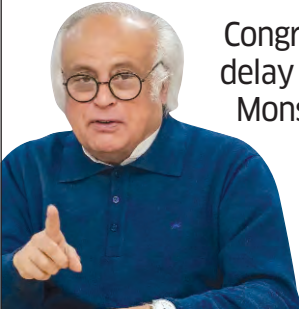


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# Delhi cracks down on illegal buildings

Five MCD officials have been suspended as investigators probe what triggered the building collapse

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

A day after the building collapse in South Delhi's Satya Niketan, the Delhi Government on Monday launched a crackdown, ordering the immediate sealing of all illegal five-storey buildings, while the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) suspended five officials, including South Zone Deputy Commissioner Rakesh Kumar, for alleged lapses. Following an on-site inspection and initial assessment, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has ordered a magisterial inquiry into the incident.

The other suspended officials include Superintending Engineer Ranvir Singh, Executive Engineer (Building) Lalit Kumar Goel, Assistant Engineer (Building) Sunil Chauhan and Junior Engineer (Building) Ashish Kumar of the South Zone. "All illegal constructions



An excavator clears debris during search and rescue operations, a day after a five-storey building housing a boys' hostel collapsed, at Satya Niketan, in New Delhi PANKAJ KUMAR

with more than four floors will be immediately sealed, and strict action will be taken against the guilty officials, leading to their immediate dis-

missal," read a notice issued by the MCD on Monday. "These orders will be implemented with immediate effect."

The suspension orders

were issued by Deputy Law Officer (Vigilance) Nand Kishore of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi

Vigilance Department on the

directions of the civic body's commissioner. The officials have been placed under suspension with immediate effect. They will be entitled to subsistence allowance as admissible under the rules.

MCD Commissioner Sanjeev Khirwar said a magisterial inquiry will shed more light on the immediate cause behind the collapse. "Whether work was being done in the basement will be ascertained after magisterial enquiry," Khirwar said.

An MCD survey in June identified only 19 buildings as dangerous among nearly 28 lakh structures inspected. According to an MCD statement, the building that collapsed on Sunday was constructed in the 1990s on a plot of around 55 square yards in a resettlement colony, and consisted of a basement and ground to the fourth floor.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Students protesting, outside South Campus metro station, for safety audits of PGs in New Delhi on Monday PANKAJ

## Govt can't escape liability: Delhi HC demands answers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Monday ordered a high-level MCD inquiry into the building collapse incident at Satya Niketan that left seven people dead and made it clear that the Government cannot evade responsibility.

The HC, which termed the incident "most unfortunate", said such tragedies are a result of inadequate measures employed by the MCD and other authorities and

directed them to double their rescue efforts.

A bench of Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia said the incident is not only unfortunate but it has evoked deep concern about inadequate housing facilities, including hostels run by Delhi University or the Government, safety and security of students and not-so-adequate measures employed by the MCD and other authorities to regulate such PG facilities.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Hariram Gupta being taken to South Campus police station PTI

## Satya Niketan PG owner, wife, son arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Police arrested on Monday the man alleged to be the owner of the five-storey paying guest building in Satya Niketan that collapsed on Sunday from Bhiwadi in Rajasthan. Hariram Gupta, who is also listed in the records as Hariram Bansal, had gone untraced since the Hostel Daze building collapsed at about 1.30 pm on Sunday. Later in the day, the police also arrested his wife, Urmila, and their son, Mahesh.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

### The ByStander



### PIONEER IN SHORT

#### NATIONAL FILM AWARDS LEAVE DELHI

For the first time in its 72-year history, the National Film Awards ceremony will be held outside Delhi, with President Droupadi Murmu presenting the honours at Kevadia, Gujarat, on September 22, officials said Monday. Kevadia, renamed Ekta Nagar, is home to the 597-foot Statue of Unity, the world's tallest statue, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2018. The first National Awards, held in 1954, took place at Delhi's Vigyan Bhawan, which has hosted most subsequent ceremonies. The 72nd edition, announced in July, marks a break from that tradition. Article 370 has been named Best Feature Film, while Yami Gautam won Best Actress. Mammooty and Kartik Aaryan will share the Best Actor award for Bramayugam and Chandu Champion, respectively.

## Nandigram heads to bypoll

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Election Commission of India on Monday announced bypolls to five Assembly seats in three states including Nandigram, vacated by West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari after he chose to retain Bhabanipur where he had defeated former chief minister Mamata Banerjee.



Representative image

Along with the five Assembly seats across West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, bypolls in Assam's Nagaon Lok Sabha constituency will also be held on October 6, while counting of votes will take place on October 9, according to the poll panel.

Nagaon seat was vacated by Pradyut Bordoloi, who had won from the constituency on a Congress ticket in 2024. He joined the BJP and won from Dispur in the recent Assembly polls.

Adhikari, who led the BJP to its maiden Government in West Bengal, contested and won both Nandigram and Bhabanipur in the April elections.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## Malaysia Airlines, AI Express flights diverted to Chennai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

A Malaysia Airlines flight from Kuala Lumpur to Jeddah was diverted to Chennai on Monday following an engine-related technical issue, prompting a full emergency declaration, an official said.

Malaysia Airlines MH 156 with 186 persons on board landed safely, and appropriate emergency response arrangements were activated at the airport here, he said. "There was a technical issue involving Engine No 2. The airline and relevant technical teams are carrying out further assessment of the aircraft and the issue," a spokesperson said, adding that operations are normal.

The aircraft was towed to the parking bay, and passengers were provided temporary accommodation at the airport before being



Representative image WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

shifted to a nearby hotel. The flight is expected to resume its journey once engineers address the technical fault, sources said.

Separately, an Air India Express flight from Tiruchirappalli to Singapore was diverted to Chennai International Airport due to a technical issue.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Chief Minister Hemant Soren taking his mother Rupri Soren to Hyderabad for better medical treatment at Birsamunda Airport in Ranchi on Monday. PNS



## SC REJECTS ARAVALLI PANEL EXTENSION

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday rejected plea by the High-Powered Committee (HPC) seeking a six-month extension to submit its report on the definition and protection of the Aravalli Hills and directed it to submit the report by November 30.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana directed the panel to submit issue-specific interim reports to enable the court to decide the matter and warned that in case of failure, it will reconstitute the committee.

"Let the panel work day and night to submit a report on the Aravalli issue, if they are unable to do that in two months, we will reconstitute the whole panel," CJI observed.

The CJI also emphasised that the committee sought the extension "with the first stroke of the pen" and appeared to be waiting for his retirement.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## Defence ministry clears ₹1.1 lakh crore hardware buys



The proposals were cleared by the Defence Acquisition Council headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The defence ministry on Monday approved acquisition of military hardware for the three services including radars, advanced light helicopters and mechanical mine layers at an estimated cost of ₹1.10 lakh crore to boost the military's overall combat prowess.

The procurement proposals were cleared by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

"The DAC accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) that is in-principle administrative approval to various acquisition proposals of the defence forces at an estimated cost of about ₹1,10,000 crore," the ministry said.

"For the Indian Army, approval was granted for the procurement of Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) recce vehicles, high mobility vehicles (HMMVs), self-propelled mechanical mine layers (MML), advanced light helicopters (ALHs), trawl tanks and Sarvatra bridge system," it said.

The CBRN recce vehicles will be capable of detecting, identifying, monitoring and marking of areas contaminated with CBRN agents.

The HMMVs are expected to enhance operational capabilities, logistic support and mobility in challenging terrains. "The ALHs will execute complex missions across all terrains and operational situations for the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

# PM Modi event in Vadodara draws huge rush on digital ticketing platform

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In a first, public participation for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's programme in Vadodara on Tuesday was opened for free registration through the BookMyShow event ticketing platform and all seats were booked within an hour.

Modi will lay foundation stones, inaugurate and dedicate to the nation development projects worth more than ₹35,000 crore in the Gujarat city. He will also address a gathering.

In a first-of-its-kind initiative, public participation for Tuesday's prime minister's programme was opened for free registration through

BookMyShow, with the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) using the private digital platform to manage registrations, officials said on Monday.

The response was overwhelming with all seats booked within an hour of registration opening, they said.

Registration was subsequently closed, with over 42,000 more applicants placed on the waiting list, reflecting the immense enthusiasm amongst the public for the programme, officials said.

The programme will also feature a fully digital, technology-enabled entry system. Registered participants will receive a digital M-Ticket on their BookMyShow account,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the centenary celebrations of Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC), in New Delhi PTI

carrying a secure live QR code for entry verification.

The entire process from registration and verification to venue entry and seating is being managed digitally, aimed at making access faster and crowd movement smoother.

The prime minister will dedicate to the nation three important sections of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC), covering 326 route kilometres and developed at a cost of more than ₹20,700 crore. These include the New Sanand (N)-New Makarpura, New Umbergaon-New Saphale and New Saphale-New JNPT sections.

The direct connectivity of Jawaharlal Nehru Port

Authority (JNPA) will facilitate faster movement of EXIM cargo, strengthen links between industrial centres and ports, reduce logistics costs and help decongest Mumbai's railway network.

Modi will also flag off freight train services from New Sanand (North), New Makarpura, New Umbergaon and New JNPT, Mumbai. In addition, he will flag off a new passenger train service between Tanda Road and Vadodara (Pratapnagar).

He will dedicate to the nation the Jobat-Tanda Road new rail line, developed as part of the Chhota Udepur-Dhar project. The rail line will connect remote and tribal areas of Alirajpur with the national rail network.



States Focus

BSL Coke Ovens department launches Safety Week



**PNS ■ BOKARO**

Bokaro Steel Plant's Coke Ovens & Coal Chemicals Department launched Safety Week on Monday to strengthen workplace safety and promote safe working practices. The programme, being held from September 7 to 12, was jointly inaugurated by the Chief General Manager (Coke Ovens & Coal Chemicals) and Chief General Manager (Safety & Fire Services) in the presence of senior officials, employees and contract workers.

The campaign focuses on 'People', 'Line of Fire', 'My Area-My Responsibility' and 'Safety Cultural Transformation', with emphasis on hazard identification, prevention and adherence to safety procedures.

Senior officials stressed that safety is a collective responsibility and urged personnel to remain vigilant and follow prescribed safety standards. Employees showing exemplary commitment to safety were also felicitated.

ESL Steel celebrates Teachers' Day, honouring mentors

**PNS ■ BOKARO**

ESL Steel Limited celebrated Teachers' Day across its CSR project sites, recognising the invaluable role of teachers, coaches and mentors in shaping young minds and nurturing future talent.

The celebrations were organised across 8 Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) and 12 Nandghars under Project Shiksha, engaging more than 900 students in quiz competitions, drawing contests and gift distribution. The activities encouraged creativity and learning while providing students an opportunity to express their gratitude to their teachers.

The celebrations also extended to the ESL Archery Academy, where young archers honoured their coaches and mentors. Since its inception, the Academy has trained 56 archers, providing young athletes with opportunities to hone their skills and pursue sporting excellence. Commenting on the occasion, Ravish Sharma, CEO & Whole-Time Director, ESL Steel Limited, said that teachers and mentors play a profound role not only in shaping what young people learn but also in determining who they become. He reaffirmed ESL Steel's commitment to investing in education, mentorship and youth development through initiatives such as Project Shiksha.



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Dumka woman turns waste into innovative tools to teach adults

**KUMAR PRABHAT ■ DUMKA**

For generations, the women of Lakarjoriya village in Jharkhand carried the weight of silence in their inked thumbprints. An illiterate mark on a government document was a constant, quiet reminder of exclusion. Today, that narrative has shifted inside a humble primary school room, driven by the sheer will, empathy, and ingenuity of forty-five-year-old Prabha Soren.

When Prabha stepped forward as a volunteer teacher under the New India Literacy Programme, the challenges were steep. The adult women of the village were exhausted by long hours in the fields and households, hesitant to embrace formal classrooms, and terrified of rigid textbooks. With no official teaching materials provided, Prabha's early sessions were met with sparse atten-



Prabha Soren engaging neo-literate women with inventive, low-cost learning kits on International Literacy Day. PNS

dance and creeping discouragement. Everything changed during an inspection visit when the district coordinator reminded her that adults cannot be taught like school children; their curiosity must be awakened through familiarity, creativity, and joy.

Heeding the call, Prabha turned her gaze toward the waste heaps of her village. Broken mobile casings, shat-

tered glass bangles, used calendar sheets, shoe cartons, palm fronds, discarded wall clocks, and mounds of plastic bottle caps became the raw clay for her pedagogy. Over three months, she transformed junk into interactive wonders: magic calculation boxes, alphabet wheels, and vibrant charts adorned with native Jadopatiya folk art. She wove lessons in both Hindi and Santali, teaching numbers through colorful clay marbles and counting days through repurposed wedding cards. Learning ceased to be a daunting chore and became a celebration of local culture and hands-on discovery.

The result was an undeniable groundswell. Women who once avoided the center began arriving early, eager to explore the colorful contraptions and practice their letters. When study fatigue crept in, Prabha handed them paints to capture their every-

day lives, restoring a sense of playfulness they had long surrendered to adulthood. Her work quickly caught regional attention, earning her a delegation seat at a prestigious national educational conference in Guwahati, Assam, where her indigenous methods turned heads.

More than an educator, Prabha has become a lifeline for her community. Learners like Kushila, Savitri, and Lilumuni find in her a confidante who listens to their household struggles and helps them claim rightful welfare entitlements. Through resourcefulness, dignity, and tireless care, Prabha Soren proved that empowering a community requires neither grand funding nor distant expertise—only the vision to see beauty in the discarded, and the heart to guide trembling hands into writing their own destinies.

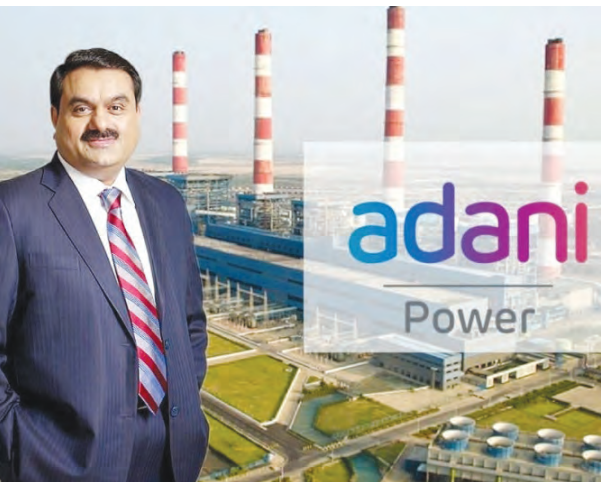
Adani Power recognised for outstanding ESG

**Pioneer News Service ■ Ahmedabad**

Adani Power Limited, India's largest private sector thermal power generator, today said that it has further improved upon its Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) performance, as assessed by NSE Sustainability, with a score of 66, against FY26 score of 65.

APL continues to rank higher than all other major Indian thermal, mixed fuel, and integrated energy companies, reflecting its unwavering ESG commitment and focus on sustainable growth with responsible business practices. It continues in the "Aspiring" category.

NSE Sustainability, a subsidiary of NSE Indices and part



of the National Stock Exchange of India Group, is a SEBI-registered ESG Rating Provider. As part of its annual ESG assessment, it evaluates 500 listed companies in India,

providing investors and stakeholders an independent assessment of a company's ESG credentials and long-term value creation potential. A high ESG score gives share-

holders greater confidence that the company is well-governed, resilient to emerging risks, attractive to long-term investors, and positioned to create sustainable value over time.

Adani Power's continuous focus on a wide range of ESG initiatives and its operational excellence is benchmarked against best industry standards. It has implemented advanced low emission technologies like Ultra-Supercritical Units to reduce its carbon footprint and has invested in continuous monitoring and corrective systems. In addition to energy efficiency measures, the company has prioritized water conservation and responsible waste disposal during operations.

Socially, the company has expanded community development programs, emphasizing education, healthcare, and skill-building for communities. Initiatives such as scholarship programs for underprivileged students, health camps, and livelihood enhancement projects reflect Adani Power's commitment to inclusive growth.

On Governance aspects, Adani Power surpasses regulatory requirements prescribed under the framework. The percentage of independent directors in Nomination and Remuneration Committee is better than the compliance requirements. Similarly, the Audit Committee's independent director representation is better than the statutory

guidelines and the composition of the Risk Management Committee is better than the required threshold of independent directors.

The company has also adopted stringent supplier and contractor ESG standards, ensuring responsible practices throughout its value chain.

In other recent ratings, APL achieved an exceptional score of 71/100 in Corporate Sustainability Assessment (CSA) by S&P Global, and 4.3/5.0 by FTSE Russel ESG rating. For FY26, Care Edge ESG Rating scored APL at 80/100 ('Leadership' position), outperforming the industry median by 35%. These independent appraisals make APL remain committed to the cause of ESG.

Tata Steel Foundation felicitates mountaineers with visual impairment

**Pioneer News Service ■ Jamshedpur**

Tata Steel Foundation today felicitated mountaineers with visual impairment who undertook an extraordinary high-altitude expedition to Dzo-Jongo Peak at 20,000 Feet in Ladakh, as part of Project Peak Potential, an initiative aimed at demonstrating the power of inclusion, determination and human potential.

The felicitation ceremony, held at SABAL Centre, Sakchi, Jamshedpur, brought together the mountaineers, members of the Tata Steel Foundation team and the media to share the remarkable journey behind the expedition, from the remote villages of West Singhbhum to the high-altitude landscapes of the Himalayas.



The event, themed "From Noamundi to Dzo-Jongo: A Journey of Possibility," featured a visual walkthrough of the journey and the experiences of the mountaineers who participated in the expedition.

At the centre of the story are

Shekhar Gope, 24, from Todanhatu, and Dhiroj Kumar, 23, from Kadamdiha, both of whom have 100% visual impairment. Having joined the Tata Steel Foundation's Sabal initiative in 2022, the two underwent training in independent mobility, outdoor

preparedness and mountaineering as they progressively challenged conventional perceptions of what is possible. As part of the expedition, Shekhar successfully summited Dzo-Jongo Peak, while Dhiroj reached the expedition's base camp at an altitude

of 16,732 feet before having to discontinue his ascent due to health concerns.

The media interaction also featured experience-sharing by Shekhar and Dhiroj, along with fellow mountaineers Bijoo Mumu and Sunita Soren, offering insights into their training, challenges, teamwork and experiences during the expedition.

Speaking on the occasion, Capt. Amitabh, Head Skill Development, Tata Steel Foundation, shared his thoughts on the determination, preparation and resilience required to achieve seemingly impossible goals, while the mountaineers were felicitated for their remarkable achievements. Project Peak Potential builds on the Foundation's efforts under Sabal to create pathways for persons with disabilities to

Congress leaders mourn Sudiwya Kumar's sudden demise

**PNS ■ Deoghar**

Jharkhand Pradesh Congress Committee General Secretary and District 20-Point Programme Vice-Chairman Dr. Munnam Sanjay has expressed deep grief and condolences over the sudden demise of Sudiwya Kumar Sonu, Minister for Urban Development, Tourism, Art & Culture, Sports & Youth Affairs, and Higher Education in the Jharkhand government.

Dr. Sanjay described the untimely demise of Sudiwya Kumar Sonu as an irreparable loss to Jharkhand's political and public life. He said Sonu was a dedicated, hardworking and committed public representative who had devoted himself to serving the people. His passing, he added, has deprived the state of an active and committed leader associated with public welfare.

Praying for eternal peace for



the departed soul, Dr. Sanjay expressed his heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family, relatives, supporters and well-wishers, and prayed to God to give them strength and courage to withstand the immense loss.

Former Jharkhand minister Badal Patralekh also expressed profound sorrow over the demise. Describing the news as deeply distressing and heartbreaking, Patralekh said that Sudiwya Kumar Sonu's simple, gentle and sensitive personal-

ity would always remain alive in the memories of those who knew him. He extended his deepest condolences to the bereaved family, relatives, colleagues, supporters and well-wishers, and prayed for peace for the departed soul and strength, patience and support for the grieving family. Meanwhile, Pradesh Congress Secretary Prof. Uday Prakash, Pradesh Coordinator Mukund Das, Congress leader Dinesh Kumar Mandal and several other party leaders.

Dumka gears up for Sept 12 National Lok Adalat

**PNS ■ DUMKA**

Aiming to maximize the settlement of pending litigation through alternate dispute resolution mechanisms, Principal District and Sessions Judge-cum-Chairman of the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Dumka, Sudhanshu Kumar Shashi, convened a high-level strategy session with top police administration officials on Monday. The coordination meeting focused on fine-tuning ground preparations to ensure the upcoming National Lok Adalat, slated for September 12, achieves a record rate of case disposal.

Presiding over the deliberations, the Principal District Judge highlighted the pivotal role of the Lok Adalat system



PDJ Sudhanshu Kumar Shashi leads a preparatory meet with police officials for the National Lok Adalat in Dumka. PNS

and other state departments. To ensure grassroots outreach, the administration outlined plans for an expansive awareness campaign covering every block and panchayat across Dumka. Para-Legal Volunteers will be deployed extensively to inform rural populations of the benefits of Lok Adalats, supported by targeted publicity across various media platforms to drive maximum public turnout.

The MoU with NASSCOM establishes a framework for cooperation in deeptech and AI, supporting Indian companies expanding into Dubai. The FKCCI agreement focuses on trade and investment, including a Virtual Dubai Desk to guide businesses. Dubai Chambers welcomed 7,579 new Indian companies in H1 2026.

**Dubai Chambers signs MoUs in Bengaluru to advance Agentic AI and strengthen trade ties with India**  
**PNS ■ Ranchi**

Dubai Chambers has signed two strategic Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) in Bengaluru to boost collaboration in Agentic AI and reinforce bilateral trade and investment. The agreements were concluded with NASSCOM and FKCCI during a high-level delegation led by H.E. Mohammad Ali Rashed Lootah, President and CEO of Dubai Chambers.

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Recruitment Reform Yatra reaches Lohardaga

**Binod Prasad ■ Lohardaga**

A statewide Recruitment System Reform Yatra, demanding transparent and corruption-free recruitment in Jharkhand, reached Lohardaga on Monday as part of its ongoing campaign across all 24 districts. Led by student leader Devendranath Mahato under the banner of Abhyarthi Nyay Manch, the campaign seeks reforms in the recruitment process conducted through the Jharkhand Public Service Commission (JPSC) and Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission (JSSC).

On arrival in Lohardaga, members of the yatra paid floral tributes to tribal icon Bhagwan Birsa Munda at his statue on the banks of the Shankh River and pledged to continue raising issues concerning the rights and future of students and job aspi-



rants. Mahato said the campaign was aimed at securing a transparent, impartial and accountable recruitment system and was not confined to individual JPSC or JSSC examinations.

He urged the government to take concrete measures to fill vacant posts and create dignified employment opportunities for young people. Paying tribute to the late Jharkhand Education Minister Sudiwya Kumar Sonu, Mahato

said the Lohardaga leg of the yatra was dedicated to his memory and expressed condolences to his family and supporters.

On the recent controversy involving MLA Jairam Mahato and the police administration, he called for an impartial investigation, saying that no conclusion should be reached before all facts were examined. Mahato also criticised remarks suggesting that youths could turn to

activities such as selling pakoras as an employment option. He said young people were seeking stable and dignified employment along with a fair recruitment process. The yatra began on August 24 from Nemra village in Ramgarh district and is scheduled to cover all 24 districts. Mahato said the movement would be intensified if the government failed to address the concerns of job aspirants.



■ States Focus ■

Sudivya Kumar’s ashes immersed in Barakar River



PNS  
■ Ranchi

The ashes of late Jharkhand minister Sudivya Sonu were immersed in the Barakar River in Giridih on Monday, with his son Shreyas performing the rituals in the presence of other family members.

Shreyas, who had also performed the last rites and lit the funeral pyre for his father, carried out the immersion ceremony on Monday.

The sudden demise of Sudivya Sonu has plunged his family and people across Jharkhand into grief. He passed away at around 4 am on September 6, leaving political leaders, supporters and the general public shocked.

The state government has declared two days of state mourning across Jharkhand on Sunday and Monday in view of his death. A large number of people had gath-

ered in Giridih to pay their last respects and have a final glimpse of the late minister.

What has made his death particularly difficult for many to come to terms with is that Sonu had remained active in public life until September 5. He had continued to meet people and attend various public programmes just a day before his sudden death.

His unexpected demise the following morning left people across the state stunned, with many still struggling to accept that a leader who was seen among the public only a day earlier was no longer alive.

Chief Minister Hemant Soren had also stayed in Giridih on Sunday night following the death of the minister, as condolences continued to pour in from across the political spectrum and beyond.

Marandi questions ex DGP’s role in JSSC-CGL exam irregularities

Pioneer News Service  
■ Ranchi

In the JSSC-CGL exam case, while a CID investigation is underway on one hand, politics over it has also intensified on the other. Using this as an opportunity, Leader of the Opposition Babulal Marandi has questioned the role of the state’s former DGP, Anurag Gupta, and demanded an inquiry.

