while revenues from products unloaded at destination ports dropped 32 per cent from July to 78 million euros per day — the lowest level since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Oil-product loadings at Russian ports have fallen for three consecutive months and were less than half their August 2025 level, CREA said.

Tuapse, Russia's fourth-largest oil-product export port before the full-scale invasion, did not load a single oil-product cargo for the third consecutive month after sustained Ukrainian drone attacks since May. Ukrainian

strikes also disrupted crude exports through Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. Crude loadings there fell 58 per cent month-on-month in August, while loadings stopped for nine consecutive days, the longest reported interruption at the port since the start of the full-scale invasion, according to CREA.

Overall, Russia's fossil-fuel export revenues fell 8 per cent in August to 604 million euros per day, while export volumes declined 7 per cent.

The fuel trade comes as India remained Russia's second-largest fossil-fuel customer in August, behind China.

A life that shared its pain with the world: Remembering Hakeem Abdul Hameed



PROFESSOR MD AFSHAR ALAM

There are men whose lives are measured by what they accumulate, and there are those rarer few whose lives are measured by what they build for others. Hakeem Abdul Hameed belonged unmistakably to the second kind. On the fourteenth of September, as Jamia Hamdard observes Founder's Day, we do not merely mark a birthday. We pause to remember a man who took a modest inheritance of healing and turned it into an enduring architecture of learning, service and compassion that continues to shape countless lives.

Hakeem Saheb was born in Delhi in 1908, into a family already devoted to the relief of human suffering. His father, Hakeem Hafiz Abdul Majeed, had established the Hamdard Dawakhana in 1906, and had chosen for it a name that held its entire philosophy in a single word. Hamdard means the sharing of pain, a sympathy for all. That idea, so simply stated and so difficult to live by, became the thread that ran through everything the son would later attempt. He inherited not a fortune but a purpose, and he honoured it with a seriousness that defined the rest of his years.

What strikes me most, when I reflect on his life, is the breadth of his imagination. He could have remained a fine physician of the Unani tradition and lived a respected and comfortable life. Instead, he saw that traditional medicine, if it was to survive and serve, could not remain locked in the secrecy of individual practitioners. It had to be studied, standardised, taught and made available to ordinary people through modern laboratories and scientific method. In pursuing this, he became something of a reformer of Unani medicine itself, giving an ancient

system a nationalist inspiration and an indigenous scientific base. He believed that heritage and progress were not enemies, and he spent his life proving it.

Even at the moment of Partition in 1947, when so much around him was breaking apart, Hakeem saheb was already dreaming of building. He imagined a complex of educational institutions that would celebrate the contribution of Islamic culture to Indian civilisation while advancing the science of healing. It was an act of faith in the future of a newly independent India, and in the place of his community within it. That same year he established the Hamdard Charitable Trust, directing the earnings of Hamdard toward public good rather than private gain. It was a decision that revealed the man completely. He treated wealth as a trust to be spent on others, not a possession to be hoarded.

The institutions came steadily, each one a brick in a larger design. In 1963, he set up the Hamdard Tibbi College and the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies. In 1964, he founded the Hamdard National Foundation. The Hamdard College of Pharmacy followed in 1972. Around these grew the Hamdard Education Society, Hamdard Public School, the Ghalib Academy, the Hamdard Institute of Historical Research and much else besides. He was building not a single college but an ecosystem, one in which medicine, pharmacy, the humanities, historical scholarship and cultural preservation could all flourish together.

The culmination of this long labour came in 1989, when the institutions he had nurtured were brought together, and Jamia Hamdard was granted the status of a deemed-to-be university. For Hakeem Saheb, this was the fulfilment of a dream carried patiently across decades. He became its Founder-Chancellor, and he had built it, in large part, with his own resources and the funds of Hamdard. Few universities in this country can claim so pure an origin, an institution raised not by the state or by commerce but by one man's conviction that learning is the highest form of service.

I have spent a meaningful part of my own



life within the institution he founded, and I can testify that his presence still lingers in it. It lingers in the university's continuing commitment to Unani and integrative healthcare, in its hospitals that carry his name and his intent, in the scholars who come from across the world to its libraries. When I walk the campus, I am aware that I am walking through a realised idea, and that the idea belonged to a physician who refused to accept that the horizon of the possible was fixed.

His work did not go unrecognised. The nation honoured him with the Padma Shri in 1965 and the Padma Bhushan in 1992. The former Soviet Union conferred on him the Avicenna Award in 1983, a fitting tribute to a man who had done so much to carry forward the tradition of the great physician-philosophers. He served as Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University in the final years of his life, and after his passing, institutions abroad continued to acknowledge his contribution to the preservation of cultural

heritage and the promotion of scholarship. Yet I suspect the honours mattered less to him than the quiet knowledge that a poor patient had been treated, or a first-generation student had found a place to study.

It would be a mistake to remember him only as an administrator or a builder of institutions. He was, at heart, a physician, and the physician's instinct never left him. He understood pain, and he understood that the relief of pain, whether of the body through medicine or of the mind through education, was the truest work a person could undertake. This is why education and health were never separate projects for him. They were two expressions of a single compassion. To heal a body and to open a mind were, in his understanding, the same essential act of care.

There is a lesson in this for those of us who have inherited the responsibility of carrying his institutions forward. Hakeem Saheb did not build for applause or for his own name. He built because he believed that a society grows only when its members are willing to share the pain of others and to act on that sharing. He gave his wealth, his energy and his imagination to this belief, and he asked for little in return. In an age that often measures success by accumulation, his life stands as a quiet and powerful rebuke, and as an invitation to a better way of living.

Hakeem Abdul Hameed left us in 1999, but the truest thing about a life like his is that it does not really end. It continues in every student who graduates from the university he founded, in every patient healed in the hospitals he imagined, in every scholar who draws on the resources he assembled. He planted institutions the way a wise man plants trees, knowing he would not sit in all their shade, content that others would.