Posting on his X (social media) handle, the Leader of the Opposition stated that State Government hesitation to take action against police officer Anurag Gupta—who is facing allegations of influencing the JSSC-CGL investigation, misleading it, and destroying digital evidence—is raising several questions.

Babulal Marandi asked what was the reason that Anurag Gupta was so bent on disproving the paper leak allegations made by the students? Why was he openly trying to dismiss these allegations in front of the media? Today, the students and unemployed youth of Jharkhand are asking these exact questions. How can one trust the CID investigation and its impartiality without taking action against an officer whose very role raises serious questions about influencing the probe?

Meanwhile, against the widespread rigging in all recruitment exams includ-



ing JPSC and JSSC CGL, the BJP has completed preparations for a state-wide agitation announced from September 8. Their demands include the withdrawal of fake cases filed by the Jharkhand government against peacefully protesting students, the arrest of those guilty of exam irregularities, and a CBI probe into the entire matter. The BJP has assigned responsibilities to its prominent leaders across various districts for this movement. These leaders will take charge of the agitation in those districts.

In this regard, State General Secretary Amar Kumar Bauri stated that under this four-day extensive movement called by the BJP, protests along with the ‘gherao’ (blockade) of DC and SP offices will be held across all 24 district headquarters systematically from September 8 to 11. As per the instructions of the party’s state president Aditya Sahu, different prominent leaders have been assigned responsibilities for this agitation in various districts.

RIMS reviews security arrangements, plans QRT and wireless communication system

Pioneer News Service  
■ Ranchi

The Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) administration has decided to strengthen security arrangements across the hospital campus following incidents of altercations involving patients, attendants and hospital personnel.

A high-level security review meeting was held at RIMS under the chairmanship of Director Prof. Dr D.K. Sinha. The meeting was attended by the medical superintendent, additional medical



superintendent, estate officer, administrative officer, DMS and officials of the Home Guard, Special Auxiliary Police (SAP) and Jharkhand Armed Police (JAP).

During the meeting, various sensitive and critical areas of the hospital were

Conviction for attempted rape requires proof of an act: HC

Pioneer News Service  
■ Ranchi

The Jharkhand High Court altered an appellant’s conviction for attempted rape under Sections 376/511 of the Indian Penal Code to one under Section 354 of the IPC after finding no specific evidence of an act sufficiently proximate to the commission of rape.

The Court observed that entering a woman’s house late at night and committing an indecent act is not sufficient to establish the offence of attempted rape under Section 376/511 of the IPC. Making this significant legal ruling in a 1999 case, a single bench of Jharkhand High Court Justice Pradip Kumar Srivastava substantially modified a lower court’s order. The court set aside the 4-year rigorous imprisonment sentence handed down to the accused under Section 376/511 IPC and instead categorized the offense under



Section 354 as an assault with intent to outrage the modesty of a woman.

The Court, however, affirmed his conviction for house trespass under Section 452 of the IPC. The Court was hearing a criminal appeal

against a judgment of the Additional Sessions Judge, Ghatsila, convicting the appellant of attempted rape and house trespass.

The incident dates back to the late hours of December 27, 1999. In a village in the

East Singhbhum district, a woman was sleeping at home while no male family members were present. According to the allegations, at around 12:00 AM, the accused entered the room by opening the door with ill

intent. He misbehaved with the woman and attempted to molest her by lifting her clothes.

An FIR in this regard was registered at the police station on December 31, 1999. After the police filed a chargesheet, the Additional Sessions Judge of Ghatsila, upon hearing arguments from all parties, convicted the accused under Section 376/511 IPC on July 28, 2006, sentencing him to 4 years of rigorous imprisonment. A criminal appeal against this lower court ruling was subsequently filed in the High Court.

During the High Court proceedings, the Amicus Curiae argued that the statements of the victim and witnesses failed to establish the essential legal ingredients required for an attempt to commit rape.

Upon analyzing the evidence, the High Court clarified that while the victim’s statement established that

the accused entered the house at night and behaved indecently, no direct or specific overt act pointing toward an attempt to rape was proven that would constitute an offence under Section 376/511. The court held that the act of the accused fell under the category of assaulting a woman with intent to outrage her modesty, which is punishable under Section 354 of the IPC.

In its order, the court noted that more than 26 years had elapsed since the incident occurred, and the accused had no prior criminal history. Furthermore, the accused had already spent approximately 8 months in jail during the trial and appeal proceedings. Based on these facts, the High Court reduced the sentence of the accused to the period already undergone in custody and ordered his release from bail bonds.

‘Drunk students fought with each other, probe underway’  
Police deny abduction bid on MLA’s son in Ranchi

Pioneer News Service  
Ranchi

A dispute between two groups of students allegedly under the influence of alcohol outside the main gate of Amity University in Ranchi’s Dhurwa police station area triggered a police alert on Monday after LJP (Ram Vilas) MLA Janardan Paswan reported that his son, Saurav Paswan, had been abducted.

Police, however, said a preliminary investigation suggests that the incident was linked to a drunken brawl between two groups of students and did not prima facie appear to be a case of kidnapping.

Ranchi City SP Paras Rana said that some Amity University students were allegedly consuming alcohol outside the university’s main gate when they got into an argument with another group over an unspecified issue. The argument soon escalated into a physical altercation, during which Saurav Paswan was also allegedly assaulted.

Following the incident, MLA Janardan Paswan contacted the police and informed them that his son had been abducted. Taking the information seriously, a police team was immediately dispatched to the area. Officers ques-



tioned people present at the spot and gathered details about the sequence of events.

According to the City SP, the preliminary investigation revealed that some members of the other group had taken Saurav Paswan in their vehicle after the altercation. He was later dropped off

near the New Assembly area. Police subsequently located him and brought him to the police station.

Rana said Saurav Paswan had also allegedly consumed alcohol at the time of the incident.

“The preliminary investigation does not suggest that this was a case of kidnapping. Prima facie, the incident appears to have stemmed from a dispute and assault between students who were under the influence of alcohol,” the City SP said.

He added that the police were investigating all aspects of the incident and that further action would be taken in accordance with the law based on the FIR and the findings of the investigation.

Police said they have identified the youths allegedly involved in assaulting Saurav Paswan.

Their individual roles are being examined and further action will follow based on the investigation.

The incident has also raised questions over the consumption of alcohol outside the university campus and the security arrangements in the area. Police are continuing to investigate the circumstances surrounding the altercation and the subsequent movement of Saurav Paswan.

BJP questions Govt over cases against students and Exam results

Pioneer News Service  
■ Ranchi

Jharkhand BJP Chief Spokesperson Pratul Shahdeo said that registering criminal cases carrying serious charges, including provisions relating to attempt to murder, against students associated with the agitation is deeply disturbing. The government must explain the basis on which such stringent provisions were invoked against young students whose future is at stake.

He said that the Central Government and six other state governments have recently approached the Supreme Court and filed interlocutory applications seeking relief in cases connected with student



protests in Delhi, setting an example of taking a sympathetic and legally permissible approach. In contrast, why has the Jharkhand Government failed to initiate the appropriate legal process before the High Court for withdrawal of such cases or for providing other judicial relief? The

government’s inaction raises serious questions about its priorities and intentions.

Pratul further questioned the State Government’s handling of the examination-result matter before the High Court. He said the government cancelled the results of two dozen examinations through a single order, but the order was drafted so weakly that the High Court granted relief on grounds relating to the principles of natural justice. He also alleged that the government did not effectively oppose the plea even when objections regarding the petition being defective were raised.

He said that when the government cancelled the examinations, ministers

went to the protest site, danced with the students and even offered them juice. But these gestures were nothing more than an eyewash and political theatrics. The ministers had also publicly announced that the cases against students would be withdrawn, yet no concrete initiative has been taken in that direction to date.

“If the government was genuinely concerned about the students, it should have acted through the legal process instead of staging political optics at the protest site. The gap between its promises and its actions exposes the government’s lack of seriousness and raises serious questions about its intentions,” Pratul concluded.

HC stays cancellation of JSSC-CGL appointments

Pioneer News Service  
■ Ranchi

The Jharkhand High Court has put on hold the state government’s decision to cancel appointments made through the Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission Combined Graduate Level (JSSC-CGL) recruitment examination conducted under Advertisement No. 10/2023.

The interim relief was granted while hearing a petition filed by Niroj and 244 other employees, who have challenged the government’s decision to annul their appointments. Justice Deepak Roshan directed the state government and the JSSC to submit their respective responses by September 15.

The petitioners were represented by senior advocate Rajiv Ranjan, assisted by advocates Dipankar and Shrey Mishra.

Through their petition, the employees have questioned both the cancellation of the JSSC-CGL examination and the subsequent termination of appointments made through the recruitment exercise.

The case stems from the

state government’s decision last month to cancel a number of recruitment examinations following findings that emerged during a CID investigation into alleged irregularities in the examination system. The government had also ordered a broader investigation into recruitment examinations conducted in the state since 2014.

Subsequently, the Personnel, Administrative Reforms and Rajbhasha Department issued a series of notifications concerning the cancellation, suspension and investigation of different recruitment examinations.

As per the government’s notification, a total of 22 examinations were cancelled, six examination processes were suspended and 17 examinations were included in the scope of the investigation.

The High Court’s interim decision has offered temporary relief to the 245 employees who approached the court. The matter is expected to be considered further after the state government and the JSSC submit their responses on the issues raised in the petition.



Babulal Marandi Giridih 1: LoP Babulal Marandi meet family members of Minister late Sudivya Kumar Sonu in Giridih on Monday. Pix by Vinay Murmu



State Bank of India  
Central Recruitment & Promotion Department  
Corporate Centre, Mumbai  
Phone: 022-22820427



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Date: 04.09.2026

General Manager (RP & PM)



## IN FOCUS



Devotees take part in Sri Siddharoodha Swami Math yatra in Hubballi

# India’s global reach growing despite turmoil: Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Panaji

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said India’s reach in the diplomatic world was increasing and asserted that the country had maintained the momentum of its economic growth despite global geopolitical turmoil.

He said India had concluded nine free trade agreements (FTAs) by 2026, noting wider economic engagement helped the country record GDP growth rate of 7.8 per cent for the first quarter (April-June) of the financial year 2026-27.

Addressing a function organised in Panaji to confer the President’s Colour on the Goa Police, Shah noted the global diplomatic landscape had remained turbulent over the past few years due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and now the conflict involving the US, Iran and the Gulf countries.

He pointed out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelled to 22 countries over the past year, while heads of state from around



Union Home Minister Amit Shah receives a memento from Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant in Bambolim, Goa

15 countries visited India during the same period.

“At a time when the whole world was grappling with uncertainty over its economic growth because of this (geopolitical) turmoil, we engaged with other countries, presented strategic partnerships and

maintained the momentum of our economic growth,” Shah said. India has entered into concrete agreements in areas such as defence, technology, energy, investment and trade, he stressed.

Shah said India had concluded nine free trade agreements by

2026, while FTAs had been proposed with 38 countries as effective trade arrangements. He said India was pursuing FTAs with the UAE, Australia, the UK, Oman, New Zealand and the European Union with the objective of increasing trade. “This is also one of the reasons why, in the first quarter of this (fiscal) year, our GDP recorded a robust growth of 7.8 per cent,” Shah said.

The Union minister said India had shared its achievements in different fields with the rest of the world and assisted several countries in disaster relief and capacity building. “India has shared its achievements in Digital Public Infrastructure with the world and provided assistance to several countries in the areas of disaster relief and capacity building,” he said. The BJP leader emphasised that it is because of PM Modi’s consistent efforts and global outreach that India’s diplomacy has been able to establish its place firmly in the world today.

“Whatever the issue facing the world, the entire world looks at what the Prime Minister of India has to say and what his perspective is on that issue. After a long time, it is our leader Narendra Modi who has earned this respect for India in the world,” Shah commented. He said Modi envisaged India as a fully developed country by the 100th year of its independence.

“PM Modi has placed before all of us the vision of a developed India by 2047. He has envisioned a developed India that, when the country completes 100 years of independence, will be number one in the world in every field,” Shah stated.

The Union minister recalled that when this vision was put forward, there were many debates and arguments, but gradually, this vision has transformed into a resolve of 140 crore Indians.

“Today, every Indian believes that, yes, on August 15, 2047, our nation will be the best in the world and we will be number one in every field,” he said.

## Manipuri musician dies after assault in Delhi’s Kilokari village

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

The Sunlight Colony police station received a PCR call regarding the beating of C Vikram Singh, a Manipur native who has been residing in Kilokari village for several years. A preliminary enquiry revealed that Singh, who

belonged to the Meitei community, objected to men creating a nuisance outside his house.

He sustained injuries during the attack, in which the men rained blows and punches on him, police said.

Singh’s son Yaiphaba rushed him to Holy Family Hospital, where he later succumbed to his injuries, they said.

Police initiated an investigation into the circumstances leading to the assault and Singh’s death. The North East Students Society, Delhi University (NESSDU) condoled Singh’s death and described him as a “respected Manipuri musician”.

## Well found under demolished mosque debris, ASI begins probe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Saharanpur

An Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) team began examining a well on Monday, found during debris removal following the demolition of a mosque located on the collectorate premises, officials said.

The well, approximately 20 feet deep and 1.5 meters wide, with iron sheets, was discovered beneath the debris on Sunday during removal work, triggering a debate over its antiquity and historical significance.



After the discovery, Sadar Sub-Divisional Magistrate Subodh Kumar said an ASI team would examine the well to ascertain its age and historical background.

Officials said they barricaded the area on Sunday to prevent anyone from accessing it. Kumar said three ASI officials reached the site on Monday afternoon and began their examination in the presence of local administration officials. Vikas Tyagi, a former Bajrang Dal convenor and the complainant in the matter, claimed that a temple might

have existed at the site before the mosque was built. However, Congress MP Imran Masood said the well was part of the mosque and was used in earlier times to meet the requirement of water for wuzu, or ablation before prayers. “The ASI officials measured the depth of the well after placing a ladder inside and examined its interior. They also carried out photography and videography and collected samples of soil and brick remnants from inside the well as part of their investigation,” Kumar said.

## Delhi cracks down on illegal buildings

However, some locals claimed that the building was nearly 50 years old and was built in the 1970s. Officials said that permission had originally been granted only for a ground-plus-one structure in these resettlement colonies.

The civic body said that the structure had no sanctioned building plan, nor was any complaint against it received. Officials said the area had been developed as a resettlement colony in the 1970s, with small plots allotted to residents.

The CM said the inquiry was under way and added that if negligence by any other officers emerged during the investigation, action would be taken against them as well. The CM said that according to the initial information, the pillars of the old building had weakened and collapsed after water accumulated in its basement, resulting in the entire building collapsing.

“Approximately 80 per cent of the debris has been cleared, with only the basement debris remaining. Water had accumulated in the basement, and the combination of this with ongoing repair work on the old structure led to the collapse,” she said.

The CM said the injured students are receiving proper medical treatment and their parents are receiving updates about them. “The situation is being closely monitored by Health Minister JP Nadda, Home Minister Amit Shah and the prime minister,” she added.

The chief minister also said that the building adjacent to the one collapsed will be demolished. “Residents of the collapsed building and adjacent unsafe buildings have been evacuated. The standing building, which appears extremely dangerous, will be demolished once the debris is cleared,” she said. A structural audit will be conducted of all such buildings, and strict action will follow, she said.

## Govt can’t escape liability: Delhi HC...

“The responsibility, prima facie, in our opinion for such mishaps does not lie solely on the owner of the PG hostel. Rather the responsibility goes to the university authorities as also the MCD which is responsible to ensure every single development in Delhi such as construction of a building or repair, etc is carried out strictly in accordance with the building bylaws or other regulations regulating the building’s development,” the bench said.

“The court’s remarks came while issuing notice to the Centre, Delhi Government, MCD, Delhi Police and NHRC on a PIL by law student Aniket Kumar Gupta, seeking urgent medical care and rehabilitation of affected students, Rs 1 crore compensation to the kin of the deceased and preservation of crucial evidence relating to the collapse.

The petition also sought a structural audit of all PG accommodations.

The court directed the authorities to file their replies within 10 days and listed the matter on September 25.

It noted the assurance given by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, Delhi Government, MCD and Delhi Police, that the rescue operation is being carried out in full swing and no stone will be left unturned.

The court noted that the PIL has been filed in the wake of the “most unfortunate incident” that happened on Sunday in Satya Niketan locality. It said many of the affected students have been taken to hospital and others are still presumably lying inside the debris crying for help and their lives.

The court directed that the MCD at the highest executive level should take up the issue and get an enquiry conducted as to whether the buildings which collapsed in the incident were constructed as per any valid permission or not.

“If it is found that the buildings were construct-

ed without valid permission, the MCD shall fix the responsibility of the officials concerned for such lapse. “MCD shall also prepare a report indicating whether the buildings in which PG hostels are housed have been constructed in terms of requisite permission and whether there has been any violation to such permissions or building bylaws. The report shall also include how many students are residing in these PG hostels,” the bench said.

It noted that the buildings that collapsed housed students studying in DU-affiliated colleges and many of them were from other cities.

The bench noted that DU does not provide adequate hostel facilities to its outstation students, due to which the students and their parents are constrained to take shelter in these PG hostels.

The court directed the MCD to explain in its affidavit whether there are any statutory or executive regulations in place regulating the PG hostels. It asked DU to indicate in its response how many outstation students take admission in colleges affiliated to it and how many hostels are being run by it or the Government.

The bench asked Mehta to impress upon the Government to provide hostel facility to students, which the law officer said appeared to be the root cause of the incident.

“It is not only very dangerous but they are causing threat to the lives, security of these students. This is because of absolutely inadequate number of hostels. In Delhi, students from all over the country come to study. That’s the reputation these institutions enjoy,” it said.

The court said if the authorities invest in such measures, they are investing in children who are the future of the country.

“It is a very pathetic situation so far as the number of hostels run by the Government and universities is concerned. Some statutory mechanism should be put in place to regulate these PGs. These PG owners recklessly indulge in construction. If the permission is for two-storey building, the construction is made for six, foundation remains the same and this collapse is probably a result of such construction,” it remarked.

“There were 50 young students who were at the threshold of entering their lives and seven of them have died. Majority of them are perhaps still lying under the debris, there can’t be anything more sad than this. You (Government) can’t escape your responsibility,” the bench said, adding that every second year such incidents are happening.

Mehta and the petitioner’s counsel flagged concerns about videos being circulated on social media showing persons injured or trapped under the debris and urged the court to issue directions stopping the circulation of such sensitive videos.

“Death can’t be sensationalised. No tragedy can be sensationalised,” Mehta said.

## Satya Niketan PG owner, wife, son arrested

The investigators noted that the Satya Niketan property was registered in Urmila’s name, while the electricity connection was in the names of Hariram and Mahesh. According to the police, Mahesh was in charge of the day-to-day management of the building.

An FIR was filed at the South Campus police station pursuant to sections 105, 290 and 125 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which cover culpable homicide not amounting to murder, negligent conduct in the repair or construction of buildings and an act endangering life or personal safety. A lookout circular was issued, and his passport details were obtained to prevent him from leaving the country. Search operations were carried out at various addresses in Delhi, Gurugram, and Uttar Pradesh by 10 teams drawn from the district police, the Special Staff, and other units.

Delhi Police teams carried out raids on suspected hideouts and travelled to Sector 23 in

## FROM PAGE - 1

Gurugram, where Gupta has been running Hariram Paints and Hardware for approximately 15 years. People in the area said the shop had been locked for two days. The locals referred to him as a long-established hardware dealer who owns several properties in both Sector 23 and Palam Vihar.

The current investigation focuses on questions of ownership, control, and the work underway at the time the building failed. The police are looking into who authorised the repairs and renovations in the basement and on the ground floor, whether the work was legal, and whether the water that collected in the basement following the recent rain weakened the foundations.

They are also investigating who leased the premises for use as a boys’ PG, who received the rent, and how many people were living in the building at the time it collapsed. A key area of inquiry is the difference between the building as it was planned and the building that actually stood on the 55-square-yard plot. According to civic records referred to by the investigators, there was no approved plan for the multi-storey building that eventually occupied the site, that altering the basement of an existing building is considered hazardous, and that extra floors were beyond what the resettlement colony was allowed to have.

The investigating officer (IO) is also reviewing previous statements that claimed relatives of people associated with the neighbouring plots had taken part in running or looking after the property.

The documents retrieved so far, such as the tenancy records, are being cross-referenced with municipal and electricity records. Gupta’s movements after Sunday afternoon, when the shop was closed, and after he left Gurugram, constitute a separate aspect of the case, a police official said.

The collapse is being attributed to alleged negligence in the maintenance and modification of an occupied building. The police State that responsibility will be determined not just for the deaths but also for allowing the students to stay in the building while work was going on below. Gupta, Urmila and Mahesh are still in custody as the investigation continues.

## Nandigram heads to bypoll

He defeated Trinamool Congress chief Banerjee in her Bhabanipur stronghold by 15,105 votes and subsequently chose to retain the Kolkata seat, resigning as the MLA from Nandigram. He had also defeated Banerjee in Nandigram in the 2021 Assembly polls.

The other West Bengal seat headed for a bypoll is Rejinagar, which was vacated by Aam Janata Unnayan Party (AJUP) chief Humayun Kabir.

Kabir, a former Trinamool Congress leader who floated the AJUP after his expulsion from the party, won both Rejinagar and Naoda in the 2026 Assembly elections.

In Tamil Nadu, bypolls will be held in the Madurantakam (SC) and Dharapuram (SC) Assembly constituencies, which were won in the recent elections by AIADMK’s Maragatham Kumaravel and P Sathyabama, respectively.

The two were among a group of rebel AIADMK legislators who backed Chief Minister Vijay’s Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) Government in a floor test. Kumaravel and Sathyabama later resigned as MLAs and joined the ruling TVK, necessitating the bypolls.

Puducherry’s Thattanchavady seat was vacated by Chief Minister and All India N R Congress chief N Rangasamy, who had won from both Thattanchavady and Mangalam in the Assembly elections. Rangasamy opted to retain Mangalam and resigned from Thattanchavady.

The Model Code of Conduct has come into

force with immediate effect in the districts concerned, the EC said.

Two other Lok Sabha seats — Shillong in Meghalaya and Basirhat in West Bengal — remain vacant and polls have not been scheduled there yet.

Shillong fell vacant following the death of Voice of the People Party (VPP) MP Ricky Andrew J Syngkon in February this year, while Basirhat has remained vacant since the death of Trinamool Congress MP Haji Sheikh Nurul Islam in September 2024.

## Malaysia Airlines, AI Express flights diverted...

In view of the issue, a “local standby was declared” at Chennai airport, and the necessary emergency response arrangements were kept ready. The aircraft landed safely and vacated the runway under its own power.

Following the declaration of a local standby, the airport’s operational and emergency agencies were kept on alert, with necessary arrangements put in place to facilitate the aircraft’s safe arrival. The airline’s engineering and technical teams are assessing the reported technical issue. “All operations are normal,” the official added.

## Doon court acquits Balkrishna in forged...

However, the court found major gaps in the evidence. It held that scanned copies of the educational certificates produced by the CBI were not admissible because the required legal procedure for electronic evidence was not followed.

The court also gave little credence to the Central Forensic Science Laboratory handwriting report, noting that the expert had acknowledged limitations in comparing photocopies. Besides, some prosecution witnesses were also found unreliable, while one key witness had turned hostile. The order stated that Balkrishna and Dwivedi are currently on bail, but the bail bonds furnished by them would be cancelled.

## SC rejects Aravalli panel extension

In its plea, the apex court-appointed Aravalli HPC asked the top court to extend the deadline for submission of its final report by six months, saying it needs more time for a “comprehensive and defensible” assessment of the Aravalli range. The bench said that the committee must hear all stakeholders, including tribal communities in Rajasthan and Gujarat, and may submit issue-specific interim reports to enable the court to resolve urgent questions separately.

The court then listed the matter for December 2. On December 28 last year, amid a row over the definition of Aravalli hills approved by it, the top court took suo motu cognisance of the issue. The committee, constituted through an order dated May 25, has been conducting an independent review of the Centre’s report on the definition and delineation of the Aravallis.

The deadline for the panel’s final report was August 31. In its compliance report submitted on August 31, the committee said it needs to bring together spatial, ecological, geological, hydrological, socio-economic, and stakeholder evidence before arriving at its conclusions regarding the Aravallis.

“The committee has... reached the view that additional time is necessary to complete the scientific process of geospatial assessment, sensitivity analysis, expert examination, field and stakeholder validation, and synthesis required for a comprehensive and defensible

report,” said the panel in its compliance report.

It has urged the top court to extend the deadline for submission of the final report to February 28, 2027.

In its compliance report, the panel says the issues regarding Aravallis extend beyond technical delineation and cannot be properly addressed through a “single terrain-based criterion or a single source of evidence.”

The matter originated from the Supreme Court’s November 20, 2025 ruling on mining activities in the Aravalli region. A Bench headed by then Chief Justice of India B R Gavai approved an elevation-based criterion suggested by an expert committee to identify the Aravalli Hills and Range for the purposes of regulating mining.

Under the formula accepted by the court, a landform in the Aravalli districts would qualify as an Aravalli Hill if it rose at least 100 metres above the surrounding local terrain. Two or more such hills located within a distance of 500 metres were to be treated as part of the Aravalli Range. The court endorsed restrictions on mining in core and ecologically sensitive areas but stopped short of imposing a blanket prohibition. It reasoned that an outright ban could instead encourage unauthorised mining and result in the criminalisation of activities that could otherwise be regulated.

The definition subsequently came under intense criticism, with environmentalists and other stakeholders arguing that the elevation-based test could exclude a substantial portion of the Aravallis from legal protection.

There were concerns that more than 90 per cent of the region could effectively fall outside the safeguards and become vulnerable to mining. Amid the controversy, the top court revisited the issue. On December 29, 2025, a bench headed by CJI Surya Kant put the November 20 ruling on hold and suspended the implementation of the earlier expert committee’s recommendations.

The bench observed that several of the concerns surrounding the judgment appeared to arise from uncertainty or lack of clarity in the directions issued by the Court. It also indicated that a fresh, independent assessment of the ecological consequences of the proposed demarcation may be necessary.

The court thereafter decided to constitute a new expert body to examine the issue afresh and recommend an appropriate methodology for identifying and defining the Aravalli Hills and Range.

## Defence ministry clears ₹1.1 lakh crore...

The trawl tanks and bridge system will be utilised to provide composite crossings to fighting formations during operations in varied terrains,” the ministry said.

For the Indian Navy, AoN was accorded for the procurement of Arudhra radars, design and development and subsequent procurement of Marine Gas Turbines (MGT).

Arudhra radars will replace the existing Air Route surveillance radars at various Naval Air Stations, and MGT, a warship propulsion system, is expected to reduce dependency on foreign vendors. For the Indian Air Force, approval was granted to various proposals to enhance the war-fighting capability of fighters, transports and helicopters. Approval was accorded for procuring Ground-Based Multi-Purpose Jammer (GBMPJ) and installing Defence Forces Secure Access Card system, according to the ministry.

The GBMPJ will provide effective jamming against radars of adversaries, it said in a statement. Of the total AoNs accorded, approximately 98 per cent of procurements will be made from the Indian industry, it added.



# Congress attacks BJP on Delhi building collapse

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

In a scathing attack against the BJP over the Satya Niketan PG building collapse, the Congress on Monday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "PR balloon" had been deflated and termed the "four-engine Government" in Delhi a killing machine claiming the lives of students. Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi accused the BJP Government of evading accountability for the collapse and alleged that Prime Minister Modi uses insulting labels like "dimagi Naxal" and "naraaz phoopha" against those who ask questions.

The remarks came a day after the five-storey building in the congested area near Delhi University's South Campus collapsed killing seven people.

The opposition party demanded that action be taken against all those responsible. It also demanded that affordable accommodation be provided to students, a rent control act be brought for hostels and PGs and Rs 1 crore compensation be given to the family of those who have lost their lives.

Gandhi asked what the excuse for this helplessness was when Delhi has a "triple-engine" Government, saying it stems from a lack of intent.



"There is no accountability," Gandhi said in his post in Hindi on X, using the hashtag "TINA". Supporters of the prime minister often cite the "TINA" factor — There Is No Alternative — to argue that Modi is the only capable and indispensable leader for India.

The former Congress chief claimed that every time, the BJP Government follows the same shameful pattern -- no prevention before accidents, just grandstanding after them, and pinning the blame on a few low-level officers, while the real culprits remain unaccountable.

"The collapse of the building packed with students at Satya Niketan is no isolated tragedy. In the last four months, six people died in a similar disaster in Saidulajab, and a fire in Hauz Rani claimed 22 lives.

"Every time, lives, dreams, and aspirations get buried under rubble -- and every

time, any real action is nowhere to be found. And when you demand accountability, the prime minister himself slaps you with insulting labels like 'dimagi Naxal and naraaz phoopha' — the intent being to shame, defame, and silence anyone who dares to ask questions," he said.

For 12 years, this Government has spun people around with lofty talk about the whole world, but never addressed the real issues, Gandhi claimed.

Delhi has a "triple-engine" Government, so what is the excuse for this helplessness now, he asked. "The helplessness stems from a lack of intent — because where there's no intent, there's no accountability either."

Addressing a press conference along with NSUI president Vinod Jakhar, Congress leader Kanhaiya Kumar said it is unfortunate that there is no clarity even after 24 hours

and the debris has not yet been fully cleared.

"There is no information on how many people are still trapped under the debris. The PG had 45 beds, it was Sunday, what if all the students were there? There were labourers working in the basement and students sit on the building's steps as well. The police administration present there is not only failing to carry out relief and rescue operations properly, but is also engaged in the task of hiding the truth," the NSUI in-charge said.

He alleged that the BJP has constructed five-star party offices in every district which don't collapse, but bridges fall, roads break, and Government buildings collapse. "There are such incidents where students have lost their lives. In one place, a fire broke out in a coaching centre. In another, a library flooded with water. In yet another, a student died from an electric shock. The question is-when will the BJP Government take responsibility and accountability for this?" Kumar asked.

Prime Minister Modi -- who addressed students at Delhi University's Shri Ram College of Commerce on Saturday - has time to send congratulatory messages to Italian Premier Georgia Meloni but no time to visit Satya Niketan to express his condolences, he said.

# Hooch tragedy toll in MP rises to 12

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Sagar (MP)

The death toll in the Sagar hooch tragedy in Madhya Pradesh rose to 12 on Monday after one more person succumbed, while nearly 30 others remained under medical observation, including two in critical condition, officials said.

Police have arrested 14 of the 30 persons named as accused in FIRs lodged in connection with the incident as authorities launched a major crackdown on bootleggers, they said.

Three separate FIRs have been registered on complaints by the victims' kin, Sagar Range Deputy Inspector General of Police Shashindra Chouhan said.

On Sunday, 11 persons died and 54 others fell ill after allegedly consuming spurious liquor in two villages of Banda tehsil, about 30 km from the Sagar district headquarters.

Many of those who fell ill complained of symptoms like blurred vision and dizziness.

One more person died in the early



hours of Monday, raising the toll to 12, Sagar Collector Pratibha Pal said.

She said that 25 to 30 persons were under medical observation and two of them were in critical condition.

One of the sick persons was airlifted to Bhopal on Sunday for advanced medical treatment, she said.

Fourteen of the 30 accused named in the FIRs have been arrested, and a hunt is on for the remaining suspects, Pal said.

Police and the excise department launched a massive crackdown on bootleggers after gathering inputs,

she said, adding that revenue department teams, along with village representatives, were going door-to-door to check whether people were possessing liquor bottles.

The police were also investigating a suspected link between people in Lalitpur in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh and the local liquor contractor (outlet owner), Chouhan said.

Collector Pal on Sunday said the preliminary investigation indicated that the liquor had been supplied from Lalitpur.

"There is a gang in Lalitpur that supplies this kind of poisonous liquor. Since this area is adjacent to Uttar Pradesh, this has come to light in the preliminary investigation," she said.

The administration has appealed to people who consumed liquor and were experiencing symptoms such as vomiting, headache or fever to immediately visit health centres and undergo medical examination.

Authorities suspended three excise officials and two police personnel in connection with the tragedy.

# ED raids premises linked to Urdu daily promoted by TMC MP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kolkata

The Enforcement Directorate on Monday raided premises in Kolkata, Delhi and Ranchi as part of a money laundering investigation against an Urdu daily promoted by TMC Rajya Sabha MP Nadimul Haque, officials said.

The 56-year-old Haque, who is also a journalist and businessman, is the director of the company (Akhbar-E-Mashriq Pvt Ltd) that brings out the daily named Akhbar-E-Mashriq.

There was no immediate response on the ED action from Haque or the TMC.

The probe relates to allegations of publication and dissemination of material

promoting communal disharmony, unaccounted cash transactions and funding from suspicious sources of the daily, the officials said.

About seven premises in Kolkata, Delhi and Ranchi (Jharkhand) were raided.

The ED case booked under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) stems from an FIR registered by the Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate, they said.

"Akhbar-e-Mashriq is more than a newspaper. It is a four-decade legacy of uncompromising journalism, technological innovation, and relentless dedication to our readers," the Urdu daily states on its website.

# LPG refill booking interval will be same for urban, rural areas: Suresh Gopi



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Union Minister Suresh Gopi on Monday said that the Union Government has asked the oil marketing companies to uniformly implement the revised LPG refill booking interval of 25 days in both urban and rural areas immediately.

Gopi, the Union Minister of State for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Tourism, said in a Facebook post that due to the pressure on LPG supply in the wake of the Middle East conflict, the refill booking interval was 25 days in urban areas and 45 days in rural areas.

"However, in view of the current LPG supply situation improving and the significant reduction in refill backlog, the central Government has relaxed this restriction. Now, all domestic LPG consumers, regardless of urban or rural, can book refills at an interval of 25 days," he said.

# West Bengal economy to revive in 1 year: Suwendu

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

Bengal's economic health had just started to limp back to normalcy, but it would be at least a year before it regains its vitality, thanks to the economic anarchy and large-scale corruption of the previous Trinamool Congress regime, State Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Monday said.

"Though it cannot be said that the economic health of our State has recovered fully, it has started recovering, and I am of the opinion that in a year's time we will be able to overcome the crisis," Adhikari said, holding the previous Mamata Banerjee Government fully responsible for the "economic mess" that Bengal was in.

"There was large-scale corruption and fiscal indiscipline committed by the previous Government," and adding insult to injury, the previous Government would not join the central Government's schemes leading to the present situation, the Chief Minister alleged. "The State Government has joined the various central schemes as a result of which more funds are coming ... I am hopeful that the economy will return to normalcy in a year," he said and claimed that because of some corrective measures taken by the Government revenue leakages would stop.

"The Government has taken some measures that will plug the revenue leakages" and eventually the



State's tax revenue would go up by 18 per cent, he said.

The Chief Minister was addressing a gathering of beneficiaries of social schemes where old people and widows had assembled to receive enhanced benefits.

The State Government increased the old age allowance from Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,500. The Chief Minister said that the waiting lists of beneficiaries prepared by the previous Government would stand cancelled as new welfare camps would be set up by the new Government to enlist newer beneficiaries.

Meanwhile, in a new development, the Central and State agencies have approved construction of a four-lane greenfield corridor connecting parts of North Bengal so that vehicles moving from southern Bengal to northern Bengal will not have to enter the Kishanganj corridor of Bihar, sources said. The new road would connect Chopra in North Dinajpur with parts of Darjeeling district.

# India-France ties have reached new heights: PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said India-France relations have reached new heights, and this strategic partnership is particularly special because it rests on the solid foundation of long-standing cultural and political ties.

Addressing virtually the inauguration of the Swaminarayan temple in Paris on Sunday, Modi hoped that the grand temple in Paris will stand for centuries as a symbol of cooperation and opportunity between both nations.

"In recent years, relations between India and France have reached new heights. Together with my friend, President (Emmanuel) Macron, both nations are building a Special Global



Strategic Partnership," he said.

The prime minister said that from technology, AI, and defence to space and climate action, India and France are moving forward together with new momen-

tum and energy.

"We are also celebrating 2026 as the India-France Year of Innovation. This strategic partnership is particularly special because it rests on the solid foundation of our long-standing cultur-

al and political ties," he said.

Modi said these days, there is much talk about joint venture possibilities between India and France.

He said history bears witness that the sacrifice of Indian soldiers in France remains alive in the hearts of people to this day.

"Language enthusiasts also know the pivotal role French scholars played in popularising Sanskrit. Romain Rolland's writings on Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda brought our societies closer," he said.

Furthermore, the prime minister said, the spiritual journey of 'The Mother' from Paris to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Puducherry has inspired countless Indian and French seekers.

He said decades ago, Srila Prabhupada Swami also

# MPSC paper leak: Aspirants protest in Pune

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Pune

A large number of MPSC aspirants staged a protest march in Pune on Monday, demanding transparency in the recruitment process and action against the alleged paper leaks and irregularities in various examinations.

The protesters demanded the resignation of the Maharashtra Public Service Commission (MPSC) chairman and secretary and the immediate appointment of officers with a "clean image" to the posts.

The march began at Omkareshwar Temple Chowk and proceeded to the Pune District Collectorate, where pro-



testers raised demands related to the functioning of the MPSC and examination procedures.

NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar and Congress legislator Vishwajit Kadam joined the protesters, extending support to their demands. Pawar said

the Government must fulfil the protesters' demands. The protesters demanded that the commission provide, within eight days, an explanation on objections raised about the Drug Inspector (Group-B) examination and initiate an inquiry into alleged irregularities.

Among other demands, the aspirants sought an inquiry into alleged errors in the evaluation of descriptive papers of the 2025 State Services Main Examination and Agricultural Services examination. They also demanded that the preliminary inquiry report submitted by the Mumbai Crime Branch to the MPSC be made public.

# CM Mohan Yadav meets UAE economy minister in Dubai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dubai

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Monday held a high-level meeting with UAE Cabinet member and Minister of Economy and Tourism Abdullah bin Touq Al Marri in Dubai, seeking to deepen investment and economic cooperation between the UAE and Madhya Pradesh.

Yadav formally invited Al Marri to participate in the upcoming Global Investors Summit (GIS) in Madhya Pradesh. Accepting the invitation, Al Marri assured him that a special investment delegation from Dubai would soon visit Madhya Pradesh to explore opportunities in the hotel and



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav interacts with global investors and industrial leaders in Dubai

PTI

hospitality sector.

The two sides also discussed potential cooperation in mining, textiles, forestry and tourism. Yadav outlined the state Government's transparent policies, land ownership regulations, labour reforms and investor pro-

tection mechanisms. He also highlighted the positive experience of UAE companies already operating in Madhya Pradesh and reiterated the Government's commitment to providing a conducive business environment for new investors.

# Indian, Chinese armies hold talks on border



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Indian and Chinese armies reviewed the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Arunachal Pradesh sector, after the two sides held Special Representative talks in Beijing on the festering boundary question.

The focus of the corps commander-level talks at the Wacha-Damai border meeting point in Arunachal Pradesh's Kibithoo region on Sunday was to maintain peace and tranquillity along the frontier, people familiar with the matter said.

The Indian delegation was headed by Lt General Girish Kalia, the commander of the Army's Dimapur-based 3 Corps. There is no official word yet on the talks.

The meeting also came amid reports of aggressive military posturing by Chinese troops along the LAC in the Upper Subansiri region of Arunachal Pradesh.

In the Special Representative (SR) talks on August 25, India conveyed

to China the importance of maintaining peace and tranquillity along the frontier for overall bilateral ties.

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval held the SR talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi which focused on delimitation of the frontier and sustaining work on trans-boundary cooperation.

In his remarks at the meeting, Doval said that normalcy in the ties has been a direct result of both sides maintaining peace and tranquillity in the border areas.

The Indian side highlighted the importance of maintaining peace and tranquillity in the India-China border areas for the continued development and progress of the bilateral relationship, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had said on the SR talks.

Both Doval and Wang are the designated SRs for the boundary talks mechanism, which was established in 2003 to comprehensively address the dispute over the India-China border spanning 3,488 km.



■ States Focus ■



## VP RADHAKRISHNAN TO VISIT ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan will arrive in Itanagar on Tuesday evening on a two-day visit to Arunachal Pradesh, during which he will attend a special session of the Assembly, officials said.

Radhakrishnan is on a four-day tour of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, which kicked off on Sunday. The vice president will arrive in Itanagar from Manipur's Imphal on Tuesday evening and attend a special session of the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly the next day, officials said. He will also visit the Assembly gallery-cum-museum. Radhakrishnan's itinerary also includes visits to Nyedrar Namlo (Prayer Hall), the Jawaharlal Nehru State Museum and the Donyi Polo Mission School for the Hearing and Visually Impaired in Itanagar, they said. (PTI)



## COMMITTED TO TRANSFORMING MIZORAM INTO DIGITAL STATE: CM

Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Monday said he is committed to transforming Mizoram into a "digital state" with an aim to make governance efficient and services more accessible.

Lalduhoma was speaking at the launch of a series of technology-driven initiatives at the Administrative Training Institute (ATI) here, including the Smart ATI App, Smart Classroom and Digital Learning Laboratory.

"My personal vision and goal is to make Mizoram a digital state. Mizoram is well-positioned to embrace digital governance, given its relatively small population and high literacy rate," the chief minister said. (PTI)

## Suvendu announces ₹1 lakh grant for Durga Puja in West Bengal

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA**  
■ Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Monday announced a grant of ₹1 lakh to the Durga Puja committees, which is about ₹10,000 less than the previous year. This, besides waiving electricity charges by 100 per cent.

Appealing to the big-budget puja committees to forego their claim to Government grant, Adhikari said, "those Puja committees which are capable of funding their Pujas independently are called upon to waive their claim to the grants."

The Government will organise a Puja-centric programme at the iconic Eden Gardens on Mahalaya day, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi was likely to attend, Adhikari said, adding the programme would include drone and firework displays.



West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari interacts with West Bengal DGP Siddh Nath Gupta during a coordination and security review meeting for the upcoming Durga Puja festival in Kolkata on Monday (PTI)

The Chief Minister, who announced a two-day State-funded programme before the Pujas, said: "From now on it will be ensured that no Puja committee has to go to the High Court to seek permission to organise Pujas."

The Chief Minister also announced that prizes would be given to the best Pujas based on decoration, theme, idol, environmental friendliness, etc.

## Punjab Police bust cross-border camera spy racket

**PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH**  
■ New Delhi/Chandigarh

The shoe shop, which was set up on the road between Ludhiana and Ferozepur, appeared completely ordinary. It opened at irregular times, and two Chinese cameras were directed not towards the cash register but at the highway, six kilometres from Baddowal Cantonment. The login IDs and passwords crossed the border, and live images of Army and paramilitary movements were transmitted. This shop is now one element in a bigger scheme.

Over the last six months, the Punjab Police have dealt with five cases in which internet cameras were used for spying. They arrested 22 of the 23 suspects and seized 11 cameras, solar panels, SIM cards, mobile phones, a router, and an adapter. Eight

first information reports were filed in Kapurthala, Amritsar, Bathinda, Pathankot, Barnala, and Ludhiana under the Official Secrets Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Investigators are now tracking SIM serial numbers, device IDs, cloud logins, and financial transactions. This method is inexpensive, difficult to trace, and easy to deny. Solar-powered 4G cameras that do not require wiring are mounted on poles, shop awnings, and highways. These cameras monitor cantonments, logistics routes, and railway lines. Residents are paid tens of thousands of rupees to install the cameras and provide the login details.

Handlers in Pakistan view the camera feeds through a phone app. If a feed stops working, they send someone to fix the equipment. Payments have increased as their operations have expand-



Representative image

ed. For example, a recruit from Pathankot to Jammu via NH-44 earned about ₹40,000 and received instructions from a contact in Dubai. In Kapurthala, an installer was paid ₹35,000 by a handler known as "Fauji."

In Ludhiana, Rashpal Singh from Gurdaspur, his uncle Akash, and two men from Amritsar, Varinder Masih and

Rohit, reportedly received ₹3 to 4 lakh over several months, with the money sent through hawala. Recruitment happened through Instagram and with help from a fixer in Punjab, who connected local recruits with ISI desks in Dubai. The cameras themselves show the supply chain: many are banned Chinese internet models that are still being cir-

## PM Modi to unveil ₹35,000 crore projects in Vadodara

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay foundation stones, inaugurate and dedicate to the nation development projects worth more than ₹35,000 Crore in Vadodara on Tuesday. He will also inaugurate the Global Fintech Fest (GFF) 2026, one of the world's largest and most influential annual fintech conferences in Mumbai.

Modi will first visit Vadodara, where he will lay the foundation stone and inaugurate and dedicate to the nation various development projects. He will also address the gathering, an official statement said.

Among the projects the prime minister will dedicate to the nation are three important sections of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor



(WDFC), covering 326 route km and developed at a cost of more than ₹20,700 crore. These include the Sanand (N)-Makarpura, New Umbergaon-New Saphale and New Saphale-JNPT sections.

The direct connectivity of Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) will facilitate faster movement of EXIM cargo, strengthen connectivity between industrial centres and ports, reduce logistics costs and help decongest Mumbai's railway network.

With the commissioning of these sections, the Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) network will stand fully operational across its entire length.

The Prime Minister will also flag off freight train services from New Sanand (North), New Makarpura, New Umbergaon and New JNPT, Mumbai.

In addition, he will flag off a new train service between Vadodara and Tanda Road, benefiting the people of Vadodara, Chhota Udepur

and Alirajpur districts.

Modi will lay the foundation stone for three railway projects spanning 329 km and costing more than ₹9,700 crore. These include the Vadodara-Ratlam third and fourth lines, Miyagam Karjan-Choranda-Malsar gauge conversion and the Vishwamitri-Dabhoi doubling project.

He will lay the foundation stone for three national highway projects costing around ₹1,780 crore. Modi will also lay the foundation stone for and inaugurate various Gujarat Government projects worth around ₹2,600 crore.

In Mumbai, the prime minister will inaugurate the Global Fintech Fest (GFF) 2026, one of the world's largest and most influential annual fintech conferences. The seventh edition of the Global Fintech Fest is being held from September 8 to 11.

## Calcutta HC quashes arrest warrant against Mahua

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA**  
■ Kolkata

There was a big relief for Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra when the Calcutta High Court on Monday quashed the arrest warrant against her, issued by a Krishnagar district court, and transferred her case to the special MP-MLA court in Bidhannagar, Kolkata.

The order was passed by the Division Bench of Justice Debangshu Basak and Justice Aryan Dutta.

The district court had, on August 19, issued an arrest warrant against Moitra for not appearing before it despite repeated summons. The TMC leader was summoned after FIRs were lodged against her for allegedly hurting the religious sentiments of some



community.

Moitra had earlier contended that it was becoming difficult for her to appear before the court because of security reasons, as members of the BJP were blocking her path and she feared an attack from them. She had reminded the court of how the TMC leaders were being attacked, and eggs were hurled at them in public.

## J&K International Film Festival kicks off in Srinagar

**MOHIT KANDHARI**  
■ Srinagar

The International Film Festival of Jammu and Kashmir (IFFJK) got off to a spectacular start with the traditional rendition of Vande Mataram, followed by the National Anthem, Jana Gana Mana, on the decked-up lawns of Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Centre, located on the scenic banks of Dal Lake in Srinagar on Monday.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, along with a galaxy of Bollywood filmmakers, including Ramesh Sippy, Vidhu Vinod Chopra, SriRam Raghvan and Cinematographer Santosh Sivan, lit the traditional lamp before felicitating them.

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh, Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria, Lieutenant Governor Ladakh Vinai Kumar Saxena and Dr Farooq Abdullah also attended the glittering ceremony.

The four-day festival has drawn filmmakers, actors, technicians, academics and film lovers from India and abroad to Jammu and

Kashmir to reconnect the Union Territory with Bollywood and the global film industry.

On the occasion, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah urged distinguished international filmmakers and other dignitaries to send out a clear message that Jammu and Kashmir is open, safe, vibrant and ready to welcome film crews.

He said we are not just opening a cinema event; we are opening a new chapter in the long-storied romance between J&K and the silver screen. He said, Kashmir is not just a location; it is a creative sanctuary, a home for global storytellers.

Earlier, interacting with



media persons before the formal ceremony, filmmaker Vidhu Vinod Chopra described his participation in the International Film Festival of Jammu and Kashmir (IFFJK) as an emotional homecoming, recalling his childhood and education in Kashmir and urging local youngsters to believe in their talent.

Chopra said the festival could provide a major opportunity for young filmmakers and help bring films and filmmakers from across the world to Kashmir. "It is an opportunity for youngsters. I see this festival as an opportunity. So many films and filmmakers can come

here," he said.

Actor Fatima Sana Shaikh, who played wrestler Geeta Phogat in the Bollywood biopic Dangal, on Monday said cultural festivals are important platforms that bring people together, provide opportunities to youth and promote regional cinema.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the event, Fatma said she is excited to attend the festival after a long time.

On regional cinema, Fatima said cinema can help showcase the culture, poetry and artistry of different regions. "Regional cinema is important. Through

cinema, poetry, culture and artistry can be showcased. These things have existed for centuries. Spoken words, artistry and all of this are part of our heritage," she said.

Fatima also said an international film festival could open doors for international filmmakers and create more opportunities for film shoots in Jammu and Kashmir.

"It will open doors for international filmmakers. Film shootings happened here earlier and they are happening now as well. It depends. With an international festival taking place, they will also understand what can be done here and what the people are like," she said.

Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir, in his welcome address, said the festival received an overwhelming response, with more than 1,100 entries from 40 Countries.

He said the festival aims to reconnect Jammu and Kashmir with the global world of cinema and invite filmmakers to explore the region.

## Clean air practical goal, not environmental aspiration, says NGT's Justice Shrivastava

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

National Green Tribunal Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava on Monday said clean air is not merely an environmental aspiration but a practical goal that can be achieved through dedicated efforts, proper planning and effective implementation at the ground level.