On this Founder's Day, we honour him best not with words alone but with renewal of purpose. We recommit ourselves to the ideal that gave his life its meaning: the sharing of pain, the service of the vulnerable, the union of knowledge and compassion. That is the inheritance he left us. It is our privilege, and our duty, to prove ourselves worthy of it.

The author is former vice chancellor of Jamia Hamdard

Era of emojis



PRIYANKA SHRIVASTAVA

Emojis have slowly and surreptitiously crept into our daily lives. It may look trite or childish, but it's definitely not a fad. It has unbottled an army of icons to express our nuanced feelings at just a click of a button.

Originated in Japan, it tiptoed its way to popular culture after Google and Apple added it to the Unicode Standard in 2010. The Oxford English Dictionary declared it the word of the year in 2015 and as the cliché goes, 'The rest is history!'

The user's phone is armed with a palette of emojis to convey one's nuanced feelings from 'flabbergasted' to 'disgruntled', and everything in between. It has tailor-made emojis to convey feelings like 'tickled pink', 'flustered', and a 'blush', ready to be explored. The pack is insane; you will find yourself dumb scrolling with an amused look. It adds drama to banal digital banter.

Banter with family is tempered with these: 'soft smile',

'huge grin', 'bashful', 'shy', or 'tearful', at a sob story all have their moments.

It's a field day when it comes to chats with friends; you can have 'playful', 'goofy', 'smirk', all stacked up to add that element of fun and quirk.

'Folded hands' emoji and the emoji with a halo are often repeated across milieus and generations; little semantic difference could be there in the interpretations, but they are still high in popularity.

To add to the fun, emojis have a companion called GIFs; both are mobile-friendly and lace the conversation with punch and humour. With the advent of smartphones, there has been a spike. This interesting format keeps users hooked across different platforms.

These super creative icons easily grab attention and can jazz up any chat. It may have become ubiquitous or done to death; still, it is here to stay, not like any other passing trend or fad.

The author is a freelance writer and columnist

Forgetfulness or dementia? AIIMS neurologist to explain when it is time to seek help



PROFESSOR MANJARI TRIPATHI

If a family member is becoming increasingly forgetful, repeating the same questions or finding it difficult to manage routine tasks, when should one seek medical advice? And why can an early diagnosis of dementia make a difference?

These questions will be among the issues discussed by Dr Manjari Tripathi, Professor and Head of the Department of Neurology at AIIMS, New Delhi, at a programme being organised by the Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India (ARDSI) — Delhi Chapter to mark World Alzheimer's Day on Wednesday, September



16, at Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

The programme, themed "The Earlier You Know, The More You Can Do: Dementia Diagnosis Matters", will focus on the importance of recognising dementia early and seeking timely medical

assessment. The session will also discuss what a diagnosis means for persons living with dementia and their families, and the support available to them.

Why should you listen? Forgetfulness is often dismissed as a normal part of

ageing. However, experts say it is important to understand when changes in memory and behaviour may require medical attention. An early diagnosis can help families better understand the condition, plan for care and seek appropriate support.

The programme will also feature experiences shared by a person living with dementia and a caregiver, offering a perspective on the day-to-day challenges associated with the condition.

An interactive question-and-answer session will allow participants to engage with experts. The evening will also include the release of the ARDSI Delhi Chapter newsletter and memory games.

The author is head of department of Neurology at AIIMS, New Delhi

India to get first 100% hydrogen DRI pilot plant

BISHASWAR MALAKAR
■ Kolkata

The CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT) will lead a Rs 207-crore national pilot project to develop India's first Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) plant running entirely on hydrogen, aimed at reducing carbon emissions from the steel sector, a senior official said.

The 20-tonne-per-day pilot project has received in-principle approval from the Ministry of Steel and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).

It will receive Rs 113 crore in government support under the National Green Hydrogen Mission, with the remaining funding to be contributed by consortium partners. CSIR-IMMT Director Ramanuj Narayan told PTI that the facility is expected to be completed by August 2029 and will focus on developing and demonstrating



hydrogen-based DRI technology suited to Indian conditions, particularly the use of domestic iron ore.

The consortium led by CSIR-IMMT includes Godavari Power and Ispat Ltd, Lloyd Steel, Jindal Stainless and Thyssenkrupp Industries India. Tata Steel has also agreed to join the consortium, and efforts are being made to bring other major steel producers, including Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL), into the project, said scientist P C Beuria, the head

of the Mineral Processing Division at CSIR-IMMT.

SP Das, chief scientist in the division, said some private steelmakers are currently working on projects involving partial use of hydrogen, with plans to increase its share gradually. "In contrast, the CSIR project is focusing on a 100 per cent hydrogen-based DRI plant," he said.

The proposed facility will use a vertical shaft furnace designed to operate entirely on hydrogen.

Beuria said a key challenge will be processing India's relatively low-grade hematite ores. Several international hydrogen-DRI projects use higher-grade magnetite, making the Indian raw material challenge different, he said.

Das said Bhubaneswar-based CSIR-IMMT is working on ore processing and reduction technologies to ensure that the proposed plant can handle the characteristics of Indian iron ore. "Globally, the technology is still at the pilot stage, and the Indian challenge is different because of the inferior quality of ore available here," he said.

Beuria said the economics of green steel, however, remains a major hurdle. Green hydrogen currently costs around \$5 per kg and would need to become substantially cheaper, at around \$1 per kg, for hydrogen-based steelmaking to become commercially competitive. (PTI)

ITC expects Aashirvaad brand to double consumer spend in 5 years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

Diversified conglomerate ITC expects consumer spending on its flagship food brand Aashirvaad to double to ₹20,000 crore over the next five years, from around ₹10,000 crore currently, as it expands into newer food categories and adjacent segments, a senior company official said.

The company is amplifying Aashirvaad's play with a two-pronged strategy for the brand — strengthening its core atta (wheat flour) business while expanding into adjacent categories such as ready-to-cook foods and frozen snacks, said Hemant Malik, Chief Executive Officer, Foods Division, and Executive Director, ITC Ltd.

Aashirvaad started its journey in May 2002 as a whole wheat atta brand and has since grown into one of the country's most trusted kitchen brands, with a portfolio of more than 200 SKUs (stock-keeping units).

ITC, which aspires to become India's leading FMCG player, has expanded Aashirvaad beyond wheat flour into staples, spices and fresh foods, and even the



frozen category, now has consumer spends exceeding ₹10,000 crore, he said.

Asked when the brand is expected to double its consumer spends to ₹20,000 crore, Malik told PTI, "We will double in the next five years." Aashirvaad products are now manufactured across a network of 66 facilities spread across the country, enabling ITC to cater to diverse consumer needs pan-India. This vast network also helps ITC to reach consumers with its products "with the highest freshness," he added.

In FY26, ITC's FMCG products were reaching around 28 crore households with nearly ₹37,000 crore in consumer spending.

Consumer spending is the total amount spent by consumers on its products, includ-

ing net sales turnover, channel margins and applicable taxes. According to Malik, the atta category itself continues to offer substantial opportunities for growth through segmentation and premiumisation as consumers increasingly seek products catering to specific nutritional, wellness and regional preferences.

The brand has expanded its portfolio beyond regular atta to include multigrain, high-protein, organic and millet-based variants, among others.

"Premiumisation is not merely about a higher price point. Consumers today are willing to spend on products that offer tangible value, whether through superior quality, convenience, health and nutritional benefits built through meaningful innovation," Malik said.

Oriental Insurance hopes to turn corner in FY27

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Public sector general insurer Oriental Insurance Company is poised to return to profit in 2026-27, helped by planned stake dilution in NSE through initial public offerings opening for subscription later this week. "We are targeting to make some profit this year...the proceeds from the NSE IPO would be booked as profit. It will improve the company's financials. Besides, it is going to provide liquidity," Oriental Insurance Company Chairman and Managing Director Sanjay Joshi told PTI.

The company is only diluting a small portion of its holding in the NSE through the upcoming IPO, he said, adding that about 49.57 lakh shares have been put on offer.

Oriental Insurance Company Ltd holds 3.52 crore shares in the country's biggest bourse, the NSE, as of June 30, 2026. In percentage terms, it has a 1.42 per cent stake in the NSE.

At the upper price band of ₹1,785 per share, Oriental Insurance Company would realise ₹885 crore, while at the lower price band of ₹1,700 per unit, it would pocket about ₹843 crore.

Oriental Insurance Company Ltd was one of the initial investors in the National Stock Exchange Ltd, which was incorporated in 1992.

Once it is listed, Joshi said, the value of the remaining holding in NSE can be used to calculate the company's solvency. He said it is expected to improve the company's solvency.



The ₹22,569-crore IPO will open for subscription on September 17, making it the country's second-largest public issue after Hyundai Motor India's ₹27,870 crore offering in 2024. The issue closes on September 21.

The IPO comes nearly a decade after NSE's plans to go public were stalled amid regulatory hurdles. With the SEBI clearance now in place, the exchange is set to make its market debut on September 24.

Meanwhile, Oriental Insurance Company Ltd celebrated its 80th foundation day. The company was founded on September 12, 1947, less than a month after India gained independence.

SEBI's expiry-day reforms to address volatility, manipulation, claim experts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Market experts have backed SEBI's proposed overhaul of the expiry-day trading framework, saying the changes could address key sources of volatility and manipulation in the closing auction while making the settlement process simpler and more transparent.

The comments come after market regulator SEBI floated a consultation paper on Saturday proposing changes to the Closing Auction Session (CAS), market timings and settlement methodologies for derivative contracts.

The proposals include delinking derivatives settlement prices from the cash-market closing price, discontinuing live indicative index values during the CAS and making orders placed beyond the one per cent band more binding.

Feroze Azeez, Joint CEO at Anand Rathi Wealth Ltd, said SEBI has addressed three major issues — the relationship between cash-market closing prices and derivatives settlement prices, distortions caused by indicative auction prices, and order cancellations during the auction process.



"The most important development is that a derivatives contract need not be settled at exactly the cash-market closing price. SEBI has recognised that the cash and derivatives markets serve different purposes," Azeez said.

He also said discontinuing dissemination of indicative index values during the closing auction would curb volatility created by unexecuted orders, while making aggressive orders beyond one per cent more binding would reduce the scope for manipulation through order cancellations.

Besides, he termed other proposals — including allowing iceberg orders in CAS, shortening the transition period and reducing the post-CAS derivatives trading window to five minutes — as sensible refinements.

Azeez said SEBI's willingness to revisit the framework

within weeks of implementation reflects an effective approach to market-structure reforms through implementation, observation and refinement. He said a blended VWAP combining continuous trading and the closing auction would add unnecessary complexity by making settlement dependent on two different trading mechanisms.

Rajesh Singla, CEO and Fund Manager at Alpha AMC, said the closing auction was conceptually sound but its implementation exposed gaps, particularly in thinner counters where concentrated price discovery amplified expiry-day volatility.

He said the solution should go beyond timing changes and include mid-session auction-price disclosures, incentives for market makers and phased implementation across different market-cap segments.

BRIEFLY

Anahat loses a thriller in Doha

India squash star Anahat Singh lost to Belgian world No 9 Tinne Gilis in a five-game thriller in the women's second round of the Qatar Classic, a \$2,42,000 PSA Platinum event, here on Sunday. After eighth seed Gilis won the opening game, World No 20 and reigning junior world champion Anahat bounced back strongly, to take control of the match. However, Gilis, who has reached a career-high ranking of No 5, drew from her wealth of experience to win the match 11-4, 8-11, 9-11, 11-4, 11-3. Late on Saturday, World No 24 Abhay Singh lost to Swiss world No 22 Dimitri Steinmann 7-11, 9-11, 12-14 and World No 38 Veer Chotrani fell to Kiwi world No 2 Paul Coll 2-11, 3-11, 1-11 in the men's opening round. Anahat, Abhay and Veer, along with Tanvi Khanna, form the Indian challenge in squash singles at the Asian Games in Japan beginning on September 19.