He was addressing the fifth 'Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan Awards', organised by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change at the Paryavaran Bhavan here on the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies. "Development and environmental conservation are not at cross purposes but can go together while maintaining the quality of life for the citizens. It is the responsibility of each citizen to ensure that generations to come can live in a clean environment," Justice Shrivastava said.

"Clean air is not merely an environmental aspiration but a practical goal that can be

culated after being smuggled through Delhi markets. Because the servers are abroad, sharing a username is sufficient, and there is no need to carry anything across the border physically.

This issue is not limited to Punjab. A case in March at Delhi Cantonment and Sonapat railway station led to an audit by the Union Home Ministry. In April, Delhi Police seized nine solar-powered cameras from locations in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Jammu and Kashmir. These cameras had been sending footage for almost three months as part of a network linked to Babbar Khalsa International. One camera in Bathinda, on the road between Malout and Sriganaganagar, operated for months, sending images to people in Pakistan and Canada. Interrogations in Ludhiana showed that the

next planned targets were Ferozepur and Rajasthan.

The three men were arrested before they could install the cameras. Police describe this as a post-conflict surge. After last year's military confrontation, the ISI started using low-cost, ongoing surveillance instead of relying only on human couriers. Hundreds of suspected contacts have been found across the country. Still, the local network includes everyday people such as shopkeepers, cooks, small-time smugglers, and men known in drug or jail circles, who were paid just enough to point a camera at a convoy.

The rest of the investigation is technical. Each seized SIM card and device ID helps trace the next handler, facilitator, or fake shop. Until the entire chain is uncovered, any camera on a Punjab highway remains a mystery.

## 33% reservation will unlock new avenues for women: Om Birla



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla inaugurates All-India Capacity Building Workshop on Gender-Responsive Governance in Faridabad on Monday. NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar was also present (PIONEER PHOTO)

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday described the 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies as a historic necessity, asserting that the coming years will witness a new generation of female leaders across political, administrative, and social spheres. He stated that the day is not far when women will account for more than 50 per cent of public services.

Inaugurating a two-day All-India Capacity Building Workshop on "Gender-Responsive Governance" organised by the National Commission for Women (NCW) in Faridabad, Birla emphasised that the focus must now shift from merely providing support and opportunities to enabling women to actively shape policies, programmes, and laws.

Birla stressed that women legislators across the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, Panchayats, and Municipalities can play a decisive role in ensuring legislation responds to ground-level realities. Highlighting the constitutional commitment to equality and legislative mea-

sures for women's safety, self-reliance, and empowerment, he added that institutions like the NCW play a vital role in identifying emerging challenges and facilitating solutions.

Underlining economic and social empowerment as non-negotiable for national progress, the Speaker noted that India cannot achieve its goal of becoming a developed nation without empowering women, who constitute nearly half the population. He urged women legislators to deliberate on effective policies and schemes to strengthen women economically, particularly those facing deprivation, while calling for cross-legislative sharing of best practices and enhanced legal awareness in vulnerable areas.

Birla observed that sensitivity is a core strength of women's leadership, fostering deeper understanding and a responsive work culture to address social challenges.

The event was attended by NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar, Haryana Minister of State (IC) for Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs Rajesh Nagar, and around 200 women legislators representing 20 States and 2 Union Territories.



achieved through dedicated efforts, proper planning and effective implementation at the ground level," he added.

The Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan is an annual assessment of 130 cities covered under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), aimed at encouraging healthy competition among cities and promoting measures to improve air quality. Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow topped the Swachh Vayu Sarvekshan Awards among cities with a population of more than 10 lakh, while Madhya Pradesh's Indore and Jabalpur secured the second and third positions, respectively.

The assessment considers

measures taken by cities on road dust, solid waste management, vehicular emissions, industrial pollution, construction and demolition waste management, other emissions (DG sets and commercial establishments), and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities. The awards were based on participation and ranking of all 130 cities in three categories – those with a population below 3 lakh, between 3 lakh and 10 lakh, and above 10 lakh.

The process involved self-assessment by cities, approval by the State-level Monitoring Committee, evaluation by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), field verification by independent committees and selection of 10 best-performing cities.

Asserting that clean air was a fundamental need rather than a luxury, the NGT chairperson said the ultimate objective should be to ensure that children can play outdoors without fear of air pollution.



# ISRO chief reassures staff over privatisation concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bengaluru

Days after some Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) employees raised concerns about privatisation, its chairman V Narayanan on Monday said the space agency remains a Government organisation and dismissed apprehensions. He said the ISRO is working with private companies and startups to expand India's space ecosystem.

His reaction came after nine employee associations at the ISRO wrote to the Chairman on September 4, seeking official clarification on the proposed transfer of its manufacturing and operational functions to private entities.

Speaking to reporters after the inaugural ceremony of the ninth edition of the Bengaluru Space Expo (BSX) here, Narayanan said India's space programme is about 64-65 years old, and that at present



ISRO Chairman V Narayanan with Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) Chairman Pawan Goenka during the inaugural session of 9th Bengaluru Space Expo 2026, in Bengaluru, Karnataka, Monday

there are 56 space assets in the sky serving the common man of the country, but the need is huge

numbers. Recalling that since the space sector reforms were rolled out six years ago, he said, "we are

supposed to hand-hold the private sector, startup companies, and grow the space ecosystem."

"In fact, whenever a PSLV or a GSLV is lifting off, almost 80 per cent budget is invested in Indian industries. A total of 450 industries are working for us," he said.

On the concerns raised by the employee associations, Narayanan said, "So, surely, my colleagues, whatever they have, is a genuine concern. It is our responsibility to clarify." He clarified that the ISRO is not privatised and remains a Government organisation.

"We are working — it's a Government investment, and we are working there. But the only thing is, we now (have) so many activities. The space ecosystem in the country has to grow and the space economy has to grow," he said.

Responding to a question about different voices within ISRO raising concerns, Narayanan said, "We are

20,000 employees...we will address the employees." He further added that ISRO has a system and it regularly talks to its employees. When asked about scientists resigning from ISRO, he said the space agency has 20,000 employees with over 8,000 scientists. "In the last five-six years, if you take the statistics, somewhere around 150 people per year have resigned. This is normal in any organisation," he said.

He also clarified that the space agency had no shortage of budget and said whatever ISRO needs, the Government has been allotting it.

Meanwhile, speaking to reporters here, Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) Chairman Pawan Goenka said that everything that they are doing is consistent with the space policy.

Referring to the space policy, he said that the role of IN-SPACe and

NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) is very clearly defined, and there is not even an iota of digression from what is in the Indian space policy. So all the technology transfer that we are doing is as per Indian space policy.

He reiterated the ISRO chief's assertion that the organisation's projects were progressing fully as planned, with no disruption, slowdown, budgetary constraints or shortage of manpower.

He clarified that it is not ISRO versus industry. Instead, it is ISRO and industry taking on the world. "Right now, we are an about USD 8 billion space economy. We are targeting \$44 billion by 2033. That cannot be done with ISRO alone; it cannot be done with industry alone. It has to be industry and ISRO together. ISRO will be supporting in a very big way, as it has been doing in the last several years, and it will continue to support," Goenka added.

## Mizoram electoral rolls see 78,442 deletions



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Aizawl

Mizoram's electoral rolls underwent a significant change during the SIR exercise, with 78,442 names deleted and 39,243 new electors added, taking the state's final voter count to 8.35 lakh, a senior official said on Monday.

The final roll also recorded the state's first third gender elector, alongside 4 lakh male and 4.32 lakh female voters, according to State Chief Electoral Officer @Garima Gupta.

The SIR was launched across all districts on May 20, alongside 15 states and two Union Territories covered in the third phase of the nationwide revision exercise.

Before the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), the state had 8.75 lakh registered electors, all of whom were provided enumeration forms, Gupta said. Of these, 8,28,906 forms were collected, while 46,162 remained uncollected and the voters' names were subsequently deleted, she said.

"The draft electoral rolls published on July 4 contained 8,28,906 electors.

During the claims and objections period, which ended on 2 September, 32,280 more names were removed while 39,243 voters were added, resulting in a net increase of 6,963 electors or 0.84 per cent from the draft rolls, in the final rolls," Gupta told a news conference.

## Congress questions delay in proroguing Monsoon Session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Congress on Monday questioned the delay in proroguing Parliament's Monsoon Session, wondering if the home minister is still scrambling for his "super-tainted" two-thirds majority to get the delimitation bills passed.

"Today is exactly 25 days since Parliament was adjourned sine die. But it has still NOT been prorogued," Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

"Normally prorogation takes place 3-4 days after adjournment sine die. But the gap for the Monsoon Session in 2015 was 28 days. That session had been washed out almost entirely over the Lalit Modi issue, but the Modi Government kept the session alive, hoping to bulldoze the GST bills through.



It needed a two-thirds majority in the Rajya Sabha which it did not have.

"As it turned out, the Modi Government was forced to consult more meaningfully with the Opposition and pass the Bills much later," he said. Ramesh said, "The 2026 Monsoon Session has been kept on ventilator because the Home Minister is still scrambling around for his super-tainted two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha to get the Delimitation Bills

passed. How much longer before he accepts the reality that his politics of threats and intimidation have reached its limit?" "How much longer before he accepts the reality that his politics of threats and intimidation have reached its limit?" the Congress leader said.

The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha were adjourned sine die on August 13.

During the Budget Session on April 17, the Modi Government faced a setback as the Constitution Amendment Bill, involving delimitation for the implementation of the women's reservation in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, was defeated in the Lower House. Of the 528 MPs who voted in Lok Sabha, 298 voted in support, while 230 opposed it. The bill required 352 votes for a two-thirds majority.

## CPI(M) demands immediate halt to privatisation of ISRO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The CPI(M) on Monday demanded an immediate halt to what it termed the "privatisation" of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), alleging that the move could compromise national security and create dependence on private players in strategically-important areas.

"The Communist Party of India (Marxist) denounces the privatisation of ISRO and demands its immediate halt," the party's Politburo said in a statement.

It said the ISRO's contributions to defence, agriculture, disaster management, weather forecasting and remote sensing are "strategically important for India's economy and security".

"Privatising such a critical, self-reliant institution would create unwanted dependence on the private sector in matters of vital national importance," the party said. The CPI(M) also questioned



recent remarks by IN-SPACE chairman Pawan Goenka that the ISRO would no longer manufacture launch vehicles.

"Pawan Goenka's comments that ISRO will no longer manufacture launch vehicles reveals a sinister design of handing over space research infrastructure built over seven decades by dedicated Indian scientists to private players," it said.

The party claimed that the shift is part of the Indian Space Policy 2023, which opened the space sector to

private players and offered liberal concessions to foreign investment.

It alleged that the policy is being pursued "in the deceptive name of cost-effectiveness in launch operations".

The CPI(M) referred to a report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change presented in March, saying it had expressed "serious concern over the transfer of public assets to private entities, without transparency or

## Karnataka rejects Kasturirangan report on Western Ghats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Shivamogga

Karnataka Minister Madhu Bangarappa on Monday said the state Government would not allow implementation of the Kasturirangan report under any circumstances and assured people in Malnad that their land, agriculture and livelihoods would be protected.

The Kasturirangan Committee had recommended declaring 37 per cent of the Western Ghats, covering around 60,000 sq km across six states (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu), as an Eco-Sensitive Area to balance environmental conservation with development.

"The Kasturirangan report will not be allowed to be implemented under any cir-



Madhu Bangarappa

cumstances. Our Government is committed to protecting every household in Malnad," Bangarappa said while addressing a Congress padayatra and protest in Thirthahalli, demanding that the report be scrapped.

The padayatra, led by former minister Kimmane Ratnakar, began at Binthala and culminated at the Shanthavari

Gopalagowda Rangamandira. Congress workers raised slogans against the BJP and the union Government during the procession. Bangarappa, who holds the School Education and Literacy portfolio, said the Congress had consistently opposed the Kasturirangan report and recalled that a Cabinet sub-committee was constituted on the issue during Siddaramaiah's tenure as chief minister after he entered the Assembly for the first time in 2013. "Based on the recommendations of the committee, the report was rejected outright. The Congress party has opposed the Kasturirangan report from the beginning," he said. The issue was not merely about opposing a notification but about protecting the land, agriculture, livelihoods and future of Malnad, he said.

"The Western Ghats are our pride and environmental protection is necessary. But in the name of environmental protection, we cannot accept any measure that puts the people of Malnad, who live in harmony with the environment, into difficulty," Bangarappa said.

Farmers across Shivamogga and neighbouring Malnad districts are seeking a physical survey and the exclusion of human settlements and cultivated land from the proposed ESA boundaries.

Turning his criticism on the BJP, Bangarappa questioned its leaders' participation in discussions on the issue, asking whether Shivamogga MP B Y Raghavendra and then Udipi-Chikkamagaluru MP Shobha Karandlaje had attended a crucial meeting convened by

the Centre on August 11, 2016.

"Today, the BJP is making big statements on this issue. But did Raghavendra and Shobha attend that meeting?" he asked. Bangarappa said Karnataka had rejected the Kasturirangan report several times and the Legislative Assembly had passed a resolution against it and sent it to the Centre. "Despite this, the BJP Government at the Centre has been issuing notifications repeatedly. Now, the draft notification has been issued for the seventh time, which has caused anger," he said.

He said 139 villages in Thirthahalli taluk had figured in the first six draft notifications, while the latest draft proposed increasing the number to 154. "What is local BJP MLA Araga Jnanendra doing on this issue?" he asked.

## Declare Bihar floods a national disaster: Tejashwi to PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Patna

Leader of the opposition in the Bihar Assembly, Tejashwi Yadav, on Monday wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding declaration of the state's floods as a "National disaster" and immediate financial assistance of ₹5,000 crore to the State to tackle the situation.

In his letter, Yadav alleged that the "financially bank-



rupt" Bihar Government "persistently failed in taking response, mitigation and adaptation measures" and

was "indifferent" to helping flood victims.

Fed by heavy rainfall, rivers have swelled and inundated 13 districts of Bihar, affecting 27 lakh people, officials said. So far in September, the state received 69.1 mm of rain, which is 55 per cent above normal. Describing flood relief and rescue arrangements made by the NDA Government in the state as "grossly inadequate," Yadav

claimed that the Bihar ministers and the ruling alliance's Union ministers and MPs elected from Bihar appeared "helpless, ineffective and incapable" in the wake of the disaster.

"They have neither been able to get the Centre to declare the severe floods a national disaster nor have they been able to strongly demand a special relief and assistance package for Bihar," he said.

## 58 lakh records to be displayed, camps for Maratha caste certificates : Patil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

Maharashtra Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil on Monday said 58 lakh records traced by the retired Justice Shinde Committee will be displayed in gram panchayats, and camps will be organised from September 10 to 17 to help Marathas complete documentation for caste certificates.

Vikhe Patil, who heads the state Government's Maratha reservation sub-committee, directed divisional commissioners and district collectors



Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil

to ensure proper coordination and take the issues concerning reservation seriously. The minister was review-

ing the implementation of decisions taken on the Maratha reservation issue during a virtual meeting with collectors and sub-divisional officers from Dharsiv, Beed, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Parbhani, Hingoli, Latur and Jalna districts of Marathwada.

He reviewed district-wise data on caste verification certificates issued, Kunbi records traced and applications received. The collectors also presented details of the action taken and implementation measures undertaken so far. Vikhe Patil said the

Parbhani district collectorate had published the records it had found, and directed other districts to take similar action and publish details on their websites.

He said that 58 lakh records traced by the retired Justice Shinde Committee will be displayed in gram panchayats, and directed the administrations to make proper arrangements for camps from September 10 to 17 to help Marathas complete the requirements for certificates. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Vikhe Patil said the state Government

would follow the law while issuing certificates.

"No one is above the law. Certificates will be issued only by following genealogical records and legal rules," he said. Around 3.5 lakh Kunbi certificates have been distributed in Marathwada, he said, adding that the rules would be strictly adhered to while issuing certificates to eligible beneficiaries.

He further said that the Government would hold discussions with Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange, who is on a hunger strike in Jalna. The Government was

taking steps to provide reservation to the Maratha community without affecting the reservation of any other community, he asserted.

"If some people are deliberately using the language of agitation to oppose Maratha reservation, it is wrong and an attempt to unnecessarily create social tension," Vikhe Patil said.

Responding to Jarange's allegation that the Government was only making assurances on Maratha reservation, the minister said that action had been taken on most of the

demands raised during the previous agitation and efforts were underway to find a way forward on the remaining demands.

The Government has always been ready to discuss the reservation issue with Jarange, he said, reiterating that its stand was to provide reservation to the Maratha community without affecting the quota of any other community.

The issue would be resolved within the legal framework and keeping the interests of all communities in mind, Vikhe Patil said.



Editor's  
TAKE

## ISRO must evolve, not retreat

As private companies take a larger role in rocket manufacturing, concerns are growing that it could weaken the very institution that built India's space programme

Days after a flawless GSLV launch put another Indian Earth-observation satellite into orbit, nine employee associations of the Indian Space Research Organisation did something unprecedented: they wrote jointly to chairman V Narayanan, demanding clarity on whether the government intends to strip ISRO of its core function building and launching rockets — and hand it to private industry instead. The trigger was a remark by IN-SPACe chief Pawan Goenka that ISRO will eventually stop manufacturing launch vehicles altogether. The unions fear exactly what they said aloud: that India's space agency is being reduced to a “residual R&D boutique”, stripped of the SSLV, PSLV and LVM3 production lines, the new Kulasekarapattinam spaceport and 120 of its own technologies, all migrating to private hands with no roadmap explained to the workforce that built them.

This anxiety did not appear from nowhere. Through this year, ISRO has watched more than a hundred scientists — many from the UR Rao Satellite Centre and Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, several tied to Gaganyaan itself — walk out for the salaries and stock options on offer at Skyroot, Agnikul and Pixxel. The Department of Space had to freeze routine resignation approvals for scientists on strategic missions just to slow the bleeding. Two consecutive PSLV setbacks and a delayed Gaganyaan timeline have not helped morale.

None of this should obscure what ISRO has actually built. It reached Mars orbit on its first attempt, for a fraction of what any other spacefaring nation had spent on the feat. It landed near the Moon's unexplored south pole, a first for any country. Its PSLV once carried 104 satellites into orbit in a single flight, a world record at the time. NavIC, weather forecasting, disaster warning, rural communication and defence surveillance all run on ISRO-built and ISRO-operated satellites. Every private Indian rocket firm flying today exists in a market ISRO created, using talent ISRO trained and technology ISRO de-risked first.

That history is precisely the argument for keeping ISRO at the helm, not retiring it. There is a real case for private industry taking over volume manufacturing of proven vehicles like the SSLV - it frees scientists for harder problems and lets India launch more, faster. But manufacturing capacity is not the same as sovereign capability. Deep-space missions, human spaceflight, strategic and defence payloads, and next-generation propulsion must stay under ISRO's direct control - because private firms are not yet built to carry that risk, and because a nation's space programme is a strategic asset, not a supply chain to be handed off.

The government owes these nine associations, and the country, the plan it has so far declined to publish: which functions move to industry, on what timeline, and how ISRO's scientists are retained, paid and promoted through the transition. Ambiguity, not privatisation, is what is emptying ISRO's corridors. India can build a space economy that includes private industry without hollowing out the institution that made a space economy possible in the first place.

—DAIV

## Daiv Vani

WISDOM FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE

### The Student Who Became the Wall of Water

In the ashram of Sage Dhaumya lived a devoted student named Aruni. One stormy evening, the sage noticed a breach in the mud wall holding back water meant for the fields. If it widened, the crops that fed the entire ashram would be lost.

Dhaumya asked his students to fix it. Most tried briefly, then gave up against the storm, rain and darkness. Aruni did not return. Worried, the guru went searching and found him lying across the gap, using his own body to hold back the rushing water, enduring the rains, cold and the current throughout the night.

When Dhaumya found him, he was moved, not by the wall that now held, but by the depth of Aruni's surrender. No one had been watching, no reward waited, yet he had given everything anyway.

This is what real learning asks of us: not just understanding with the mind, but proving it through sacrifice when no one is measuring, a wholehearted effort when walking away would be far easier.

This week, take one responsibility you've been given, and instead of doing the minimum, protect it as though it were entirely yours. Notice what changes when you stop asking “is this enough,” and start asking “have I given everything I have.”

—DAIV

## PICTALK



Women from the Dogra community perform rituals during the 'Bachch Dua' festival in Jammu. PHOTO: PTI



# Sifting the wheat from the chaff

The debate over Jauhar in *Padmaavat* has exposed an uncomfortable tendency in contemporary discourse: judging the past entirely through the moral vocabulary of the present. There is nothing wrong with questioning whether a modern film can inadvertently romanticise a practice that constitutional morality rightly rejects today



BHOPINDER SINGH

There are really two separate questions in the controversy over an actor's comments on the Jauhar sequence in *Padmaavat* — what Jauhar meant in its historical context, and what message a modern film depicting it may convey to a contemporary audience.

The latter is a perfectly legitimate subject for debate. But the former cannot be reconstructed entirely through the moral vocabulary of the present.

The fundamental problem with drawing a direct parallel between Jauhar and rape survivors is that it conflates two profoundly different circumstances. Rape is an act of sexual violence forcibly inflicted upon a woman. Jauhar, in the historical context in which it is remembered, was understood as a collective act undertaken by women facing the imminent prospect of capture, sexual violence, enslavement and dishonour following defeat. That does not require us to endorse Jauhar today. It requires us to understand what the act meant to those who undertook it. And this distinction matters.

To say that Jauhar should not be practised today is uncontroversial. Nor should practices such as sati be romanticised or encouraged. Modern constitutional morality, individual liberty and the sanctity of life rightly reject such practices. But rejecting a historical practice in the present is different from denying the historical and cultural ideas that gave rise to it. In fact, there is a much larger principle here — one that applies to every faith and every civilisation.

The entire edifice of religious and cultural belief rests, in varying degrees, upon scriptures, epics, mythologies, oral traditions, poetry and literature. These bodies of work cannot be read as literal, contemporary instruction manuals. Their stories, symbols, metaphors and moral frameworks have been interpreted across centuries, often differently by different generations.

We do not ordinarily insist that every episode in a religious epic must be reproduced literally in modern life merely because it appears in a sacred or revered text. We understand that there is a distinction between the literal act, the historical or mythical narrative, and the philosophical or spiritual idea that generations have derived from it. That same intellectual generosity ought to extend to history.

The Rajput conception of honour, sacrifice



ONE CAN FIERCELY  
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ONE CAN REJECT A  
MODERN  
INTERPRETATION  
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PERSON MAKING IT.  
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THE WOMEN WHO  
UNDERTOOK IT CAN  
BE UNDERSTOOD  
WITHOUT  
REFERENCE TO THE  
WORLD IN WHICH  
THEY LIVED

The writer is a former  
Lieutenant Governor of  
the Andaman and  
Nicobar Islands and  
Puducherry, and a  
military veteran

## India's new music stars go independent



NAMRATA KOHLI

### 2ND OPINION

For decades, the route to becoming a music star in India usually ran through cinema. Singers became famous through playback, songs travelled on the back of films, and soundtracks dominated popular listening. That model is now being disrupted.

A new report on India's streaming economy suggests that artist-first music — tracks created and released outside film soundtracks — is rapidly moving into the mainstream. According to Spotify's Loud & Clear India report, half of its year-end top 10 in India in 2025 came from outside film soundtracks, while 90 per cent of tracks on its Daily Top 50 were by Indian artists.

Names such as Anuv Jain, Aditya Rikhari, Kushagra and Faheem Abdullah are emblematic of a generation building audiences around the artist rather than the movie.



Rikhari's independent track Sahiba, for instance, remained No. 1 on Spotify India for more than 11 consecutive weeks.

“A few years back, Indian music was dominated by film music — there were playback singers and film soundtracks,” says Dhruvank Vaidya, Head of Music & Podcast, Spotify India. “What we have seen in the last three years is phenomenal growth of artist-first music.”

The shift is economic as well as cultural. Royalties generated by Indian artists on Spotify rose 29 per cent year-on-year in 2025, according to the report. The number of artists generating more than ₹1 crore annually grew 21 per cent, while those crossing ₹5 crore have more than doubled since 2023.

#### The rise of regional India

Perhaps the bigger disruption is coming from language. Telugu music royalties grew more than 120 per cent year-on-year, Marathi nearly 50 per cent, Bengali nearly 40 per cent and Malayalam over 30 per cent. Haryanvi streams

increased almost seven-fold between February 2023 and February 2026.

It reflects a marketplace where artists no longer necessarily have to migrate towards Hindi to find scale. “When you stay true to your culture and art form, you sound authentic,” says Vaidya. Young listeners, he adds, relate to the stories and identities of these artists, allowing musicians to build their own fandoms across languages.

And increasingly, those fans may not even be in India. More than 40 per cent of royalties earned by Indian artists on Spotify in 2025 came from listeners overseas. Of the 15 most-exported Indian tracks on the platform, 11 were independent, artist-first releases. Globally, listeners discovered an Indian artist they had never heard before 12.8 billion times during 2025, up 14 per cent year-on-year.

The numbers point towards a fundamental change in the Indian music business. Digital discovery is weakening some of the old barriers of film, geography and language. A singer-songwriter no longer necessarily needs a Bollywood soundtrack to become nationally known; nor does a Malayalam, Haryanvi or Telugu artist have to abandon a regional identity to find a global listener.

Bollywood remains formidable. But for India's next generation of musicians, it is no longer the only stage that matters.

The writer is an author and podcaster and a Senior Fellow at the Ministry of Culture, Government of India

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Don't wait for buildings to collapse

The incidence of a fatal building collapse is not merely a reminder for public authorities to keep a check on building safety audits; it is also a gentle reminder for local communities to recognise the dangers of unplanned construction. The building disaster that resulted in the deaths of six identified students, while some others may still remain unidentified, is nothing less than a tragedy.

Such incidents of building collapses are particularly concerning because similar occurrences may be repeated in different parts of India. Unplanned construction, poor building maintenance and infrastructural mismatches are serious urban menaces, especially during the monsoon season.

More than just a responsibility of public authorities, building safety requires citizens to be aware of the seriousness of the matter. Timely maintenance and repairs, as well as adequate architectural planning, are extremely important to ensure the safety of building residents.

We hope that building safety audits will become part of a civic habit. We should all, at an individual level, conduct safety audits of our buildings to help prevent such mishaps.

KIRTI WADHAWAN | KANPUR

### EOS-05 boosts space capabilities

The launch of the EOS-05 satellite is a significant step in India's continuing journey in space technology. Earth-observation satellites provide vital information about changes taking place on the ground and can support better management of land, water, forests and other natural resources. The mission reflects India's growing ability to develop and deploy sophisticated space systems. Satellite data has uses beyond space, helping farmers assess crops, monitor water resources, assess disaster damage and support urban planning, environmental monitoring and infrastructure development.

The achievement highlights the need for sustained investment in research, innovation and indigenous technology. Strengthening cooperation among ISRO, educational institutions and private companies can help India develop more advanced satellites and create a larger ecosystem for space-based applications. Building skilled human resources should remain an equally important priority. The real success of EOS-05 will ultimately depend on how effectively its data is converted into public value. With consistent investment and effective utilisation, India's space programme can contribute meaningfully to economic growth, environmental protection and national preparedness.

RUKMA SHARMA | PUNJAB

### India-EU partnership gains momentum

Apropos “Belgium hedges against an unpredictable US” (September 7). The growing India-EU partnership is welcome, but its value will depend on how far it moves beyond diplomatic assurances. Europe's search for greater strategic autonomy offers India an opportunity to build a more balanced economic relationship, particularly in defence, technology and clean energy. Yet trade agreements should not become exercises in political symbolism. Both sides must address market access, regulatory differences and the concerns of smaller businesses before announcing ambitious targets. India should seek practical cooperation in areas where European expertise can strengthen domestic capabilities, including renewable energy, advanced manufacturing and research. Belgium's experience in defence production and its role in European institutions could be useful in this regard. At the same time, India must avoid replacing one form of dependence with another. Diversifying partnerships is sensible, but self-reliance requires investment in skills, innovation and competitive industry.

The trade relationship should prioritise jobs, fair competition and mutual economic benefit. Europe must respect India's development priorities.

A MYILSAMI | COIMBATORE



# How are India and Japan reimagining energy security?

As geopolitical tensions and volatile fuel markets reshape energy security, India and Japan are turning to domestic renewable resources. Their initiative to develop 1,000 compressed biogas (CBG) plants in India by 2030 combines India’s abundant biomass with Japan’s technology and financing



AKANKSHA JAIN

When people think about the energy transition, they usually picture solar panels, wind turbines and electric vehicles. However, the recent meeting between the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Japanese Premier Sanae Takaichi in New Delhi suggests that both countries are beginning to see energy security differently. Among the several announcements on bilateral energy cooperation, the launch of the India-Japan Cooperative Biogas for Growth Initiative stands out. The initiative aims to support the development of 1,000 compressed biogas (CBG) plants by 2030 in India. In an era marked by geopolitical uncertainty, volatile fuel markets and increasingly fragile supply chains, the question is no longer simply how to generate cleaner electricity. It is also how to produce the fuels that modern economies will continue to need and to do so from domestic resources.

The crisis in West Asia has underscored the strategic importance of energy security. It has also exposed how the concept itself has evolved through three dimensions. For decades, energy security has been centred on securing uninterrupted supplies of oil and gas. The clean energy transition introduced the second one, focused on technologies, critical minerals and manufacturing supply chains, supply chains that remain concentrated in a handful of countries. A third dimension is now emerging that involves securing domestic renewable resources for reducing dependence on both imported fuels and imported clean-energy technologies. While electricity would power much of the future economy, modern economies cannot run on electrons alone. Industries such as steel, fertilisers, chemicals, shipping, aviation and long-haul freight will continue to depend on molecules for decades. Therefore, a more successful and strategic energy transition should seek where electrons are sufficient, where molecules are indispensable, and how those essential molecules can increasingly be produced from domestic renewable resources.

This is where the India-Japan partnership becomes strategically important in addressing their complementary energy security vulnerabilities. With over 90% of its crude oil and nearly all its LNG sourced from overseas, Japan’s energy insecurity remains overwhelmingly molecular and import-dependent. In addition to the risks of geopolitical vulnerabilities, this also contributes to annual greenhouse gas emissions of approximately 994 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent, the key barrier to Japan’s 2050 net-zero target. Under this partnership, Japanese public and private entities provide finance, advanced technologies and equipment to support CBG projects in India. The resulting emission reductions are quantified, verified and authorised as Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes under Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement. These mitigation outcomes are allocated between India and Japan according to their agreed financial and technological contributions, with Japan applying its authorised share towards its Nationally Determined Contributions and, where applicable, voluntary corporate climate commitments. For Tokyo, supporting renewable gas projects is also a way to diversify future energy options while advancing its international decarbonisation commitments.

India, meanwhile, faces a dual challenge of energy security and systemic decarbonisation. It imports nearly 90 per cent of its crude oil requirements and around 50 per cent of its natural gas demand, while its rapidly expanding clean energy transition remains heavily dependent on imported solar modules, battery technologies and upstream processing of critical minerals.

In other words, India’s vulnerabilities extend across both molecules and electrons. Since CBG is produced from domestic feedstocks — cattle dung, agricultural residues, municipal organic waste and industrial biomass —CBG simultaneously addresses energy security, waste management and methane emissions while creating value from domestic resources.

Unlike crude oil, LNG or battery minerals, its feedstock cannot be monopolised by distant producers or disrupted by maritime conflict. Also, unlike several emerging energy carriers like hydrogen that still require new supply chains and infrastructure, CBG can leverage existing gas networks. The partnership is also economically complementary. India possesses one of the world’s largest and



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RESOURCES

The writer is a Research Associate at the Centre for Climate Change and Energy Transition, Chintan Research Foundation

most diverse biomass resources, generated by its extensive agricultural sector, livestock population and growing urban organic waste streams. Japan, meanwhile, brings technology through precision engineering and project financing.

Rather than competing in the same segment of the value chain, the two countries bring different strengths to building a regional renewable gas economy. More importantly, this cooperation leverages India’s existing GOBARdhan programme and the National Dairy Development Board’s extensive cooperative network, providing an institutional foundation for scaling feedstock collection, avoiding the starting-from-scratch route. But none of this suggests that scaling compressed biogas will be straightforward. India’s principal constraints lie less in technology than in systems integration.

Countries routinely map their coal reserves, oil fields and critical mineral deposits because they are recognised as strategic assets. Biomass resources deserve similar treatment. Crop residues, cattle dung, food waste and organic municipal waste constitute dispersed but significant domestic energy reserves in the form of residual and renewable carbon. This biomass is geographically dispersed, seasonal, variable in quantity and quality, and generated by millions of small producers. Establishing transparent pricing mechanisms, village-level aggregation centres and reliable collection systems, while ensuring that its qualitative characteristics for digestion are maintained, will be as important as constructing digesters themselves. While this complicates logistics, it also makes domestic energy supply inherently more resilient by reducing dependence on single points of failure.

Another, more manageable challenge is the infrastructure. Pipeline connectivity, gas compression facilities and assured offtake remain essential for commercial viability. Without investment in downstream infrastructure, new plants risk becoming underutilised assets. The third challenge is market development. Stable pricing mechanisms, harmonised gas quality standards, stronger carbon market incentives and recognition of digestate as a valuable fertiliser are necessary to improve project economics. India’s experience with renewable energy offers an important lesson. Rapid expansion of solar generation often outpaced transmission infrastructure, leading to curtailment and stranded capacity in some regions. The CBG sector should avoid repeating this mistake by investing as much in logistics and distribution as in plant construction.

One underappreciated aspect of CBG is renewable carbon. While renewable electricity will power much of the future economy, many industries will continue to require carbon-containing fuels and feedstocks. Biomethane addresses this need by providing not only renewable methane but also renewable carbon, making it more than just another low-carbon fuel. Produced from agricultural residues, livestock waste and organic municipal waste, it can be integrated into existing gas infrastructure while reducing methane emissions, producing organic fertiliser and creating rural economic opportunities.

The significance of the India-Japan biogas partnership therefore extends beyond the number of plants it builds. It reflects a broader shift in energy security, from dependence on imported hydrocarbons and vulnerable clean-energy supply chains towards greater reliance on domestically produced renewable fuels. By combining India’s abundant biomass resources with Japan’s technological expertise, this partnership offers a model for strengthening energy security, accelerating decarbonisation and building resilient energy systems across Asia.

# Listen to the body before it demands grace



PRATIKSHA VATS

For years, I treated my body like an unpaid intern - working it to the bone, demanding endless overtime, and offering very little gratitude in return. If I felt a migraine creeping in at my desk, I didn’t pause; I swallowed two painkillers, washed them down with an espresso, and kept typing. If my shoulders were hitched up to my ears in stress, I just considered it the tax for being a responsible adult.

I convinced myself I was fine because I was still standing. I was proud of my ability to “push through”.

But what I failed to realise — and what took years of burnouts to understand — is that pushing through isn’t strength. It is a slow, silent borrowing against a bank account that will eventually go bankrupt.

We live in a culture that conditions us to treat our physical frame like a high-performance vehicle — always pushing for more mileage, faster turnarounds, and higher output. We measure our worth by our productivity, demanding relentless efficiency from a living being we rarely stop to thank. When the dashboard lights on our health start flashing, our instinct isn’t curiosity or care; it’s annoyance. We view physical exhaustion as an inconvenience and pain as an enemy to be silenced. We cover the check-engine light with tape, swallow another coffee, and keep driving.

What we fail to realise is that the body is not an opponent to overcome or a machine to run into the ground. It is the most loyal companion you will ever have.

Long before a sudden collapse, a hospital bed, or a heavy medical diagnosis forces us to pull over, the trouble has already begun in the quiet spaces of our daily lives. The break doesn’t start in the cells; it starts as an internal atmosphere. It begins with the invisible weight of internal and external pressure, relentless overthinking, perfectionism, and a background noise of harsh, unforgiving self-talk. We carry an endless list of shoulds: I should be doing more, I shouldn’t be tired yet, I can’t let anyone down.

The body is an exceptionally attentive, sensitive audience to this internal dialogue. It doesn’t distinguish between a real external threat and the threat of your own stressful thoughts. Every time you force yourself past your limits out of fear, guilt, or obligation, your nervous system registers the alarm. Day after day, your body absorbs the weight of these thoughts.

The mind can only hold a burden for so long before it hands the weight down to the physical frame. The body holds your unspoken anxiety in a tight, nervous stomach, stores your unaddressed grief in a heavy chest, and carries your relentless rush in tense joints and elevated blood pressure.

When people finally fall ill, they almost always pinpoint the start of their trouble to just a couple of months ago - the moment the fever broke out, the back seized up, or the fatigue became paralysing. But if you sit with them and ask them to look closer, you discover a deeper truth: the body had been knocking for years. It knocked as a lingering tension headache you ignored. It knocked as a persistent gut issue you dismissed as bad food. It knocked as a sudden, unexplained fog over your concentration, a bout of restlessness, or months of tossing and turning in your sleep. But in our rush to achieve, produce, manage the outside world, and survive, we ignore the knock.

The body is fiercely loyal; it rarely fails without warning. It speaks to us first in quiet, gentle whispers. But when its quiet whispers are ignored long enough, it has to speak louder. And when its shouts are continually bypassed, it simply pulls the emergency brake.

When that brake is pulled, a wave of shock, grief, and betrayal usually follows. We feel angry at our bodies for failing us right when we needed them most. The heart-breaking irony is that our bodies never intended to betray us. They knocked because they were trying to survive us. They forced a full stop because it was the only way left to save our lives from our own relentless pace.

It does not have to reach a crisis for us to change this narrative. Healing, longevity, and true emotional peace begin with a simple, radical, and gentle shift in perspective: recognising that your body is not a machine to be driven into the ground, but the most devoted partner you will ever have in this life. It has carried you through every heartbreak, every late night, every deadline, every milestone, and every silent storm you have ever weathered. It has fought for your survival every single second of your life without you ever having to ask.

We must learn to sit down and listen before our bodies are forced to scream.

Listening doesn’t require a grand, complicated retreat. It starts with a simple, intentional act of quiet stillness. Sit for a while without judgement, without rushing to “fix” anything, and without demanding that your body perform for you. Close your eyes for five minutes and ask your physical self a simple question: How are you actually doing? Notice where you are holding your breath. Unclench your jaw. Drop your shoulders away from your ears. Feel the quiet weariness in your bones that you’ve been sweeping under the rug for months. Acknowledge the physical debt you have accumulated. Your body does not just need basic maintenance; it needs reward. It deserves to be pampered, rested, and thanked for its relentless loyalty. A reward doesn’t have to be grand or elaborate. It can be an extra hour of restorative sleep without guilt, a warm bath without a phone nearby, a slow walk in nature where the only goal is to feel the air in your lungs, or a deep, unfiltered breath that fills your chest completely. Sometimes, the greatest reward you can offer is simply telling yourself, “We have done enough for today. You can rest now.”

Stop waiting for a lab test, a diagnosis, or a doctor’s warning to grant yourself permission to rest. Step off the treadmill of constant demands, offer your body the grace, kindness, and gratitude it has earned, and listen to its gentle voice — long before it has to stop you in your tracks. If you don’t pick a day to rest, your body will pick it for you.



The writer is a nutritionist, health writer and wellness coach

# What the Jauhar debate reveals about our fear of complex agency



PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI

Recently, there has been a conversation. A controversy. Over a movie scene from almost a decade ago. An apples-to-oranges comparison made in an attempt to sound like a staunch feminist. But the take is so problematic that it does a huge disservice to women. And yes, it is important enough to debunk it, lest it become an ill-informed idea to propagate - about an act of jauhar in the 14th century to a rape survivor in the 21st-century context.

There is a peculiar irony in some contemporary conversations about women’s agency. We say we want women to have the right to choose. And then, when some women in history made that choice — a decision that we find uncomfortable in this day and age — we decide that they could not possibly have been making choices at all, but were coerced into it.

Let us begin with something that should require no qualification whatsoever:

A woman who survives rape has a right not just to live, but to thrive. And not just to live, but to live a life of dignity.

She does not become impure, dishonoured, damaged or less worthy of love, marriage,

motherhood, work or happiness. The shame and criminal act is that of the accused who has committed the crime, and the dishonour is for him to bear — our laws must ensure that.

I can’t imagine I have to literally spell it out because some made it about a rape survivor choosing life over death, by comparing the 21st-century nation-state situation, which is constitutionally governed with recourse available, to a 14th-century princely statehood choice, where women chose jauhar — choosing death over life in the face of impending defeat, captivity and sexual violence.

Firstly, they are not the same choice, if it isn’t already obvious.

But in case it still isn’t obvious to some brainwashed idea which was spoken recently and is being justified repeatedly — in one case, a woman is subjected to violence against her will. In the other, we are talking about women confronted with an extraordinarily brutal circumstance in which they knew capture could mean enslavement, sexual violence and the loss of control over their own lives and bodies. You can find that choice tragic. But to say that the women who chose jauhar were simply victims of patriarchy is not just misplaced but also an insincere argument.

Worse still, equating jauhar to sati, as though they were interchangeable manifestations of one identical practice. They were not.

Sati was associated with the death of a widow following her husband’s death on the same funeral pyre as her husband, an abhorrent



Images are for representative purposes only

idea developed within particular social and cultural contexts. Jauhar belonged to the context of war, siege, defeat and anticipated captivity.

One was connected to widowhood — the other to warfare.

Sati was not just abolished but identified as a criminal act against women once India became a republic. And rightly so.

If we flatten every historical practice involving women’s bodies into one convenient category called “patriarchy”, we stop understanding history and start using history as a prop for contemporary arguments.

Talking of contemporary history, not too long ago, in 2014, during the genocide in Iraq’s Sinjar region, many Yazidi women and girls chose to take their own lives rather than submit to systematic rape, torture and forced conversion by ISIS militants.

after an assault she did not choose. A woman who chose jauhar, in the historical circumstances, was choosing death rather than anticipated captivity and violence.

Those are radically different circumstances. One simple fact: a woman’s agency does not disappear simply because we dislike the choice. We cannot say a woman is empowered when she makes the choice we approve of and brainwashed when she makes the choice we don’t.

I would rather ask a much harder question. Why is it that all through history, a woman’s body has been made a battlefield on which victorious armies asserted power?

Why is it that women have had to contemplate death as an alternative to captivity?

Those are profoundly feminist questions. And it isn’t definitely an illiterate argument that we have been subjected to.

The idea that a rape survivor’s honour is destroyed by sexual violence against her is itself an obscene form of victim-blaming.

But does defending the right of a rape survivor to live require us to declare that a woman who chose jauhar was wrong to make that choice?

A woman who survives rape in the 21st century or earlier is choosing life

The tragedy of jauhar, or in the case of Yazidi women, is not that women chose death. Perhaps the tragedy is that the world in which they lived gave them only that one terrible choice to deal with. The question should not be of the women but the mindset of such invaders who looked at women as acquisitions to do as they pleased with them.

Also, to put sati, jauhar and rape survivors into one basket is to construct a contemporary analogy out of three profoundly different circumstances.

Sati was a practice that needed to end. Which we did.

Similarly, women who chose jauhar should not have their agency erased merely because we, living centuries later, would make a different choice. Rape survivors have an absolute right to live. No woman should ever be told that her life is less valuable because of sexual violence.

There is no contradiction in holding all three positions. In fact, I would argue that this is what a genuinely feminist reading of history demands.

The goal of feminism cannot be to tell women what the correct choice is. It must be to build a world in which women have choices that do not involve choosing between their lives and their dignity.

That is the world we should be fighting for.

Not rewriting the choices of women who lived in another one.

The writer is a former Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) and currently heads Women Led Futures at ORF





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## Order Order

### Justice Mohapatra sworn in as chief justice of Chhattisgarh HC



Justice Krushna Ram Mohapatra, a senior judge of the Orissa High Court, was sworn in as the chief justice of the Chhattisgarh High Court here on Monday.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, senior cabinet ministers and state officials attended the ceremony at Lok Bhavan where Governor Ramen Deka administered the oath of office to Justice Mohapatra.

Born on April 18, 1965, Justice Mohapatra holds a BA LLB degree and enrolled as an advocate with the Orissa State Bar Council in February 1988. He spent 26 years practising across diverse legal fields, including civil, criminal, service, and constitutional matters.

He also served as Additional Standing Counsel for the state of Odisha and the Orissa Public Service Commission, and represented institutions, including Central Cooperative Banks Limited (Keonjhar), Neelachal Ispat Nigam Limited, Bank of Baroda, and the National Institute of Open Schooling under the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Justice Mohapatra was elevated as a judge of the Orissa High Court on April 17, 2015.

His appointment fills the vacancy created by the retirement of former Chief Justice Ramesh Sinha on September 4. Justice Sanjay Kumar Agrawal had briefly served as the Acting Chief Justice of the High Court from September 5.

(PTI)

### Removal of TMC billboard: SC asks to raise contentions before HC



The Supreme Court on Monday asked the TMC to raise its contentions over the removal of the party's signboard from its office at Camac Street in Kolkata before the high court.

The top court asked the Calcutta High Court to expeditiously decide the petition filed by the All India Trinamool Congress, also known as the TMC, challenging the Kolkata Municipal Corporation's removal of the billboard from the party's office there. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana disposed of the plea filed by the TMC. At the outset, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state government, raised a preliminary objection to the appeal. "My learned friend should not be excited," senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the TMC, said. The law officer took strong objection to Sibal's submission. "You should not have used this expression... it is just for the media, just because it is a political matter..." the solicitor general said. Sibal said that the billboard was removed without any notice, and the board of Haldiram's, functioning on the ground floor, was not touched. The CJI said the matter is still pending before the high court and remedial orders can be passed there.

"Just because the board was removed, it does not mean the matter has become infructuous... if it is found to be wrongly removed, there can be a mandatory order for restoration," the bench said. It said that the high court can be requested to decide expeditiously.

"In our view, the interim order dated August 28, 20206 has not decided pending issues on merits. Since the High Court is seized of the matter, and there are tentative observations made in the order, the parties are granted liberty to raise their respective contentions before the High Court. We request the High Court to determine all issues that arise for consideration expeditiously," the top court said in the order and disposed of the plea. The controversy relates to the removal of an allegedly unauthorised billboard bearing TMC signage from the building at 9, Camac Street in south Kolkata by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC), with police assistance.

(PTI)

## SC allows West Bengal govt to file report on questioning of Abhishek's PA in land-grab probe

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday permitted the West Bengal government to file a detailed investigation report in a sealed cover in support of its claim that Sumit Roy, personal secretary of TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee, was not cooperating with the police in the ongoing probe in the Salboni land-grab case.

Earlier on August 31, the top court had asked the state government to produce records pertaining to the interrogation of Roy. It had also extended Roy's protection from arrest until the next hearing.

On Monday, Solicitor

General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state government, told the bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices J Joymalya Bagchi and J V Mohana that he wanted to file a "detailed investigation" report of Roy.

"On the last date, a query was (made) whether he was confronted with the issue of large cash deposits. There was detailed interrogation and he remained elusive. I have the transcript. It can be posted tomorrow or the day after," the law officer said.

The submissions were made when the counsel for Roy sought a pass-over of the hearing on grounds that senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan was



## Justice Mehta's fresh salvo rocks Rajasthan HC

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

In a fresh salvo at Rajasthan High Court judge Sanjeev Prakash Sharma, the Supreme Court's Justice Sandeep Mehta has sent a fourth letter to CJI Surya Kant, accusing Sharma of interfering in an internal judicial enquiry, breaching confidentiality and abusing administrative powers.

Justice Mehta had earlier written three letters on August 2, 10 and 17, accusing Sharma, the then acting chief justice of the Rajasthan High Court, of "maladministration", "malpractices", "nepotism" and "favouritism".

Justice Sharma, who went on leave following a protest by a group of advocates outside his courtroom, had termed the allegations against him as baseless.

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant had, on August 26, said that Justice Mehta's allega-



Justice Sanjeev Mehta (left) Rajasthan HC jude Sanjeev Prakash Sharma (right)

tions against Sharma cannot be adjudicated in the public domain and the judge "must be given a fair opportunity" before any conclusion is reached. In his fourth letter dated August 30, Justice Mehta, whose parent high court is also the Rajasthan High Court, claimed he has "further information" and "material" regarding arbitrary, dubious and patently

"high-handed" acts of Justice Sharma.

Justice Mehta has alleged arbitrary rule changes, judicial interference in a land dispute and broader corruption and administrative breakdown at the Rajasthan High Court.

He said a complaint committee of the High Court was constituted to enquire into the allegations against

a judicial officer who was accused of displaying indecent pictures of a fellow lady officer on his mobile phone.

"Two Resolutions of the committee dated May 21, 2026 and July 9, 2026 clearly record that the Acting Chief Justice (Justice Sharma) has made direct intervention in the enquiry proceedings, hampering the indepen-

dence of the committee and that such intervention could vitiate the enquiry as a whole and also breached the confidentiality of such sensitive proceedings," Justice Mehta wrote.

He alleged that the committee, comprising three female judges of the Rajasthan High Court, recorded the said minutes and refused to proceed with the enquiry.

"The Committee also observed that the Acting Chief Justice caused the records of the Committee to be shared with other officers of the registry and judicial officers, thereby breaching the confidentiality of the enquiry instituted against a judicial officer with grave charges," he claimed.

On August 31, the Supreme Court collegium had recommended Justice Sanjay K Agrawal as the Chief Justice of the Rajasthan High Court.

Justice Mehta had levelled sensational allegations

against Justice Sharma in his three letters to the CJI urging him to appoint a permanent chief justice from outside the state.

Justice Mehta was appointed a judge of the Rajasthan High Court in May 2011. He became Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court in February 2023 and was elevated to the Supreme Court in November the same year.

Justice Sharma was appointed a judge of the Rajasthan High Court in November 2016 and transferred to the Patna High Court in January 2022.