Borussia Monchengladbach fires Eugen Polanski as coach



Borussia Monchengladbach fired coach Eugen Polanski on Sunday after starting the Bundesliga with three defeats. Gladbach's 5-0 loss at Freiburg on Saturday was Polanski's last game in charge, with his assistant coach Tobias Trulsen also told to go. "Despite a good pre-season and positive signs, the team failed to achieve the desired results in the Bundesliga," sporting director Rouven Schroder said. "Recent performances led to the decision to relieve Eugen of his duties with immediate effect. Eugen is a true Borusse' through and through." Saturday's loss followed a 4-3 defeat at home to promoted Elversberg and an opening 3-0 loss at Leipzig. Gladbach's only win this season was a 5-0 rout of fifth-tier side Schott Mainz in the German Cup. "It hurts so much that things have turned out this way," said Polanski, the former Under-23 team coach. "After successfully securing our top-flight status (last season), we made a number of changes for this season. We had big ambitions but failed to put them into practice." Polanski took over the team in similar circumstances last season from the fired Gerardo Seoane, whose team had a point after three games. He ultimately led the team to 12th after his interim status was upgraded to permanent in November. Gladbach said Sunday that Polanski's assistant Jan-Moritz Lichte was to take over as head coach on an interim basis. Lichte has experience as coach of Bundesliga club Mainz, where Schroder also previously worked. Polanski is the first head coach to lose his job in the Bundesliga this season.

India complete junior Asia Cup hockey hat-trick

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Moqi (China)

Sanika Chandrakant Mane's early strike proved decisive as India qualified for the junior women's hockey World Cup by winning the AHF Junior Asia Cup title for the third time in a row after defeating China 1-0 in a closely fought summit clash, here Sunday. Sanika struck in the 17th minute as the defending champions retained their continental crown. The title clash began with nervous energy on both sides, with neither team able to establish control in the early exchanges. China enjoyed greater possession and looked to put India under

pressure, but the defending champions remained composed, soaking up the pressure and working hard to negotiate the opening phase without conceding. As the quarter wore on, India's defensive structure grew stronger, ensuring the hosts were unable to create a clear-cut opening. India, however, made their first real opening count. Two minutes into the second quarter, Sanika showed excellent awareness and intelligent off-the-ball movement to sneak in behind a Chinese defender and position herself just five metres from goal. She got her stick to a long slap-push into the Chinese circle and produced a deft deflec-



Indian women's team edged past China to win Junior Asia Cup Hockey title

tion that beat goalkeeper Xu Mengjiao to put India ahead. China came closest to restoring parity when they earned the only penalty corner of the match. However, their direct effort was ruled out after the ball entered the

when captain Khaidem Shileima Chanu found space for a shot on target, but the Chinese goalkeeper reacted sharply to palm the effort away. India took their slender 1-0 advantage into the break, setting up a tense second half. China resumed with renewed intent and came close to an equaliser seven minutes into the third quarter. A well-worked move saw a Chinese attacker overlap from the baseline before sending a dangerous cut-back into the area in front of goal, but India's defence read the danger perfectly and intercepted the pass before it could reach its intended target. The final quarter turned

into a test of India's defensive resolve. The defending champions stayed disciplined, compact and alert around their circle, closing down spaces and repeatedly frustrating the hosts' attacking moves. China pressed for the equaliser in the closing stages, but India held their shape and defended their slender advantage with composure to seal a memorable 1-0 victory and lift the trophy. India finished tournament unbeaten. After topping the Elite Pool with three wins and a draw, they thrashed South Korea 5-1 in the semi-finals before edging China 1-0 in the final to successfully defend their title and become three-time champions.

Pramod bags gold and silver, Sukant completes career 100-medal haul in Japan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Tokyo

Tokyo Paralympic gold medalist Pramod Bhagat secured a gold in men's singles SL3 and silver in men's doubles SL3-SU5, while Sukant Kadam bagged the 100th medal of his career at the Japan Para Badminton International here on Sunday. Pramod, a six-time world champion, produced a dominant performance to defeat fellow Indian U Kumar 21-16, 21-8 in 30 minutes in the men's singles SL3 final. He then partnered Kadam in the men's doubles SL3-SU5 final, where the Indian pair went down 5-21, 15-21 to Indonesia's Hikmat Ramdani and Fredy Setiawan. "I am very happy to finish the tournament with a gold and a silver. The singles final was challenging, especially after U Kumar got the early lead, but I stayed patient and focused on my game," Pramod said in a release. "Once I found my rhythm, I was able to take control. The doubles result was not



Sukant Kadam and Pramod Bhagat

what we wanted, but I am proud of the fight we showed. Every international tournament is an opportunity to learn and improve, and I will take the positives from Japan," he added. India also secured several other medals across categories with Chirag Baretha and Singapore's Wei Ming Tay winning gold in men's doubles SU5. Shashank Kumar claimed two bronze medals, finishing third in men's singles WH1 and partnering Ammu Mohan for another bronze in mixed doubles WH1-WH2. Deep Ranjan Bisoyee and Kuldeep Mahkul also won bronze in men's doubles

SL3-SU5, while Takar Biri and Harshit Choudhary finished third in the same category. Abhijeet Sakhua added another bronze in men's singles SL4. For Kadam, the tournament was particularly special as he took his career tally of medals to 100 in 12 years of competitive badminton. The milestone came alongside a silver in men's doubles and a silver-medal finish in men's singles SL4. In the men's singles SL4 final, Kadam lost 8-21, 16-21 to France's Lucas Mazur. "Reaching 100 career medals is a very special moment for me. When I started playing para badminton 12 years ago, I never imagined that I would reach this milestone," he said. "There have been many ups and downs, victories and defeats, but every match has taught me something. I am grateful to everyone who has supported me throughout this journey. "At the same time, I don't want to look at 100 as the finish line. It motivates me to keep working harder and aim for many more achievements for India," he noted.

Last climb was tough, won with right strategy: Ladakh marathon winner

SUMAN RAY ■ Leh

Nikhil Singh surprised one and all by winning the high altitude Ladakh Marathon ahead of a few local long distance runners on Sunday, and he attributed his triumph to his mental power, consistency and right strategy. Nikhil won the gruelling race in 2 hours, 44 minutes and 40 seconds. "I didn't walk at all. I didn't want to slow down. The last climb was a bit tough, still I didn't walk. My mental strength and right strategy paid off. I was confident that I would be in the top 3. As the race went on, my confidence grew that I could do it," Nikhil told PTI after his win here on Sunday. He pointed out that this was his maiden appearance in Ladakh Marathon and is thrilled to win it. "I have come to Ladakh for the first time, and this is my first experience running in Ladakh. My training is in Mumbai. This is my second run in high altitude. Before this, I had done Spiti, but Ladakh killed it," he observed. He noted that being an elite runner, it was not really impossible for him to achieve the feat. "I am an Indian elite runner. Otherwise, my best is



Ladakh LG Vinai Kumar Saxena flags off 42 kilometer full marathon and 21 Kilometer half marathon during 13th Ladakh Marathon, in Leh

2 hours 22 minutes. Actually, my event is 42 km. I had the preparation, but I had no experience of high altitude. I came here around 9-10 days ago. "I did one hour of speed work. I tried to concentrate on this. In the first 5-6 days, I had headache. I couldn't sleep at night. I felt dizzy," he recalled. Explaining his spectacular performance, Nikhil said he had no idea about the route, so he was mostly following other marathoners. "I was just following the route. I had no idea about the route. When I came to the flat route, it was my strong point. I pushed the lead of the race," he added. He promised that he will come here again and defend his title with a better timing.

"I will come here next year as per my preparation. There is no competition nearby, so I will try to come here. I have recently won a Maharashtra State medal in 10 km. Before that, I ran in Tata Mumbai in Indian Elite. "I also ran in Vedanta last year. Let's see next time I haven't thought about running ultra marathon. My target is 42 km." He, however, pointed out that for him to reach next level would mean getting some financial support. "I am trying to reach the next level. But there is no financial support. I am trying to get support from somewhere. Otherwise, I am wasting my time," he signed off with resolve.

DAILY SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

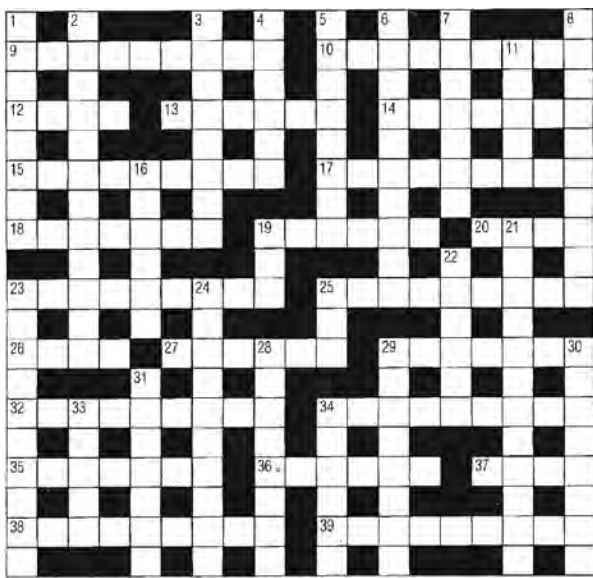
Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction- no maths involved.



SOLUTION (12.9.26)

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

DOUBLE CROSSWORD
MONDAY | SEPTEMBER 14, 2026



- ACROSS**
- 9 Indicates it's unsheathed (6,3)
10 Concession made by the permissive? (9)
12 Go round to get something for the fishing trip (4)
13 Support, when one's introduced, or oppose (6)
14 It helps to brighten up a circus act (7)
15 Entering shiftily, grabs a fruit (9)
17 Thought about how it did credit to? (9)
18 Flamboyant and always in a hurry? (7)
19 Hand down, as do fathers to a child
20 Strike painfully against something protruding from the ground (4)
23 There's clear water if you go beyond the peak (9)
25 Promise to photograph less? (9)

- DOWN**
- 2 Carried away, becomes thoroughly animated (8)
2 Put the cowl on and look ashamed (4,4,4)
3 The fellow goes to the mob for protection (8)
4 Enter one's mind to give up work (6)
5 Designs in the past involved a bird (8)
6 Cloudburst that's accompanied by lightning? (5,5)
7 The garment tears badly when we get into it (7)
8 Trustworthy but could become a hanger-on (10)
11 Near time, or time, to go to bed (5)
16 Is, for the sex change, first in (6)
19 A mug to criticise (3)

- 26 Concerned with the hustle and bustle
27 A bottle for the fellow you get along badly with (6)
29 What the sergeant major did, who took up dentistry? (7)
32 Acts for which wind instruments provide suitable accompaniment? (3,6)
34 Lose an opportunity, we're told, through bad luck (9)
35 Bolt when there's no longer need to (7)
36 Result of firing into the air? (6)
37 Gives permission to and I think we should (4)
38 So the referee took the ball again (9)
39 That will show just what you've got up to! (9)

- 21 For campers without exception, virtually (2,3,7)
22 In accompanying the soldier, shows spirit (6)
23 Poorly or ill equipped to offer a choice
24 Giving a number and the whereabouts to (10)
25 A receptacle for rain, uncovered (3)
28 Signs that guests may be about to be received (8)
29 Has fun and games with the little girl
30 Furniture for liners (8)
31 Was uncertain though about, you say, to get married (7)
33 Pleasant about the Eastern member of the family (5)
34 A girl-meets-boy book (6)

Two huge putts from Kupcho give US renewed hope in Solheim Cup finish

STEVE DOUGLAS
■ Den Bosch (Netherlands)