His request for repatriation to Rajasthan on health grounds was not accepted by the Supreme Court Collegium in March 2023.

He was instead transferred to the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

The Collegium subsequently recommended his repatriation to Rajasthan in May 2025.

## State's view on appointment of HC judges not binding on Union Govt: Ex-law minister

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Former Union law minister Ashwani Kumar on Monday said the controversy over the appointment of the Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court should have been avoided as it negatively impacts inter-institutional and Union-State relations. In a statement, he said that while the views of state governments are sought on the proposed appointment of High Court judges, they are not binding on the Union Government or the President of India.



"The controversy over appointment of the Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court ought to have been avoided. It impacts negatively on inter-institutional and Centre-state relationships," Kumar said in the statement. Noting that the constitutional position and established practice with regard to the appointment of judges of the High Courts are firmly established, the former law minister said, "While the State Governments concerned are

asked for their views on the proposed appointments as High Court judges, their views, while entitled to weight, are not binding on Union Government or President."

"Consultations with state govts concerned do not mean concurrence of the state govt," he claimed. "Withholding of views by the concerned state govt in the matter of appointment of High Court judges could also impact the inter-se seniority amongst the judges of High Courts," he also noted.

## Justice Mishra sworn in as HC judge despite Punjab protest

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Chandigarh

Justice Ashwani Kumar Mishra was sworn in as the Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court here on Monday, a day after the Mann govt objected to his appointment and urged the Centre to stop oath-taking ceremony.

Justice Mishra (57), who had been functioning as the acting chief justice of the high court since June, was administered oath by Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria at the Lok Bhavan. The oath-taking ceremony was attended by Haryana Governor Ashim Kumar Ghosh, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, Haryana Assembly Speaker Harvinder Kalyan, Akali MLA Ganieve Kaur Majithia and Punjab Chief Secretary K A P Sinha.

However, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann was



not present at the ceremony.

In July last year, Justice Mishra was transferred from the Allahabad High Court to the Punjab and Haryana High Court. He assumed charge as Acting Chief Justice of the high court here on June 1 this year, following the elevation of Justice Sheel Nagu to the Supreme Court. The Centre notified Justice Mishra's appointment on Saturday, about a month after Supreme Court Collegium had recommended his elevation.

On Sunday, the Mann gov-

ernment convened an emergency meeting of the cabinet against the Centre's decision. The state cabinet passed a resolution, asking the Centre not to move forward with the administration of oath to Justice Mishra till the state government's concerns are adequately addressed.

The Mann government claimed that appointment of Mishra as chief justice of the high court was done without awaiting state govt's views bypassing Constitutional norms and set procedures.

## Will fix date in marital rape petitions after Union Govt's stand on issue: SC

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday said it will await the stand of the central government on a batch of petitions concerning the criminalisation of marital rape before fixing a suitable date for hearing on the issue.

Senior advocate Indira Jaising mentioned a petition related to the prosecution of a husband for marital rape before a three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant, urging that the batch be listed for a date in November.

Jaising, who appeared for the wife, said although the matters are scheduled to come up for hearing on Wednesday, the Centre was yet to file a substantive reply and that the parties were also yet to exchange the petitions. "Union has not filed a reply, except a preliminary objection.. I am asking for a fixed date of hearing in November. We have not exchanged the petitions. We don't know the commonal-



ity or differences," the senior counsel said.

"Matter is listed on Wednesday. Union will appear. We will see what they say and then we will fix a suitable date accordingly," the bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, said.

Senior advocate Karuna Nundy, appearing for another petitioner, said the matter may be fixed on any date to ensure the completion of pleadings.

The court was told that the batch pertains to constitutional validity and interpretation of the provisions concerning marital rape in the criminal law.

Under the exception clause of Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, now repealed and replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his wife, the wife not being minor, is not rape.

Even under the new law, exception 2 to section 63 (rape) says that "sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under eighteen years of age, is not rape".

The top court had on January 16, 2023 sought the Centre's response on a clutch of petitions assailing the IPC provision which pro-

vides protection to a husband against prosecution for forcible sexual intercourse if the wife is an adult.

Later, it also issued notice to the Centre on a similar plea challenging the BNS provision on the issue.

The newly enacted laws - the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNS) and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam -- came into effect from July 1, 2024, replacing the IPC, CrPC and the Evidence Act.

One of pleas is related to the Delhi High Court's split verdict of May 11, 2022 on the issue. The appeal has been filed by a woman, who was one of the petitioners before the Delhi High Court.

While delivering a split judgement, high court judges Justice Rajiv Shakdher and Justice C Hari Shankar had concurred on granting the petitioners a certificate of leave to appeal in the Supreme Court as the matter involved substantial questions of law which required a decision by the top court.

## Delhi HC rejects Hindutva influencer's plea against arrest



Security personnel deployed outside the Patiala House Courts ahead of the hearing of social media influencer Swatantra Bhardwaj in an alleged assault case, in New Delhi

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Monday dismissed a plea by Hindutva influencer Swatantra Bhardwaj against his arrest in connection with the alleged assault on the father of a student activist during a protest at Jantar Mantar. A bench of Justices Navin Chawla and Ravinder Dudeja said Bhardwaj was remanded to custody pursuant to trial court's judicial orders and he can challenge his arrest before the court concerned.

The counsel for Bhardwaj contended that even a single day's custody is illegal, saying the FIR does not exist in the eyes of law. He argued that this was one of the FIRs related to the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest that were quashed by the Supreme Court.

However, the counsel for Delhi Police said Bhardwaj was produced through video conferencing before a sessions judge on Saturday and was sent to one-day police custody. On Sunday, he was virtually produced before a duty magistrate and was remanded to one-day judicial custody. On Monday, he was again produced before a special judge virtually and has been sent to 14 days in judicial custody.

"He is in custody in pursuance to judicial orders, so where is the question of habeas corpus or illegal custody. Once there is a legal

order, they can challenge it before the court concerned," the police counsel contended.

On instructions from SHO of Parliament Street police station, the counsel said this FIR has not been quashed by the Supreme Court.

The counsel for the complaint apprised the court that provisions under the SC/ST Act have also been invoked against Bhardwaj in the FIR.

The court noted that while Bhardwaj's counsel argued that the FIR has been quashed by the Supreme Court, this ground was not raised in the petition. "You have not raised this ground in the petition. Even if we issue notice on the petition, what reply the State would have filed," the bench said, adding that "we fail to understand how this prayer is sought in the habeas corpus petition". The plea filed on behalf of Bhardwaj's father Randhir Kumar Jha was mentioned before a bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tejas Karia for urgent hearing in the morning. Bhardwaj was detained in Bulandshahr on September 4, hours after the CJP staged a protest outside the Parliament Street police station here demanding his arrest over the alleged assault. Delhi Police has added provisions of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and criminal intimidation to the FIR against Bhardwaj over the alleged assault on Sanjay Kumar, the father of a teenage student activist, during CJP-led protest at Jantar Mantar in June.



PIOTECH

## PGIMER marks 63 years with vision for AI-driven healthcare

Artificial Intelligence will fundamentally transform healthcare by augmenting the capabilities of doctors, enabling greater knowledge, efficiency and reach, Prof Ajit Kumar Chaturvedi, Vice-Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi said on Monday.

Addressing the 63rd Institute Foundation Day celebrations of PGIMER, Chandigarh as chief guest, Chaturvedi described Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research as a “true national asset” and lauded its pioneering contributions to healthcare, education, research and innovation.

Delivering the Foundation Day address on “AI in Healthcare”, Prof Chaturvedi described PGIMER as a “true national asset” and lauded its pioneering contributions to healthcare, education, research and innovation.

“PGIMER Chandigarh is, without doubt, a true national asset” not limited to one region, but making a significant contribution to healthcare, education, research and innovation across the country. I congratulate each and every member of the PGIMER family for this remarkable journey and for keeping the institution at the forefront of Indian healthcare,” he said.

Emphasising that AI should be viewed as an enabler rather than a replacement for medical professionals, Chaturvedi said, “The most successful healthcare deployments today are not examples of AI replacing doctors. They are examples of AI helping doctors perform at their best.”

Vice Chancellor of the BHU noted that AI had moved beyond being a technological novelty and was making deep inroads into healthcare, research and decision-making.

“AI is no more something like a fashionable toy or something that is a status symbol. It has made very deep inroads in the market, and naturally, we cannot be just watching it from a distance,” he observed.

Highlighting its potential to process vast volumes of medical information, he said AI could assist doctors in extracting information from clinical records, pathology reports and scientific literature.

(PTI)



# When AI takes over the daily UPI payments

## India’s UPI revolution may take another leap as AI agents handle small payments for us



RAJESH SETH

For millions of Indians, paying for something has become almost an unconscious act. Buying vegetables from the neighbourhood vendor, we scan the QR code. Paying the kirana store, we scan the QR code. Taking an auto or an Uber, we pay through UPI. Visiting the chemist, restaurant or even the doctor, we reach for our phone rather than our wallet.

In less than a decade, UPI has transformed the way India pays. According to NPCI data, UPI processed a record 24.51 billion transactions worth ₹29.82 trillion in August 2026, nearly 800 million transactions every day or 9150 transactions every second.

India has not merely embraced digital payments; it has emerged as a global pioneer in instant retail payments. UPI has made paying small amounts of ₹50, ₹200 or ₹500 effortless. It is now very difficult to find smaller denomination currency notes in the market or even with bank tellers.

And now something even more significant is on the horizon.

### Payments by AI Agents

A Reuters report last week said India is preparing a framework that could allow AI agents to make small UPI payments without requiring users to approve individual transactions. The initial focus is expected to be on low-value, routine purchases, with users setting rules and spending limits in advance.

This may sound like a small technological refinement. It isn’t.

UPI changed the way Indians make payments. Agentic AI could change the way Indians decide to make them.

Today, if you want to buy groceries, you



open Google Pay, PhonePe or another UPI app on your mobile phone, scan the merchant’s QR code and approve the payment. Tomorrow, you might simply tell your AI agent: “Keep my weekly grocery spending below ₹2,000 and ensure the usual household items are replenished.”

The AI could potentially identify what is needed, compare available options, place the order and make the UPI payments, all within the conditions you specified.

The same principle could apply to dozens of mundane transactions with commands like “Pay my electricity bill when it becomes due” or “Book my Uber to the airport if the fare is below ₹600”.

### How much discretion can we give AI Agents

For the consumer, the important change is not that the payment becomes faster. Rather, that the consumer no longer needs to initiate every transaction.

This could be particularly useful for small, repetitive and predictable payments.

Instead of remembering bills, monitoring prices or repeatedly approving routine purchases, we could delegate these tasks to an AI agent. Elderly consumers, busy professionals and small business owners could benefit from having routine purchases handled automatically. This also changes the role of the consumer from authorising each transaction to setting the rules under which an AI agent (or a machine) can transact for us securely.

There is, however, a new question: how much financial discretion are we prepared to give the machine?

Suppose the AI orders a product that is cheaper but not the one we normally buy. Suppose it interprets “usual groceries” differently from us. Suppose an online platform manages to influence the agent into



choosing a more expensive product. Or suppose the AI makes a perfectly logical decision that we simply would not have made.

And what happens if the transaction is fraudulent or the agent makes a mistake?

These are not merely technical questions. They are questions of trust, accountability and consumer protection.

### Safeguards for AI Agents

The proposed framework is reportedly expected to incorporate safeguards such as spending limits, identity checks, audit trails and rule-based payments and also expected to address liability.

The objective should not be to create an AI with unrestricted access to our bank accounts. It should be to create an AI that operates within clearly defined boundaries: what it can buy, how much it can spend, when it can spend and when it must ask its (human) master.

India is particularly well placed for this next stage because the digital payment infrastructure is already in place. UPI has accustomed hundreds of millions of Indians to trusting a QR code with their money. The next step is

considerably more ambitious: trusting an algorithm to decide when and how that money should be spent.

That is the real significance of agentic payments.

The future of digital payments may not be about making it easier for us to tap “Pay”. It may be about making it possible for us to say, “You take care of it.”

The challenge will be ensuring that when the machine acts on our behalf, it never forgets whose money, and whose trust, it has been given.

The author is an alumnus of IIM Ahmedabad and Professor of Practice at IILM University, Gurugram with an interest in AI, technology and strategy

# The century of the checker & will it matter for India’s story?

A machine has finished the most famous proof in mathematics in eleven days. The next decade belongs to whoever can tell the truth from output



NISHANT SAHDEV

Sometime around 1637, a French lawyer named Pierre de Fermat was reading a Greek textbook and had a thought. He noted it in the margin.

The claim was simple enough for a schoolchild. You can easily find whole numbers where  $3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$ . Try the same with cubes, or fourth powers, or anything above the square, and you will never find any. Then Fermat added the most famous sentence in the history of mathematics. He had discovered a marvellous proof, he wrote, but this margin was too narrow to contain it.

He was almost certainly wrong about having the proof. He was spectacularly right about the margin.

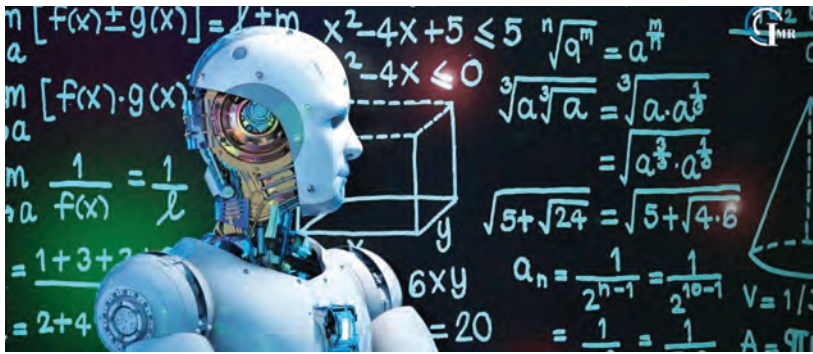
It took 358 years. Andrew Wiles finally settled it in 1995, and even then the first version had a hole in it that took another year and a collaborator to patch. What he produced was a document of well over a hundred pages, written in the compressed dialect of modern number theory, which perhaps a few hundred people on earth could genuinely evaluate. That is how mathematics has always worked. A proof is a piece of writing. It becomes true-for-the-community when enough qualified humans have read it and nodded. Last month, it has a change.

### Eleven days

In the early hours of 7 August, a small team at the American AI lab Anthropic pointed several dozen copies of a language model at Wiles’s proof and asked it to write the whole thing out in a language called Lean. Eleven days later, working largely without human direction, the machines were done.

To understand what “writing it out” means, think about giving someone directions. A human mathematician writes directions the way a local gives them: take the second left after the temple, you can’t miss it. Everyone who knows the neighbourhood follows perfectly. Lean is not a local. Lean is a machine that has never been to your city and refuses to take a single step you have not specified. Every “it follows that”, every “clearly”, every move a specialist would unpack silently in their head has to be written down and justified.

That is why a proof of a hundred-odd pages came out the other end at 13 million lines of code. Along the way the system proved 30,300 supporting statements, of which about 29,500 ended up in the final chain, and produced roughly six billion words of output. The finished object is more than five times the size of Mathlib, the shared library that the world’s Lean community has been



assembling for over a decade. Lean then checked the entire structure and accepted it, relying on nothing beyond its three basic assumptions. A separate check confirmed that the thing proved was the real Fermat statement and not a convincing lookalike.

Kevin Buzzard, the Imperial College mathematician who in 2024 launched a five-year funded project to do exactly this job with human volunteers, called it extraordinary. He is not a man given to hype about machines.

### Nobody is going to read it

Here is the part that should make you sit up. That 13-million-line file will never be read by a human being. Not skimmed, not spot-checked, not taught. It is not written for us. Its only reader is a program.

We have therefore arrived somewhere genuinely new: a mathematical certainty that no mind comprehends. For four hundred years, “we know this is true” and “somebody understands why” were the same sentence. They have just come apart.

The instinct is to find this frightening. I think the more useful reaction is to ask where the trust went, because it did not disappear. It moved, and it got smaller.

Everything in that gigantic file rests on one small program at the centre of Lean called the kernel, a few thousand lines of code whose only job is to check that each step really follows. We have effectively swapped a jury of a hundred distracted experts for a single very careful judge. That is mostly an upgrade. It is also a concentration of risk, and concentrated risk fails in a particular way. Last summer, a soundness bug in that kernel briefly allowed a bogus “disproof” of a famous unsolved problem to sail through verification before anyone noticed. It was found and fixed. But it is worth saying plainly: machine-checked does not mean beyond doubt. It means the doubt has been squeezed into a smaller, more inspectable place.

### A physicist’s confession

I should admit that in my own field this stopped being news around 1985.

Nobody reads a climate model line by line. Nobody reads the code behind a lattice simulation of the strong nuclear force, or the pipeline that turned raw detector counts into the Higgs boson. These are millions of lines written by hundreds of people across decades, and no single human has ever held one in their head. Physics learned to live with it. We trust results by re-deriving them independently, by running rival implementations, by demanding that two groups who dislike each other get the same number, and by publishing an error bar on everything.

Mathematics was the last discipline where one person could, in principle, verify the whole chain personally. That was always its special dignity. It has now joined the rest of us, and it will need to import our habits: independent reimplementations, adversarial checking, and a culture that treats verified-but-unexplained as a real but partial kind of knowledge.

### What the machine did not do

It did not discover anything. This matters, and the coverage has mostly missed it.

The system followed Wiles’s route. Its dependency graph closely tracks the original argument. It walked on a road that had been surveyed for it by an 86-page technical blueprint written by human mathematicians, over a decade of accumulated Mathlib groundwork, and a coordination tool built by a research group at Columbia. Its first attempt failed outright. Early runs collapsed because the parallel agents lost track of what had already been proved and kept redoing each other’s work.

So the honest sentence is not “AI proved Fermat’s Last Theorem in eleven days.” It is: the walking became astonishingly fast, and the map is still ours. Eleven days of machine time sits on top of twenty years of human scaffolding that nobody is going to write a headline about.

Please read the complete article online at [dailypioneer.com](https://dailypioneer.com)

The author is a physicist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a contributor at Wall Street Journal

# Add to cart, courtesy AI



ROHIT YADAV

For nearly a century, the Indian shopper was won through noise. The biggest hoarding on Linking Road, the catchiest radio jingle, the celebrity endorsement during a cricket match, or the sponsored listing at the top of a shopping app all influenced what eventually landed in our shopping carts. Advertising was never just a business function. It shaped what we noticed, what we trusted and, ultimately, what we bought. That familiar world is now beginning to change, and artificial intelligence is quietly leading the shift.

The clearest glimpse of this future came recently from Glance, an Indian AI platform that has made shopping undergo transformation since the rise of e-commerce. Unlike an online marketplace, Glance does not sell products. Instead, it learns what a user likes, understands their preferences, studies their previous purchases and recommends products that best fit their needs.

Just as online shopping replaced many visits to physical stores, AI assistants may now replace much of the searching, comparing and decision-making that consumers currently do themselves. Instead of opening multi-



products, compares alternatives and identifies the best value. These are precisely the functions that advertising has traditionally influenced. As AI performs them itself, the importance of advertising in shaping purchase decisions naturally begins to decline.

The consequences for brands are profound. Companies have always spent heavily to remain in consumers’ minds because familiarity often translates into sales. But an AI assistant does not remember brands the way people do. It has no emotional attachment to a familiar logo or a celebrity endorsement. It can compare thousands of products within seconds and recommend whichever best matches the customer’s needs. That means a relatively unknown Indian manufacturer could suddenly compete with a global brand if its product offers genuinely better quality or value. In this new environment, success will depend less on creating memorable campaigns and more on building products that deserve to be recommended.

This is not a distant trend unfolding somewhere in Silicon Valley. If anything, India appears unusually well prepared for it. A widely cited Capgemini study found that 41 per cent of Indian consumers already use AI-driven shopping tools, while another 40 per cent plan to start soon. That means more



than eight out of every ten Indian shoppers are either already using AI or are ready to let AI influence their buying decisions. No other country in the survey reported a higher figure. In this story, India is not simply adopting a global trend. It is helping shape it.

That advantage is not limited to consumer behaviour. India also has an institutional head start. Long before agentic shopping became a global conversation, the country had already built the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), a Government-backed protocol designed to do for online retail what UPI did for digital payments. Instead of forcing sellers to compete for visibility within a handful of dominant platforms through expensive

advertising, ONDC allows any buyer application to discover any seller connected to the network.

By 2026, ONDC had expanded to several hundred thousand sellers, more than a hundred buyer applications and operations across hundreds of towns and cities. A kirana shop in a tier-three town can now be discovered by a customer sitting in Pune without paying hefty advertising fees simply to become visible. India reached this point through digital public infrastructure long before AI shopping became mainstream. As agentic shopping grows, that early investment could become one of India’s biggest competitive advantages.

For India’s millions of small and medium enterprises, this convergence between AI and ONDC could be transformative. Many have spent years arguing that rising digital advertising costs make it difficult to compete with larger companies. If AI recommends products chiefly on the basis of quality, value and customer satisfaction, smaller businesses could finally compete on more equal terms. A well-made kurta from a local manufacturer or a competitively priced insurance policy from a lesser-known company could stand alongside products from much larger brands without first having to win an expensive advertising battle.

Advertising, though, is not disappearing, and it would be misleading to suggest otherwise. Every interaction with an AI system requires substantial computing power, known as inference cost, and someone ultimately has to pay for it. Advertising has long funded free digital services, and AI will be no exception. The real change lies in what advertising looks like. Instead of focusing only on attracting human attention, brands will increasingly have to ensure that AI systems understand their products accurately through reliable information about quality, pricing, delivery performance and customer satisfaction. Some technology experts have begun describing this as agent-to-agent optimisation, where a brand’s AI effectively communicates with the consumer’s AI assistant. In that world, structured and trustworthy product information becomes just as valuable as a memorable tagline once was.

The implications extend beyond individual brands. If AI assistants can discover, compare and recommend products independently, even online marketplaces could lose some of the influence they currently enjoy. Much of their power today comes from helping consumers search through millions of products. When an intelligent assistant can perform that task instantly on behalf of the shopper, the marketplace becomes less central to the buying journey. That represents a meaningful shift for India’s digital commerce ecosystem, where a handful of platforms have long shaped product discovery and the advertising economy built around it.

There is, all the same, one reason to remain cautious. The companies building AI shopping assistants are businesses too, and businesses need revenue. Today’s neutral recommendation engine could become tomorrow’s sponsored recommendation if commercial incentives begin influencing what AI suggests to consumers. The technology promises a more level playing field, but that promise will only hold if transparency and fairness remain central to how these systems operate.

Please read the complete article online at [dailypioneer.com](https://dailypioneer.com)

The writer is Assistant Professor, IIM Bodh Gaya



# BUILDING A HEALTHIER INDIA: THE POWER OF NUTRITION

‘ILLNESS TO WELLNESS’ CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR NUTRITION AWARENESS, FOOD SAFETY AND COMMUNITY-LEVEL ACTION FOR A HEALTHIER NATION



**Mr. Anil Rajput,**  
Chairperson, Advisory Council,  
Illness to Wellness Foundation



**Mr. Rajesh Bhushan,**  
Former Secretary, Ministry of Health &  
Family Welfare, Govt. of India &  
Chairperson, Governing Council, Illness  
to Wellness Foundation



**Shri Rajit Punhani,**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Food Safety and Standards  
Authority of India



**Prof. Nirmal Kumar Ganguly,**  
Former Director General, ICMR &  
Member, Governing Council, Illness  
to Wellness Foundation



**Dr. Neelam Mohan, HOD - Department  
of Paediatric Gastroenterology,  
Hepatology & Liver Transplantation,  
Medanta Hospital**

India's growing emphasis on preventive health-care is placing nutrition and food safety at the heart of efforts to help citizens stay healthy and reduce the long-term burden of disease, said Shri Rajit Punhani, Chief Executive Officer, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), while addressing the 'Illness to Wellness' Conference on Healthy Nutrition for a Healthy Nation.

Speaking on FSSAI's role in this transition, Shri Punhani highlighted the Authority's efforts to combine food-safety regulation with consumer education and behavioural nudges. He cited initiatives including Eat Right School, Eat Right Campus and Eat Right Thali, along with consumer awareness campaigns, as part of efforts to encourage informed food choices.

Shri Rajit Punhani said, "There is a clear shift in the public-health landscape towards prevention, and food sits right at the centre of this transition. While ensuring that food is safe, wholesome and compliant remains FSSAI's fundamental responsibility, empowering consumers with the right information to make informed choices is equally important. Through initiatives such as Eat Right School, Eat Right Campus, Eat Right Thali and consumer awareness campaigns, we are using education, information and behavioural nudges to make nutrition awareness part of everyday life. This requires collective action, with government, healthcare, academia, civil society, industry and consumers working together to make informed food choices more accessible, affordable and convenient."

The 'Illness to Wellness' Conference on Healthy Nutrition for a Healthy Nation, organised by the Illness to Wellness Foundation, brought together policymakers, healthcare professionals, nutrition experts, educators and representatives from industry and civil society to deliberate on strengthening nutrition awareness, food safety and community-level action.