Jennifer Kupcho first shushed the Europeans with her finger against her lips. Then she did it with her putter. In one of the most remarkable finishing stretches in the Solheim Cup's 36-year history, Kupcho rolled in huge birdie putts on Nos. 17 and 18 - one, outrageously, from 93 feet - to snatch an unlikely point for the Americans from the last match on the course on Saturday and tie score at 8-8 after four sessions at Bernardus Golf. Over to the Sunday singles to determine the destination of the crystal trophy, with the United States needing 14 points to keep possession. "That was huge," U.S. captain Angela Stanford said of Kupcho's exploits. "It's absolutely turned the tide." Europe's fans became more excitable - or "rowdy," in the words of Kupcho - as Day 2 wore on, helped by two big wins from Swedish pairing Maja Stark and Linn Grant, first over Nelly Korda and Allisen Corpuz in the morning foursomes and then



Jennifer Kupcho of United States celebrates after holing a putt on the 18th green during Solheim Cup in Den Bosch, Netherlands

Megan Khang and Lauren Coughlin in the afternoon four-balls. Kupcho silenced them. She was already a target after producing a "shush" gesture, seemingly toward the Europe fans, after making birdie on the 10th hole of her match with Lindy Duncan against Carlota Ciganda and Celine Boutier. About two hours later - and trailing at 1 down as she reached the 17th green - Kupcho got to her ball off the back of the green knowing Ciganda and Boutier were both inside 12 feet. "Honestly, going into it, I had zero expectations," Kupcho said. "I hardly ever read my putt."

Lowry one-putts every green on back nine and builds 4-shot lead in Irish Open

JIMMY ROBERTSON
■ Doonbeg (Ireland)

Shane Lowry thrilled his home crowd in the Irish Open, which included a visit by President Donald Trump, by one-putting every green on the back nine for a 5-under 65, and a four-shot lead going into the final round. Lowry lost his three-shot advantage at the start when Jacob Skov Olesen of Denmark finished the front nine eagle-birdie to go out in 31 and share the lead. And then the Irishman couldn't miss. It started with a 5-foot birdie on the 10th and a 10-foot par save on the 11th. Lowry made every putt on the back - three for



Shane Lowry

birdies, six for pars - finishing with a superb pitch from left of the 18th green to 4 feet for one last par. "I'm normally the one watching other people do it, so why not me sometimes?" Lowry said. "I'm seeing my lines well and starting the ball where I want and they're going in. And hope-

fully that stays that way for another 24 hours." Lowry was at 16-under 194 at Trump International Ireland, the Doonbeg course Trump bought in 2014. Trump stopped by after meeting with Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin in Dublin. Trump is the first U.S. president to attend a European tour event. He now has been to golf events on three circuits this year, having already gone to tournaments on his courses at the PGA Tour (Doral in Florida) and LIV Golf (Bedminster in New Jersey). Skov Olesen didn't make another birdie after the ninth hole, closed with a bogey on the 18th had to settle for 66 that left him four shots behind.

Rahul could be Gill’s deputy for ODIs against West Indies

KUSHAN SARKAR
■ New Delhi

Seasoned KL Rahul could be named India’s vice-captain for the upcoming three-match ODI series against the West Indies, starting on September 27.

India, to be led by Shubman Gill, will start the ODI campaign against the Caribbeans from Thiruvananthapuram while the remaining two matches will be held at Guwahati (September 30) and Mullanpur (October 3).

The team for the West Indies series along with Irani Cup is scheduled to be picked here on September 16, a day after the second T20i against

Afghanistan. The match will be attended by chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar.

Interestingly, this selection meeting will be Agarkar’s last assignment in his stipulated contract period which ends on October 4.

He is eligible for one more year’s extension but as of now BCCI has been tight-lipped about Agarkar’s future.

It is understood that with the Asian Games coinciding with ODI against the West Indies, regular 50-over vice captain Shreyas Iyer would-n’t be available as he will be in Japan, leading the T20 squad. With Ishan Kishan also on Asian Games duty, there will be debate on the second wicketkeeper’s slot

behind Rahul.

The choice is between Rishabh Pant and Dhruv Jurel.

“It is a choice between Pant and Jurel. Obviously, the head coach and captain’s point of view would be important,” a BCCI source privy to selection matters told PTI. It is understood that in case Pant is not selected as second keeper, then he would be leading the Rest of India side in the Irani Cup against Jammu and Kashmir in Srinagar.

In case Pant is picked for India, then Jurel might lead the Rest of India. He recently led India A in Sri Lanka.

The national selectors might have a tough time in picking a seam bowling all-



rounder for ODIs unless Hardik Pandya is declared fit. Hardik, who has been

picked for India A, is expected to be fit to play competitive white ball cricket from

September 20 as per PTI’s sources in BCCI Centre of Excellence.

“The selectors picked Hardik for India A one dayers scheduled from October 6 in Puducherry. However, the West Indies ODIs will end on October 3. It will be interesting if Hardik will be selected for West Indies ODIs,” the source said.

The pace attack though features a sorted combination with Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Gurnoor Brar and Prince Yadav all fit and available. Rituraj Gaikwad is likely to be selected in absence of Shreyas Iyer.

Injuries to a lot of fringe players are also making the process difficult for the selection committee, which is facing paucity of all-rounder options.

Right now, the list of injured players include Harsh Dubey, Suryansh Shedge, Mohsin Khan, Venkatesh Iyer, Harshit Rana and Shabbaz Ahmed who are all unavailable for selection either for the senior, A team or Irani Cup. All these players will be undergoing rehabilitation at the CoE in Bengaluru.

Mumbai domestic stalwart Sarfaraz Khan, who wasn’t picked for India A Tests versus Australia A, is likely to be picked for Rest of India.

Delhi youngsters Sanat Sangwan and Ayush Doseja, who were among top three run getters in Ranji Trophy, are expected to be a part of RoI side along with Ravichandran Smaran. (PTI)

Elena Rybakina beats Aryna Sabalenka to win US Open title

BRIAN MAHONEY
■ New York

Elena Rybakina came to New York and took everything that had belonged to Aryna Sabalenka. First, it was the No. 1 ranking in women’s tennis, then the US Open trophy. The tournament that for so long was a struggle for Rybakina turned into the site of her coronation.