Mr. Anil Rajput, Chairperson, Advisory Council, Illness to Wellness Foundation, said, "The foundations of a healthy nation are laid much before illness takes a person to the hospital, and nutrition must be at the heart of this transition from illness to wellness. India's nutrition landscape requires us to look beyond food availability towards nutritional security, ensuring access to food that is safe, affordable, diverse and appropriate to individual needs. It is not out of place to mention that the salt, sugar and fat requirements differ across people, regions and activities. Their needs differ and we must remain mindful of that, while creating awareness in the larger section of society. The way forward lies in promoting awareness based on science, balance, moderation and informed choices. Building a healthier India is a shared responsibility, requiring the collective efforts of government, healthcare professionals, schools, responsible industry, civil society, media and communities."

Delivering the keynote address, Mr. Rajesh Bhushan, Former Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India and Chairperson, Governing Council, Illness to Wellness Foundation, said, "Nutrition cannot be addressed through isolated interventions;



(L to R): Dr. Smriti Pahwa – Director, Scale up, Arogya World; Dr. Manjari Chandra, Senior Consultant, Nutritional Medicine, Max Healthcare; Dr. Jitender Nagpal, Senior Consultant, Paediatric, Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science and Research; Dr. Zoya Ali Rizvi, Deputy Commissioner, National Health Mission, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt of India; Dr. Pulkit Mathur, Joint Secretary, Nutrition Society of India and Professor, Dept of Food & Nutrition and Food Technology, Lady Irwin College, New Delhi and Dr. Satish Koul, Principal Director & Unit Head – Internal Medicine, Fortis Medical Research Institute (FMRI), Gurgaon



(L to R): Dr. Latika Bhalla, Senior Consultant, Adolescent Paediatrics, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital; Dr. Kumud Khanna, Former Director, Institute of Home Economics, University of Delhi and Former National Vice-President, Nutrition Society of India; Dr. Jose Stephen, Principal, Rosary Senior Secondary School, Kingsway Camp, Delhi; Dr. Charu Dua, Chief Clinical Nutritionist, Amrita Hospital, Faridabad; Ms. Anjali Malik, Principal, Jaypee Public School, Noida and Mrs Alka Singh, Principal, Air Force Golden Jubilee Institute, Subroto Park, New Delhi



(L to R): Ms. Kalpana Gupta, Clinical Nutritionist - Nutrition and Dietetics, Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital, Saket; Dr. Sanjay Kumar Mattoo, Joint Commissioner & Addl. Deputy Director General, Central TB Division, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India; Dr. Preeti Khanna, National Program Manager- Health and Nutrition, Project Concern International (PCI) India; Dr. Sukriti Gupta, Senior Consultant, Haematology Oncology & Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, Artemis Hospital; Ms. Ishi Khosla, Member, Advisory Council, Illness to Wellness Foundation and Chief Nutritionist, Founder, Celiac Society of India and Dr. Rajesh Kesari, Member, Advisory Council, Illness to Wellness Foundation

it requires a life-cycle approach beginning with pregnancy and continuing through the first 1,000 days, early childhood, school years and adulthood. The challenge is not only to create awareness but to translate that awareness into healthy behaviour, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Our frontline health workers, Anganwadi systems and schools provide an important institutional network through which nutrition interventions can reach families at scale. We already have programmes and guidelines in place; the priority now must be effective implementation, continuous monitoring and the use of practical behavioural approaches that help people make healthier choices."

The inaugural session highlighted the importance of strengthening nutrition outcomes across different stages of life, with discussions covering maternal, child and adolescent nutrition, anaemia and malnutrition, food safety and

nutrition standards, safe and nutritious food choices, and the role of different stakeholders in taking national nutrition priorities to the grassroots.

Further, taking the discussion ahead, Dr Zoya Ali Rizvi, Deputy Commissioner, National Health Mission, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, said, "The real impact of nutrition programmes will come from taking information to the grassroots and listening to the needs of communities. Our 10.5 lakh ASHAs and Anganwadi workers are the backbone of this effort, and strengthening communication through their insights can help translate awareness into meaningful action."

Dr. Sanjay Kumar Mattoo, Joint Commissioner & Additional Deputy Director General, Central TB Division, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, said, "Malnutrition remains one of the biggest health challenges facing our society and has a close bearing on

the fight against tuberculosis. Addressing this challenge requires a collective effort from all stakeholders, including the government, health-care system, media, parents, schools and communities, to strengthen awareness and support effective action against malnutrition and TB."

The conference also featured three focused sessions that explored the role of nutrition across different stages of life and its linkages with disease prevention and public health.

The first session, "Poshan Jan Andolan: Awareness to Action for Healthier Women, Children and Families," focused on translating nutrition awareness into sustained action, with discussions around breastfeeding and complementary feeding, anaemia and micronutrient deficiencies, balanced and affordable diets, and the role of technology, media and communities in driving behaviour change.

The session was moderated by Dr. Jitender

Nagpal, Senior Consultant, Paediatrics, Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science and Research, Delhi, and featured insightful perspectives from a distinguished panel comprising Dr. Zoya Ali Rizvi, Deputy Commissioner, National Health Mission, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India; Dr. Manjari Chandra, Founder, Manjari Wellness and Senior Consultant, Nutritional Medicine, Max Healthcare and Everhope Oncology; Dr. Pulkit Mathur, Joint Secretary, Nutrition Society of India and Professor, Department of Food & Nutrition and Food Technology, Lady Irwin College, New Delhi; Dr. Smriti Pahwa, Director - Scale Up, Arogya World; and Dr. Satish Koul, Principal Director & Unit Head - Internal Medicine, Fortis Medical Research Institute (FMRI), Gurugram.

The second session, "Healthy Schools, Healthy Children: Safe Food, Better Nutrition, Brighter Futures," examined the need for safe and nutritious food environments for children and ways to strengthen the implementation of food and nutrition guidelines at the school level. The discussion covered healthy school canteens, food safety and hygiene, safe food-handling practices, making nutritious choices accessible and appealing to children, and the role of parents in reinforcing healthy eating habits at home.

The session was moderated by Dr. Latika Bhalla, Senior Consultant, Adolescent Paediatrics, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, and brought together participation from Dr. Kumud Khanna, Former Director, Institute of Home Economics, University of Delhi and Former National Vice-President, Nutrition Society of India; Dr. Charu Dua, Chief Clinical Nutritionist, Amrita Hospital, Faridabad; Mrs. Alka Singh, Principal, Air Force Golden Jubilee Institute, New Delhi; Ms. Anjali Malik, Principal, Jaypee Public School, Noida; and Dr. Jose Stephen, Principal, Rosary Senior Secondary School, Kingsway Camp, Delhi.

The third session, "Nourishing Health, Ending Disease: Strengthening Nutrition for a TB- and Anaemia-Mukt Bharat," focused on the relationship between malnutrition, anaemia and tuberculosis, including early identification and management of anaemia and nutritional deficiencies, nutrition support for TB patients, and improving access to iron, folic acid, protein and micronutrient-rich foods.

The session was moderated by Dr. Preeti Khanna, National Program Manager - Health and Nutrition, Project Concern International (PCI) India, and discussion brought together insights from Dr. Sanjay Kumar Mattoo, Joint Commissioner & Additional Deputy Director General, Central TB Division, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India; Dr. Sukriti Gupta, Senior Consultant, Haematology Oncology & Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, Artemis Hospital; Ms. Ishi Khosla, Member, Advisory Council, Illness to Wellness Foundation and Chief Nutritionist and Founder, Celiac Society of India; Ms. Kalpana Gupta, Clinical Nutritionist - Nutrition and Dietetics, Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital, Saket; and Dr. Rajesh Kesari, Member, Advisory Council, Illness to Wellness Foundation and Member, National Executive Committee, RSSDI.

The conference concluded with a call for continued collaboration among government, healthcare professionals, schools, communities, civil society, responsible industry and other stakeholders.





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## FM Sitharaman discusses trade with IMF’s Dy MD

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday met IMF Deputy Managing Director Nigel Clarke and discussed bilateral engagement as well as the outlook for the Indian and global economies. During the meeting, Sitharaman and Clarke discussed India-IMF relations and appreciated India's role in supporting the South Asia Regional Training and Technical Assistance Center (SARTTAC). Both sides emphasised the importance of continued India-IMF engagement in strengthening macroeconomic cooperation, supporting sound policies and contributing to greater regional and global economic resilience.

## Gold falls ₹650 per 10g in Delhi amid weak global cues

Gold prices began the week on a muted note, falling ₹650 to ₹1,60,250 per 10 grams in the national Capital on Monday as a bearish global trend weighed on domestic sentiment. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity had ended at ₹1,60,900 per 10 grams on Friday. However, silver remained unchanged at ₹2,40,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) for the second straight session, according to local traders. "Gold remained under pressure after stronger-than-expected US jobs data increased expectations of a September Fed rate hike, with markets now awaiting this week's Producer Price Index and Consumer Price Index data for further policy clues," said Gaurav Garg, Head of Research at brokerage platform Lemonn.

# Sensex drops 382 points amid elevated crude prices

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

Benchmark stock index Sensex dropped by 382 points on Monday due to selling in metal, IT and oil and gas shares amid rising crude prices, escalation in US-Iran hostilities and fears of a US rate hike.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 382.62 points, or 0.50 per cent, to settle at 76,132.81, with 23 of its constituents ending lower and seven with gains. During the day, it declined 544.91 points, or 0.71 per cent, to a low of 75,970.52. The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 118.55 points, or 0.50 per cent, to end at 23,779.15, dragged by losses in Infosys, Reliance Industries and State Bank of India.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, Infosys fell the most by 3.81 per cent. Tech Mahindra fell

by 1.96 per cent, Tata Steel by 1.85 per cent, Bajaj Finserv by 1.57 per cent, UltraTech Cement by 1.41 per cent and Tata Consultancy Services by 1.28 per cent.

Larsen & Toubro, Bharti Airtel, Maruti and Power Grid were among the winners.

Crude oil prices breached USD 97 per barrel due to fresh US-Iran attacks in the Strait of Hormuz. Global oil benchmark Brent crude gained more than 1 per cent to trade at \$97.41 per barrel.

"Markets remained under intense selling pressure on Monday, extending the ongoing corrective phase amid persistent geopolitical concerns and fear over a possible US interest rate hike," Ajit Mishra, SVP – research, Religare Broking.

"Indian equity markets ended lower as elevated crude oil prices and persistent

## RBI mops up ₹6 lakh crore in 2 auctions with mixed response

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India on Monday mopped up over ₹6 lakh crore of excess funds from the banking system in two auctions, which saw an underwhelming response from banks despite surplus liquidity. The 30-day variable rate reverse repo (VRRR) auction announced last week received a tepid response from banks, and the central bank announced another auction in the first half of the day.

As against ₹7 lakh crore of notified amount, the first auction received a tepid response, with bids of just over ₹2.59 lakh crore being received for the 30-day VRRR, according to an official statement.

The bids for the 30-day VRRR were accepted at the cut-off and weighted average rate of 5.24 per cent, according to the RBI. Soon afterwards, the RBI announced an overnight VRRR auction with a notified amount of ₹5 lakh crore, which was completed at 1130 hrs.

Market response to the second auction was a tad better, with bids of ₹3,53,390 crore received, which amounts to over 70 per cent of the notified amount, indicating that lenders are comfortable parking funds for a shorter tenure.

# The Pioneer

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## BUSINESS 13

# Air India must rebuild safety, trust: Chandrasekaran

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Air India must restore passenger confidence, strengthen safety standards and improve financial discipline as it enters a new phase under incoming Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Tewolde Gebremariam, Tata Sons Chairman and Air India Chairman N Chandrasekaran said on Monday.

Addressing employees at a town hall, Chandrasekaran introduced Gebremariam, who will succeed Campbell Wilson as the airline's chief executive. Chandrasekaran said rebuilding trust among passengers would be one of Air India's most important priorities. He said the airline should aim to have a safety record that is "better than the best".

He identified safety, customer confidence, operational performance and cost control as the key priorities for the airline's next phase. He also called on employees to develop greater awareness of costs across the organisation.

The comments come as Air India faces significant operational and financial challenges. Chandrasekaran said the airline had experienced a particularly difficult period over the past 18 months because of geopolitical tensions, airspace restrictions, fluctuations in fuel prices and the fatal AI171 accident.

The June 2025 crash of an Air India Boeing 787 shortly after take-off from Ahmedabad claimed 260 lives and resulted in extensive scrutiny of the airline's safety practices. The carrier has also faced regulatory concerns related to operational and compliance procedures.

Air India's financial performance has added to the pressure on the management. The Air India Group reported a loss of more than \$2 billion in the financial year ended March 2026, compared with about \$1.13 billion a year earlier, according to Singapore Airlines, which holds a 25.1 per cent stake in the enlarged group.

The airline has remained loss-making since the Tata Group took control of Air India in January 2022.

Chandrasekaran has said the transformation of Air India could take between five and 10 years. The Tata Group has undertaken extensive investment in aircraft, cabin upgrades, technology and the integration of Air India with Vistara.

The group also has more than 500 aircraft on order, creating substantial future expenditure while the airline works to improve its financial position. Air India has been considering measures to defer some aircraft deliveries as it seeks to manage costs.

Gebremariam, who previously headed Ethiopian Airlines Group, said Air India had a strong heritage and significant potential.

"If we do the right things at the right time, the sky is the limit," he told employees.

In reference to US President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan, he also said, "We will Make Air India Great Again."

Gebremariam said he had first encountered Air India while working in Mumbai in the 1990s and remembered it as one of the leading airlines in the industry. He said his objective would be to help restore the carrier's position.

Safety, he said, would be the foundation of that effort. "Safety-first culture has to be the number one priority," Gebremariam said, while encouraging employees to raise concerns when they identify potential risks.

"If something is not right, it should be stopped," he said. He also stressed the importance of improving day-to-day operational performance. According to Gebremariam, punctual flights, reliable baggage handling and clean aircraft would be essential to improving the customer experience.

"We need to minimise disruptions and when they do occur, handle them professionally and take care of our customers," he said.

The new CEO said Air India had already undergone considerable groundwork but warned that further progress would depend on the workforce. "We cannot bring about meaningful change without

the commitment of our people," he said. Gebremariam was appointed to lead Air India on August 5 after a selection process overseen by a board committee. He becomes the second foreign chief executive to head Air India since its privatisation. He spent more than 36 years with Ethiopian Airlines, joining the carrier in 1985 and eventually becoming its group chief executive in 2011. He remained in the role for more than a decade, during which the airline expanded its fleet, network and cargo operations.

His tenure also included major crises. In 2019, Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 crashed shortly after take-off from Addis Ababa, killing all 157 people aboard. Following the accident, Ethiopian Airlines grounded its Boeing 737 MAX aircraft before similar measures were adopted by regulators in major aviation markets.

Gebremariam now takes charge of an Air India that is considerably larger and more complex than the airline that existed before the Tata Group takeover. His immediate task will be to improve reliability and safety while addressing persistent losses and managing an ambitious fleet expansion. The airline is also facing fresh scrutiny following an incident involving an Air India A320 flying from Phuket to

New Delhi on August 4, and in the past planes accident and Ahmedabad crash is also under investigation.

Outgoing CEO Campbell Wilson, who oversaw Air India's transformation after the Tata Group takeover, told employees that the airline's transformation would continue under the new leadership. Wilson said he would remain Air India's "biggest cheerleader from the sidelines" and expressed confidence in Gebremariam's ability to lead the airline.

During Wilson's tenure, Air India completed the merger with Vistara and consolidated Tata Group's airline operations. The carrier also began a major fleet renewal programme. Tata Group acquired Air India from the Indian government in January 2022.

Singapore Airlines later acquired a 25.1 per cent stake in the enlarged airline group, with Tata Sons retaining control. For Chandrasekaran, Air India's revival remains a major project as he prepares to step down as Tata Sons chairman when his current term ends on February 20, 2027. For Gebremariam, the immediate challenge will be to turn years of investment and restructuring into improved safety, operational reliability, passenger confidence and sustainable finances.

## Goyal promises 100% funding for medical device testing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday pitched for development of high-quality medical devices for global customers, and said the Government is ready to provide 100 per cent fund for the acquisition of testing equipment.

Addressing two events of the pharma industry in New Delhi, he said domestic firms should bring technology partnerships, encourage joint ventures, and invite global innovators and large pharma companies to India.

"We must develop a critical component ecosystem by strengthening our domestic capabilities with high quality. We must create shared testing infra facilities where these equipment can be tested, benchmarked to the best in the world, certify and demonstrated to global

customers. "From BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards), we are willing to support 100 per cent cost of the best testing equipment for your equipment...100 per cent Government of India will fund the acquisition of testing equipment...demand from us, there is no proposal from you. And we'll set up the most modern labs," Goyal said.

He also called for improving design, copyrights, patent laws, and the IPR (intellectual property right) ecosystem so that interna-

tionally people look up to come to India and India can become a global hub of innovation because the country has a huge cost advantage. "We must bring technology partnerships, we must have better buyer and seller relationship, we must encourage joint venture...We must co-design, and co-develop licence wherever required...look for joint R&D centres with other countries," he added.

The minister further called upon insurers and health-tech companies to build products and platforms that make the patient journey more seamless, and ensure timely reimbursements.

He suggested the industry to train and certify caregivers and develop a skilled workforce capable of providing healthcare of international standards; and encourage more hospitals to publish honest and transparent treatment packages.

## BMW India launches first locally produced i5 LWB

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

BMW India has launched the first-ever i5 Long Wheelbase (LWB), marking a significant step in the German automaker's local electrification strategy. The sedan is BMW's first locally-produced electric model and only its second electric car to be manufactured in India, rolling off the line at BMW Group Plant Chennai, with deliveries starting immediately.

The i5 LWB is priced at ₹79.6 lakh (ex-showroom), with BMW India Financial Services offering EMIs starting at ₹79,999 per month and a 55 per cent guaranteed buyback after four years. An exclusive First Edition, limited to 99 units, sold out entirely before the official launch.

Hardeep Singh Brar, President and CEO, BMW Group India, called the launch a defining statement of the company's India strategy, combining electrification with long-wheelbase luxury.

With local manufacturing now anchoring its EV push, BMW is betting that Indian buyers are ready to pay a premium for chauffeur-driven electric luxury.

## Sebi extends deadline for Angel Funds to comply with accredited investor mandate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Markets regulator Sebi on Monday extended the deadline for existing Angel Funds to comply with the accredited investor mandate by nearly seven months to March 31, 2027.

The move comes after representations from the Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) industry seeking additional time for Angel Funds to comply with the revised regulatory framework.

Earlier, Angel Funds registered with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) on or before September 10, 2025, were required to implement the accredited investor mandate by September 8, 2026. In a circular, the regulator said

these funds can now continue to offer investment opportunities to non-accredited investors until March 31, 2027, subject to a limit of 200 such investors.

However, from April 1, 2027, these Angel Funds will not be allowed to accept contributions from non-accredited investors

for investment in an investee company.

Sebi clarified that existing investors will continue to hold their investments already made in the Angel Fund in accordance with the terms of the private placement memorandum (PPM) and other fund documents.

## Rupee falls 7 paise to close at 94.50 against US dollar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

The rupee fell 7 paise to close at 94.50 (provisional) against the American currency on Monday as surging crude oil prices and global headwinds offset the support from strong FCNR dollar inflows.

Forex traders said the rupee saw modest gains in initial trade on foreign inflows, but a negative trend in domestic equities and rising crude oil prices weighed on investor sentiment.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.40 against the US dollar. During the day, the local unit touched an intraday high of 94.38 and a low of 94.50. The rupee finally settled at 94.50 (provisional), down 7 paise from its previous close.

On Friday, the rupee settled higher by 8 paise at 94.43 against the US dollar.

"The Indian rupee traded flat to positive on foreign inflows and a

| Date   | Rate (₹ per US \$) | Change |
|--------|--------------------|--------|
| Aug 31 | 95.22              | +0.21  |
| Sep 1  | 94.95              | +0.27  |
| Sep 2  | 94.73              | +0.22  |
| Sep 3  | 94.51              | +0.22  |
| Sep 4  | 94.50*             | -0.07  |
| Sep 7  | 94.73              | +0.08  |
| Sep 8  | 94.50              | -0.07  |

\*Provisional

soft dollar. However, a weak tone in domestic markets and a surge in crude oil prices capped sharp gains," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan.

According to Choudhary, the rupee is likely to trade with a positive bias on optimism over foreign inflows and a weak dollar.

"Iran said that the deal with Oman regarding the Strait of Hormuz is in its final stages. This may ease crude oil prices, which may further support the rupee. However, tensions between the US and Iran may continue to pressurise the rupee at higher levels. Investors may now focus on inflation data from the US and India," he said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 98.90, lower by 0.27 per cent.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading higher by 0.58 per cent at \$96.84 per barrel in futures trade.

On the domestic equities market front, Sensex dropped 382.62 points to settle at 76,132.81, while Nifty fell 118.55 points to 23,779.15.

## JLR to cut around 4,000 jobs globally in next two years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Tata Group's British luxury car-maker Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) on Monday said it will reduce its global workforce by around 4,000 roles over the next two years.

The company, a subsidiary of Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd, said it is targeting approximately £1.7 billion of savings over the next two years to reduce its break-evens towards 300,000 units. JLR currently employs 43,000 people globally.

The savings are designed to enhance JLR's ability to deliver sustainable profitable growth, against the backdrop of increasingly competitive and rapidly changing markets and continuing geo-political uncertainty.

The programme will reduce organisational complexity, and underpin the commitment to

invest between £15-18 billion in electrification, digital technologies, advanced manufacturing and enhanced customer experiences over the next 5 years.

"As a result, JLR will reduce its global workforce by around 4,000 roles over the next two years. The reduction, which is not expected to impact direct manufacturing jobs, will be achieved through voluntary means wherever possible," a regulatory filing by Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles said.



From Munger to the World

How Swami Sivananda Made Yoga a Science for All



(On his birth anniversary, September 8)

■ By Kumar Krishnan

The modern history of yoga is too often told as a journey from ancient India to the West, with the story beginning in the Himalayas and ending in global wellness centres. That narrative misses an important Indian chapter. Before yoga became a global phenomenon, Munger had already emerged as one of the places where it was being reimagined for the ordinary human being. The story of Munger is therefore not a footnote to the history of yoga; it is central to understanding how yoga moved from a specialised spiritual discipline towards a practical, accessible and eventually global system of living.

The intellectual seed of that transformation lay in the vision of Swami Sivananda Saraswati. His association with Munger and, subsequently, the establishment of the Bihar School of Yoga by his disciple Swami Satyananda Saraswati gave this vision an institutional and international dimension. The school, established in Munger in 1963, became a major centre for the teaching and dissemination of yoga.

That is why Munger deserves a more prominent place in the story of modern yoga. Rishikesh provided the spiritual soil in which Sivananda's vision matured; Munger became one of the places where that vision acquired an organised, public and international expression. From the banks of the Ganga, yoga was taught not merely as a technique of physical exercise or an esoteric discipline, but as a means of integrating body, mind, emotion, conduct and consciousness.

The journey from Munger to the world was, in many ways, the journey of yoga from exclusivity to accessibility. Born on September 8, 1887, in Tamil Nadu, Sivananda received a medical education and worked as a physician in Malaya.

His years among Indian labourers exposed him to poverty, illness and helplessness at close quarters. On one occasion, a poor worker brought his ailing wife to him but had no money for treatment.

Sivananda treated her and also gave the family money to obtain nourishing food. Medicine, for him, gradually

ceased to be merely a profession. It became an instrument of service. During these years, a sadhu gave him the book *Brahma Vichara*. Its study awakened in him a deeper enquiry into the purpose of human existence.

In 1924, he left Malaya and returned to India. Rather than going home, he set out in search of a guru and of the deeper meaning of life. After travelling through several places, he reached Rishikesh, where he met Swami Vishwananda Saraswati and received initiation into monastic life. In Rishikesh, Sivananda brought together spiritual discipline and service.

He established the Sivananda Ashram in 1932 and the Divine Life Society in 1936. He wrote extensively on yoga, Vedanta, spirituality and the art of living. His particular gift was to explain difficult spiritual ideas in language accessible to ordinary readers.

His concern was that yoga should not remain the preserve of a small circle of ascetics and seekers. It had to become relevant to the life of the common man. It was this conviction that gives his connection with Munger a special significance.

Sivananda's visit to the city in 1938, when he is remembered to have participated in a nagar kirtan, reflected an approach that placed spirituality in the midst of public life rather than behind the walls of an ashram. His presence among ordinary people was consistent with his larger belief that spiritual practice should lead to service and social responsibility. But the real significance of Munger emerged later.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati, one of Sivananda's foremost disciples, spent years learning from his guru before travelling extensively across India. He encountered a society undergoing rapid change and saw the growing pressures of modern life—stress, anxiety, restlessness and the widening gap between material achievement and inner well-being.