Rybakina won her first US Open title and punctuated her climb to the top of her sport by beating Sabalenka 6-4, 5-7, 6-2 on Saturday.

Rybakina had already been guaranteed to replace Sabalenka at Number 1 in the rankings next week and for good measure took the title that Sabalenka had won the previous two years.

“It’s still so difficult to process what happened,” Rybakina said. “Too many achievements these few weeks.” It was the third Grand Slam title for Rybakina

and the second this year - both against Sabalenka on hard courts. She opened the season by beating Sabalenka for the Australian Open title.

This time, Rybakina stopped Sabalenka’s 19-match winning streak at the US Open, where she hadn’t lost since falling to Coco Gauff in the 2023 final.

Rybakina earned \$5.5 million, the largest prize in Grand Slam history, and tied Sabalenka and French Open winner Mirra Andreeva with a tour-high three titles this season. Sabalenka falls short of third straight title in New York. Sabalenka took home \$2.8 million but it was clear how little that meant to her, as she smashed her racket after a brief hug with Rybakina at the net.

Sabalenka was trying to become the first person since Serena Williams from 2012-14 to win three in a row at Flushing Meadows. Rybakina dethroned the champ



without even having her best stuff. The WTA Tour leader in aces got less than half of her first serves in but instead put Sabalenka under constant pressure with a strong return game, racking up 12 break chances and converting three, which was all she needed. The third meeting of Number 1 vs. Number 2 in a US Open women’s final since 2000 was the first to go the way of the challenger. Williams was the top seed for the other two, beating her sister Venus

to complete the career Grand Slam. And it’s clear her power - and her ability to absorb her opponent’s - was something that unnerved Sabalenka.

“Her serve is amazing, the way she’s able to step in and overpower you on court, and especially if it’s a US Open court where it’s super fast, it’s definitely a huge advantage for her,” Sabalenka said. “A lot of things make her dangerous.”

A native of Belarus, Sabalenka sometimes swings from her heels, like a golfer trying to unleash a 300-yard drive, grunting “Aaaaahhh!” as she takes her mighty cuts. Rybakina’s power comes more easily. There is little sound coming from her side of the net besides the squeaking of her sneakers, and she rarely shows any hint of stress. “I think Elena is probably - not nonchalant, I don’t want to say that, because she’s not nonchalant - but just no reaction ever,” Gauff said

after losing to Rybakina in the semifinals. Rybakina did show some frustration after pulling a backhand wide with a break point in the opening game of the third set, but soon she had taken charge of the match for good. Sabalenka had won the two other meetings this season, on the hard courts at Indian Wells and Miami, and leads their rivalry 10-8. But her season then took a strange dip after those victories. Sabalenka fell to Naomi Osaka in the fourth round at Wimbledon, then returned to action with consecutive fourth-round exits in Toronto and Cincinnati.

Rybakina had to take a brief break after she was forced to stop playing in her quarterfinal match against Iga Swiatek in Cincinnati because of injury, but she was healthy in time for a tournament where she had never done particularly well, failing to advance past fourth round until this year. (AP)

Divyanshi dials down on criticism of national federation after Asiad setback

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Wushu player Divyanshi Choudhary has dialled down her anger against the sport’s national federation after being dropped from the Asian Games squad due to an injury, saying she has full support of the governing body to make a stronger comeback.

Divyanshi was included in the seven-member wushu team for the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games in the list released by the Sports



Ministry on August 22. But on Friday, she was replaced by

two-time Asian Games medallist Naorem Roshibina

Devi in the women’s 60kg sanda category on the ground that she has suffered an ACL tear.

In an earlier video, Divyanshi claimed that the doctors cleared her to participate in the Asian Games despite the injury but in a fresh video, she accepted the decision taken by the Wushu Association of India (WAI). “My federation made me understand that health is most important so I could win medal for India in the future. I was thinking my federation is not with me but I

have now understood they are with me and will channelise their support to win gold in the 2030 Asian Games. “The federation wants me fully recover from my injury and then return to action. I was not able to understand this. Even the Sports Minister (Mansukh Mandaviya) made me understand the importance of recovering from injury.

“My federation and SAI as well offered me full support. I will focus on my health and fitness and will be back in the ring soon. My parents also

made me understand that I need to prepare for the next games and not thinking about this one,” said Divyanshi.

However, she maintained that her replacement, two-time Asian Games medallist Naorem Roshibina Devi, harassed her and her family.

“Roshibina has harassed me and my family mentally and physically. I can’t believe an athlete can stoop to this level, she has done from June to now, she has been constantly harassing me and my family,” added Divyanshi.

Sabalenka beats herself up as she is denied US Open three-peat

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ New York

Aryna Sabalenka crushed a ball into the stands and received a warning. She yelled at herself, smacked her first racket against the ground and then completely destroyed another after the match was over.

The two-time defending US Open champion has been dethroned, losing to Elena Rybakina 6-4, 5-7, 6-2 in the final on Saturday. Denied the chance to become the third women’s player to win the American Grand slam tournament three times in a row, Sabalenka beat herself up throughout the 2-hour, 21-minute ordeal that was filled with self-inflicted mistakes. “I

just wanted to let all of that aggression and disappointment go outside (on the court),” Sabalenka said. “It’s really tough to control your emotions when you lose in the final of the Grand Slam and when you were trying to go for (a) three-peat, so I just wanted to let it go.”

Sabalenka said she would not have been nice had she not expressed her frustrations. Mere minutes after the trophy ceremony, the 28-year-old from Belarus said complimentary of Rybakina but also still kicking herself for not living up to her own lofty expectations.

“I wish I could perform a little bit better, but I guess next year,” Sabalenka said. “Obviously, not really happy



with the level I played (at).”

Making her fourth consecutive appearance in the US Open final, Sabalenka committed 35 unforced errors. They clearly took a toll on a player who had been atop the WTA rankings for 99 consecutive weeks. “I was just out there competing, trying to do my best with what I

American,” Sabalenka said. “I just wish I could win it and feel the support even more. Not this year.” Sabalenka failed to win any of the Grand Slams this year, the first time she has come up empty since 2022. But after making such a deep run following some summer struggles, she hopes to take positives out of the US Open moving forward.

“I’ll just keep working hard and keep improving my tennis,” Sabalenka said. “There’s lots of things to take from this tournament. As experience shows, I only come back stronger, and all of these lessons this season definitely already made me stronger. Definitely going to motivate me for the next year to do a better job.”

Messi scores his 19th MLS goal as Inter Miami draws 2-2 with Nashville

TYLER CARMONA
■ Miami

Lionel Messi scored his MLS-leading 19th goal of the season as Inter Miami played first-place Nashville to a 2-2 tie.

Messi appeared to have Miami on its way to its first win over Nashville this season when he scored with a left-footed shot to make it 2-1 in the 62nd. Nashville’s Sam Surridge equalized with his second goal of the night just a minute into stoppage time to keep his club unbeaten in four meetings with Miami this season.

The draw also kept Nashville nine points ahead of second-place Miami in



the Eastern Conference standings.

Nashville struck just four minutes into the match when Surridge finished Andy Najar’s pass for his 14th goal of the season.

The score was evened in the 19th when Nashville defender Reed Baker-

Whiting scored an own goal on a corner kick.

Messi had a shot blocked from outside the box in the 27th minute and sent a free kick wide shortly afterward before breaking through in the second half.

Rodrigo De Paul found Messi outside the penalty area, and the eight-time Ballon d’Or winner sent a left-footed shot into the bottom-left corner for his 19th MLS goal of the season.

Miami was looking to avenge a 4-1 loss to Nashville in the teams’ previous meeting on Aug. 15. Nashville also eliminated Miami from the Concacaf Champions Cup earlier this season. (AP)

Arsenal goes on top of the Premier League table, as Liverpool and Chelsea stumble

JAMES ROBSON ■ London

Bruno Guimaraes sent Arsenal three points clear at the top of the Premier League with a moment of brilliance that was doubly painful for Sunderland.

Not only did the Brazil midfielder set up a 2-0 win for defending champion Arsenal at the Stadium of Light on Saturday. But, as a former Newcastle player, he made the most of his moment, sending a message to the home supporters who booed him by cupping his ears as he ran towards the corner in celebration. Guimaraes joined Arsenal from Sunderland’s fierce north east rival Newcastle in the summer so will have been well aware of

the significance of his goal. Coming on as a halftime substitute, he curled a long-range shot into the top corner in the 58th minute.

Guimaraes’ goal came two minutes after Arsenal’s David Raya saved a penalty from Sunderland’s Enzo Le Fee.

Bukayo Saka sealed the win with a penalty in the seventh minute of added time after Reinildo Mandava was sent off for bringing down the Arsenal forward in the box.

Manchester City is three points behind Arsenal in second place and plays Manchester United on Sunday. Liverpool and Chelsea dropped more points after being held to surprise draws at home. Liverpool’s

big money forwards Alexander Isak and Bradley Barcola couldn’t find a way past winless Fulham in a goalless contest at Anfield.

Chelsea’s fragile defense was exposed again by newly promoted Hull in a 2-2 draw at Stamford Bridge.

Aston Villa’s nightmare start to the season continued with a 2-1 loss at home to Nottingham Forest.

Substitute Zian Flemming scored a 90th-minute winner as Ipswich beat Crystal Palace 3-2, while Bournemouth and Brentford drew 2-2.

Tottenham is still without a goal after a 0-0 draw with Everton. Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta was furious about a penalty given against his team when Ezri Konsa



was adjudged to have pulled down Dan Ballard in the box.

Referees are clamping down on such incidents from set-pieces but Arteta insisted the decision was wrong.

“It’s a huge win, but it could have been something very different,” he said. “It’s unacceptable at this level. Unacceptable. This changes

the course of the season, the championship, and it’s not acceptable. I’ve seen it 10 times to make sure because I watched it live and I said it’s not possible at this level that there’s going to be a penalty.”

The Premier League confirmed the penalty was given for holding. “I’ve been in football for almost 27 years,

28 years. It’s not a penalty in any case, in any game, in any context, in any league,” Arteta said. Liverpool has spent more than half a billion dollars rebuilding its attack over the past two seasons, but was nullified by a Fulham team that had not kept a clean sheet and was pointless going into the game.

In front of a frustrated Anfield crowd, Andoni Iraola’s expensively assembled team was held to a draw for the third time this season, halting the momentum of back-to-back wins, including a midweek victory against Atletico Madrid in the Champions League. British record signing Isak (\$170 million) came up short, while Barcola - signed from Paris

Saint-Germain for \$166 million - failed to produce anything in his first start in the league. It was the same story for Florian Wirtz (\$156 million) and the relatively inexpensive Victor Munoz (\$46 million).

Iraola is still finding his feet in his first season at Liverpool after previously impressing at Bournemouth. But it has been an unconvincing start that has left his team with ground to make up even this early in the campaign.

Chelsea’s defensive problems are becoming increasingly costly. Xabi Alonso’s team has conceded at least two goals in each of its league games and 12 goals in six games in all competitions. Its only clean sheet came

against third division Luton in the English League Cup.

It took a goal from Joao Pedro in the 66th to salvage a draw after Mohamed Belloumi’s double saw Hull rally from 1-0 down to lead 2-1. Morgan Rogers put Chelsea ahead in the seventh minute.

Tottenham remained goalless and winless in the Premier League on Saturday despite a summer of heavy spending including the arrival of Manchester City forwards Omar Marmoush and Savio.

A 0-0 draw at home to Everton made it more than six hours without a goal for Spurs after spending more than \$400 million in market to overhaul a squad that has flirted with relegation in back-to-back seasons. (AP)