He came to believe that yoga, if presented systematically and practically, could serve not merely monks and seekers but ordinary men and women. In 1956, Sivananda entrusted Satyananda with the task of

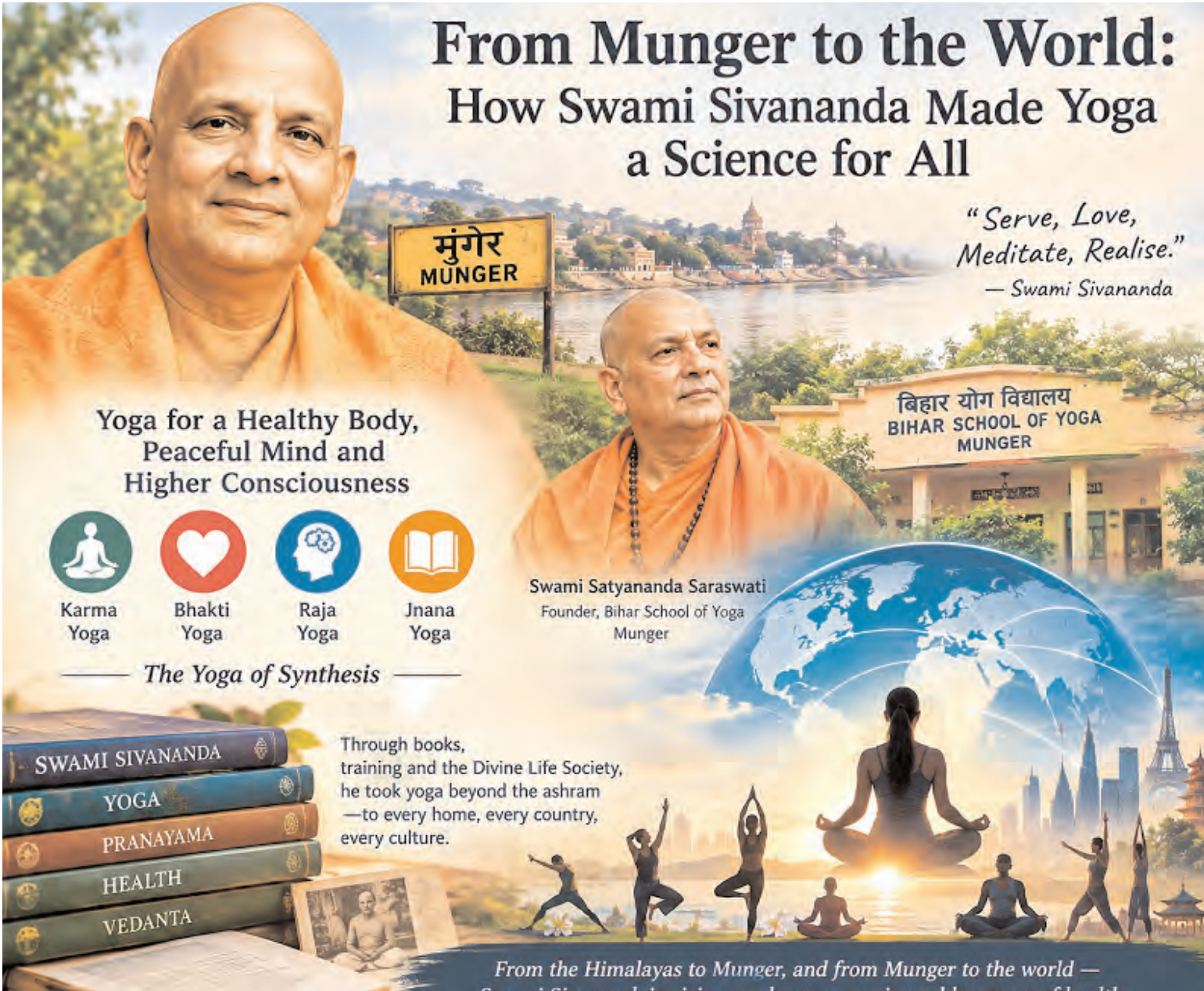
taking the message of yoga to a wider public. The mandate was not simply to establish another ashram. It was to make yoga available to society at large.

Satyananda eventually made Munger his principal field of work, and in 1963 the Bihar School of Yoga was established there. Its formal inauguration took place on Basant Panchami, January 19, 1964, when an eternal flame was lit in dedication to Sivananda. That distinction matters. The year 1963 marks the establishment of the institution, while 1964 marks its formal inauguration.

Such details are important when recounting the history of an institution that became central to Munger's identity. From this point, Munger acquired a new place in the modern history of yoga. The Bihar School of Yoga did not merely teach postures and breathing exercises. It developed systematic training in different branches of yoga and sought to present yogic practices in ways suited to contemporary life.

The institution also promoted publications and research, helping take yogic knowledge beyond the traditional guru-disciple setting. The significance of Munger was therefore not simply geographical. It became a bridge between an ancient spiritual tradition and the needs of modern society. Yoga was presented as a discipline capable of addressing the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions of personality. From Munger, teachers were trained, literature was published and the message of yoga travelled across India and eventually overseas. Satyananda's later international travels helped establish yoga centres and disseminate yogic teachings in several countries.

In this sense, Munger did something more consequential than merely preserve a tradition. It helped reinterpret that tradition for a changing world. Sivananda's own understanding of yoga was much wider than physical exercise. He regarded the body as one part of a larger human personality. Physical health, mental equilibrium, emotional stability and spiritual awareness had to be developed together. Yoga,



THE BIHAR YOGA BHARATI, ESTABLISHED IN 1994, SOUGHT TO COMBINE TRADITIONAL YOGIC KNOWLEDGE WITH ACADEMIC AND SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES. THE RESULT IS A REMARKABLE CONTINUITY: A CITY THAT ONCE RECEIVED SIVANANDA AS A VISITING SAINT BECAME THE KARMA BHUMI OF HIS DISCIPLE'S WORK AND A CENTRE FROM WHICH YOGA TRAVELLED TO THE WIDER WORLD. THE OFFICIAL BIHAR YOGA TRADITION ITSELF DESCRIBES MUNGER AS THE EPICENTRE OF ITS YOGIC RENAISSANCE.

therefore, was not simply a set of postures but a discipline for bringing greater balance into life.

His teaching drew upon service, love, charity, purity, righteous action, good conduct, meditation and self-realisation. Karma Yoga purified the mind through action and service; Raja Yoga disciplined the mind; Jnana Yoga sought to dispel ignorance through knowledge. Their synthesis constituted, for him, a more complete understanding of yoga.

The significance of Sivananda's thought can also be understood through the well-known episode involving Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. As a young man, Kalam aspired to become a pilot in the Indian Air Force. He reached the final stage of selection but was unsuccessful.

The disappointment was profound. At Rishikesh, he met Sivananda at a time when he was struggling with the failure of his immediate ambition. Kalam later recalled

that encounter as a turning point. During his visit to Munger as President, he spoke publicly about his meeting with Sivananda and how the saint's words helped him overcome what he described as a defeatist tendency.

According to contemporary reporting of Kalam's remarks, Sivananda drew his attention to the Bhagavad Gita and encouraged him to overcome the sense of defeat that had taken hold of him. The episode is important not because Sivananda predicted Kalam's future, but because it illustrates the practical dimension of his teaching. He did not ask the young man to withdraw from the world. He encouraged him to look at failure differently and to recognise that a closed door need not mean the end of a journey.

Kalam subsequently turned towards science. He went on to play a major role in India's space and defence programmes, became one of the country's most respected scientists and eventually served as President. His life became an example of how disappointment can be transformed into a new direction when the mind is able to regain balance and purpose.

There is an additional significance to the Kalam episode in the context of Munger. When he later visited the city as President, he explicitly recalled the encounter with Sivananda and connected it with the city's yoga tradition. Contemporary reports noted that Kalam remembered the saint and described the meeting as an encounter that had changed the course of his life.

Thus, in an unusual way, the story came full circle: a young man seeking direction met a saint in Rishikesh, and decades later the man who had become President returned to Munger, where Sivananda's disciple had built one of the most influential centres of modern yoga. The same principle found a practical expression in the yoga tradition that developed in Munger. Yoga was presented not as an escape from life but as a means of living it with greater clarity and balance. Its purpose was not merely to make the body flexible but to steady the mind, clarify thought and bring discipline to conduct. Service remained central to Sivananda's spiritual vision. "Service to man is service to God" was not for him a rhetorical proposition but a way of life.

The ideal of bahujana sukhaya, bahujana hitaya—the welfare and happiness of the many—gave social meaning to his spirituality. He believed that the value of spiritual practice should ultimately be visible in human conduct: in greater compassion, self-discipline and responsibility towards others.

This is also what distinguishes the Munger tradition from the contemporary reduction of yoga to fitness. The global popularity of yoga has undoubtedly brought an ancient Indian discipline to millions. But when yoga is reduced to posture, flexibility and physical appearance, much of its philosophical depth is lost.

The tradition associated with Sivananda and developed institutionally in Munger insisted on a more comprehensive understand-

ing. The body mattered, but so did the mind. Meditation mattered, but so did conduct. Personal well-being mattered, but so did service. The purpose was not merely to produce a healthier individual but a more balanced human being. That broader understanding explains why Munger became important to the modern yoga movement. The Bihar School of Yoga became a focal point for practitioners from India and abroad, while its publications and teacher-training programmes helped carry the teachings beyond the city. The later development of institutions associated with the tradition further strengthened Munger's place in the intellectual and practical history of yoga.

The Bihar Yoga Bharati, established in 1994, sought to combine traditional yogic knowledge with academic and scientific approaches. The result is a remarkable continuity: a city that once received Sivananda as a visiting saint became the karma bhumi of his disciple's work and a centre from which yoga travelled to the wider world. The official Bihar Yoga tradition itself describes Munger as the epicentre of its yogic renaissance.

Today, yoga has become part of global conversations about health, mental well-being, education and lifestyle. Its international acceptance is often presented as a story of India's ancient wisdom finally finding a global audience. But that story is incomplete without acknowledging the modern institutions and teachers who made the tradition intelligible and acces-

sible to contemporary society. Munger belongs to that history.

The city did not invent yoga. Nor did it replace the ancient centres of yogic learning. Its importance lies elsewhere. It became a place where an inherited spiritual discipline was reorganised for modern needs and carried beyond the boundaries of traditional practice. That is why Sivananda's birth anniversary is also an occasion to remember Munger. Rishikesh nurtured his spiritual vision; Munger became a major field in which that vision was transformed into an organised movement.

His disciple Satyananda gave the city a new identity, and from the banks of the Ganga the message of yoga travelled to distant countries. The journey from Munger to the world is therefore more than a story of one institution or one lineage. It represents a larger transformation in the history of yoga—from an esoteric discipline to a public philosophy of life, from individual spiritual practice to a systematic science of human development, and from a tradition rooted in India to a global cultural force.

Swami Sivananda's enduring contribution was to insist that yoga must serve life rather than remain detached from it. Munger gave that conviction an institutional home and an international reach. The city on the Ganga was not merely a halt in the modern journey of yoga. It became one of the places from which India's ancient discipline acquired a new public life—and eventually found its way to the world.





FROMTHE  
WORLD

LEBANON

Israeli airstrikes  
kill 9

Israel's air force carried out two strikes early Monday on a southern Lebanese village, killing at least nine people, including women and children, Lebanon's Health Ministry said. The ministry said one of the strikes hit a building, killing eight people including a child and two women. It added that 11 people were also wounded, including four children and two women. The ministry added that another strike on a car in the village killed a paramedic with the Lebanese Islamic Risala Scout Association and wounded two others. The strikes came amid a new round of escalation between Israel and Hezbollah. (AP)

PAKISTAN

16 people killed  
in road accident

Sixteen people were killed and over 70 injured in separate road accidents in Pakistan's Punjab and Sindh provinces, officials said on Monday. The first incident took place in Rahim Yar Khan district, some 600 km from Lahore, on Sunday. Seven persons died and over 50 were injured when a tractor trolley carrying wedding party guests collided with an overspeeding trailer at Sardar Garh area, Punjab Emergency Services Rescue 1122 spokesperson Mohammad Farooq said. The injured were shifted to the Sheikh Zayed Medical College Hospital and the Mianwali Qureshian Hospital in Rahim Yar Khan, where the condition of five of them is stated to be critical, officials said. The second accident occurred at Thal city in Sindh's Jacobabad district when a passenger bus en route to Lahore veered off the road due to overspeeding and rammed into a tree. "Nine passengers were killed and 20 others injured in the accident. (PTI)

Nepal observes national mourning as 5,000 remain missing

SHIRISH B PRADHAN  
■ Kathmandu

Nepal on Monday observed a national day of mourning on the 13th day of the Rasuwa flash flood disaster, honouring more than 1,340 people who lost their lives in one of the country's deadliest natural disasters in recent history. Nearly 5,000 people remain missing, including 589 foreign nationals, after the flash floods struck Rasuwa, bordering China, and adjoining districts on August 26 following an ice-rock avalanche in the high Himalayas, causing widespread loss of life and extensive damage to infrastructure in northern and central Nepal. The Government declared September 7 a national day of mourning to honour the victims of the catastrophic



floods that swept through Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Dhading and other areas along the Bhotekoshi and Trishuli river systems. The mourning is being observed on the 13th day

after the disaster, in keeping with the traditional Hindu practice of marking the thirteenth day following a death. The day is regarded in many Hindu communities as an

important period in the mourning period, when rituals are performed to honour the deceased and mark the conclusion of the formal period of mourning.

"The national flag will be flown at half-mast at Government offices across the country and at Nepali diplomatic missions abroad," the Ministry of Home Affairs said in a statement issued on Sunday. The devastating floods caused massive loss of life and extensive destruction of homes, roads, bridges, hydropower projects, Government offices and other critical infrastructure. Search and rescue operations are continuing in the worst-affected areas, including hydropower project tunnels, with security personnel and specialised international rescue teams engaged in efforts to locate missing people and recover bodies. The disaster has displaced at least 32,000 families, completely destroyed around 7,500

houses and severely disrupted livelihoods and essential infrastructure across central Nepal. The Government has mobilised the Nepali Army, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force and other agencies for search, rescue, relief and recovery operations. Specialist teams from neighbouring countries, including India, have also joined efforts to rescue people believed to be trapped in hydropower tunnels. Meanwhile, the Government has declared Tuesday (September 8) a public holiday to mark Gen Z Martyrs' Day. On the same day last year, Gen Z-led protests erupted in Kathmandu against a Government decision to ban social media platforms, alleged corruption and what protesters described as the ostentatious lifestyles of the children

of influential politicians and officials. The agitation turned violent after security personnel opened fire near the Parliament building, killing 72 people, including children, and eventually forcing then-prime minister K P Sharma Oli to resign. The developments led to the dissolution of Parliament and the collapse of the Government led by the CPN-UML and Nepali Congress. A caretaker Government was subsequently formed and fresh parliamentary elections were held on March 5 this year. The polls brought the Gen Z-backed Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), led by Rabi Lamichhane, to power with an almost two-thirds majority, with former Kathmandu mayor Balendra Shah becoming prime minister. (PTI)

Belgian-Chinese  
man to face trial  
over espionage



ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Brussels

A Belgian-Chinese man has been taken into custody on suspicion of industrial espionage after allegedly transferring trade secrets about semiconductor production to China, Belgian prosecutors said Monday. Prosecutors said the 52-year-old man, who was born in Beijing but lived in Belgium, was detained on May 10 as he was about to board a flight in Brussels to the Chinese capital. The man, who was not named, is being held in prison while he awaits trial. The man worked in a senior research position at a company named BelGaN that specialises in making gallium nitride semiconductors, used in electric vehicles, satellites, radar systems and for electronic warfare. The company, which employed around 400 people, was declared bankrupt in July 2024. Prosecutors said investigators suspect the man was working at the same time as the head of a Chinese company doing similar kinds of work.

Bangladesh, India to discuss resumption of stalled cross-border passenger train services

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Dhaka

Bangladesh and India are expected to discuss this week the resumption of the cross-border passenger train services that have remained suspended since the violent unrest in 2024 that toppled prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Government, officials here said on Monday.

According to officials, Bangladesh Railway officials will hold a two-day meeting with their Indian counterparts in Dhaka from Tuesday to discuss restarting the Maitree, Bandhan and Mitai Express services and the possibility of introducing a new route.

"We are set to discuss matters relating to re-launching of the railway services - Maitree, Bandhan, and Mitai Express - in the IGRM (Inter-Governmental Railway Meeting) starting tomorrow," a Bangladesh railway official familiar with the development said. The Maitree Express connects Dhaka with Kolkata, the Bandhan Express links Khulna with Kolkata, while the Mitai Express previously connected Dhaka with New Jalpaiguri. Both Kolkata



and New Jalpaiguri are situated in West Bengal.

Bangladesh is expected to propose a new train route connecting Rajshahi in the country's northwest with Kolkata, said the official who wished to remain anonymous.

Bangladesh is also likely to propose that the Maitree Express operate between Dhaka and Kolkata via the newly constructed Padma Bridge instead of the Jamuna Bridge.

"If both sides agree, the Maitree, Bandhan, and Mitai Express trains could resume operations by next month," the official said, adding that Indian railway authorities were also interested in restarting the services. The official said both countries would need clearance from their respective foreign, home and other relevant ministries before the passenger services can be resumed or a new route

Philippine  
lawmaker  
charged with  
corruption

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Manila

A Philippine lawmaker and former speaker of the House of Representatives was charged Monday for allegedly pocketing millions of dollars in kickbacks from flood control projects in a widening scandal concerning vital public construction to shield communities from typhoons.

Rep Martin Romualdez, a cousin and former political ally of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, and others are facing plunder charges at the anti-graft court Sandiganbayan.

"The amount involved here is 7.4 billion pesos (\$118 million), and this has been divided in various transactions where the money was used," Ombudsman Jesus Crispin Remulla, whose office filed the charges, told a news conference.



EU chief inaugurates \$232 million Greenland package as tensions heighten with Trump claims

LORNE COOK ■ Brussels

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen unveiled on Monday a 200-million-euro (\$232 million) investment package for Greenland, as the European Union seeks to boost its relations with the vast island.

"Greenland can count on the EU," von der Leyen said, after signing an EU-Greenland declaration with Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. Greenland is a semi-autonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark. The EU has increased its focus on Greenland since US



President Donald Trump began insisting that the United States should take control of the island for security reasons.

Von der Leyen said the investment partnership "will create new opportuni-

ties and a strong and engaged EU in both Greenland and the Arctic, because Greenland is a strategic ally and a trusted friend." It aims to help Greenland improve education and fisheries, internet

connectivity, hydropower systems, and the use of critical raw minerals. Funds are also earmarked for better housing, support for small businesses and sustainable tourism.

Trump's persistent claims on the island raised sovereignty concerns and pushback from Greenlandic and Danish leaders and heightened tensions among thae NATO partners. Denmark and seven of its European allies sent a small group of military personnel to island in January, publicly for military exercises focused on strengthening Arctic security, but with intention of showing support for Greenland's sovereignty.(AP)

UK Government condemns anti-immigrant demonstrators after Channel crossing protests

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

The British Government on Monday condemned the "intimidating and thuggish behaviour" of anti-immigrant demonstrators who converged on a port in southern England where migrants were brought ashore after crossing the English Channel.

Hundreds of protesters, many dressed in dark clothing and wearing masks, faced off with police in Portsmouth late Sunday in an attempt to prevent lifeboats from bringing the migrants to land.

They then tried to block buses carrying the new arrivals to a processing facility for asylum seekers. "The



PM Andy Burnham

right to peaceful protest is fundamental to our democracy, but it must never cross a line into disorder," the Government said in a statement. The Portsmouth

protest came a day after hundreds of masked anti-immigration protesters blocked roads leading to Britain's busiest ferry port of Dover on Saturday, clogging traffic and disrupting travellers as well as cargo vehicles heading for France. Both groups appeared to be led by Daniel Thomas, an ally of veteran far-right activist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, better known as Tommy Robinson.

Successful UK Governments have struggled to stop people - more than 40,000 last year - making the dangerous journey across one of the world's busiest shipping lanes. The issue has been depicted as a crisis by

politicians including Nigel Farage of the hard-right party Reform UK, and has been used as a rallying point by anti-immigration activists.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham's Government says stepped-up law enforcement cooperation between Britain and France has helped reduce the number of people making the crossing so far this year by more than 40% compared with 2025.

The boat carrying about 140 people to Portsmouth had left early Sunday from Normandy, far west of the beaches near Calais where most departures have taken place - making it a much longer and riskier journey.

Charismatic candidate propels German far-right party to victory

GEIR MOULSON ■ Berlin

Irich Siegmund, a charismatic 35-year-old who gave the far-right Alternative for Germany a friendly face and combined promises of a better future with a touch of nostalgia, has led the party to its strongest showing yet.

The party surged to a resounding victory in Sunday's regional election in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt, but fell just short of a majority as it seeks to form the first far-right state Government since World War II.

Siegmund's face was everywhere in posters for Alternative for Germany, or AfD, in a campaign whose motto was "everything is possible." At campaign events, supporters - some of them



wearing T-shirts bearing his image - queued at length for a selfie and a few words with the candidate. Although his party is known for its pro-Russian and anti-immigration positions and other radical

stances, Siegmund has avoided making extreme statements and presents himself as a man of the people. But while that appeals to voters who might otherwise be put off by AfD, he is also uncompromis-

ing, insisting after the election that the party won't "throw our positions overboard for coalitions." Siegmund studied business management and used to sell air fresheners. But he is no political novice: after

a brief period as a member of the centre-right Christian Democratic Union of current Chancellor Friedrich Merz when he was younger, he joined AfD.

He has been a lawmaker in the state legislature in Magdeburg for 10 years and the co-leader of AfD's parliamentary group there since 2022. He built a social media following as a critic of restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alongside his image as a young and energetic politician, Siegmund has frequently harked back to the past. He said during the campaign that voters want "the old, safe Germany back."

Born on October 25, 1990, weeks after German reunification, he has also catered to lingering nostalgia for life in

communist East Germany among some voters - notably with campaign rides on Simson mopeds, which were produced in the east. On Sunday, he arrived at the polling station in his hometown of Tangermunde on one of the machines.

AfD's use of the mopeds has drawn criticism from the Simson family, whose Jewish ancestors were expropriated by the Nazis in the 1930s and fled to the US

The party's regional branch in Saxony-Anhalt is one of several classified by the domestic intelligence agency as a proven right-wing extremist group.

Siegmund was a participant at a 2023 meeting in Potsdam at which a prominent member of the extremist Identitarian Movement

presented his "remigration" vision for deportations of immigrants - a gathering that drew large protests when it came to light a few months later. Siegmund was removed as head of the state legislature's social affairs committee, though he disputed any wrongdoing and said his presence didn't mean an endorsement.

During a recent television debate, incumbent state governor Sven Schulze was asked whether Siegmund is a right-wing extremist.

"I don't want to judge that as far as he personally is concerned, and I can't either," Schulze replied. "But I know who he surrounds himself with." The governor added that there were "very extreme people" in Siegmund's orbit. AfD vehemently rejects accu-

sations of extremism. Last month, Siegmund said that "no one here needs to be afraid, quite the contrary. Every honest person in Saxony-Anhalt will benefit from an AfD-led Government."

Siegmund "manages to come over as likeable, open, always smiling," said Wolfgang Merkel, a political science professor with the WBZ Berlin Social Science Centre, adding that he avoids the often abrasive and overtly provocative or ideological language of some other prominent AfD figures.

"He is avoiding major conflicts at present; that doesn't have to mean that he is a moderate or conservative. He isn't," Merkel said before the election. He said that "whether he can govern is something he still has to prove. (AP)



BRIEFLY

It's always Plan A, there is no Plan B for us: Satwiksairaj



Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty do not believe in a Plan B. Instead, the Indian badminton stars prefer to stick to their strengths while making the necessary adjustments to counter different opponents, a formula that helped them conquer the China Masters.

The world No. 5 pair, who had finished runners-up at the 2023 and 2025 editions, stressed the importance of sticking to their strengths while adapting their tactics according to their opponents.

"It's always Plan A, there is no Plan B for us. It always depends on the opponents. The Chinese want to play a fast game. If you are playing with Malaysians and Indonesians, they are not attacking," Satwik said during a virtual interaction on Monday.

PCB starts inquiry concerning conduct on tour of England



The Pakistan Cricket Board on Monday said it has initiated an internal inquiry amid spiralling media speculation of disciplinary violations during the ongoing tour of England from where seven players were called back after massive losses in the first two Tests. In statement that did not any specify violation or the individuals involved, PCB's media head Aamir Mir announced that the Board has initiated the inquiry owing to the media reports.

"The Pakistan Cricket Board has initiated an internal disciplinary inquiry following media reports concerning discipline and conduct, which are currently being reviewed internally," he said. "The PCB handles such matters in accordance with its standard procedure. The process is being conducted under PCB regulations, ensuring all concerned individuals are given due consideration," he added.

Gyaneshwari eyes new personal best at Asian Games after Glasgow silver



APARAJITA UPADHYAY ■ New Delhi

Commonwealth Games silver medalist weightlifter Gyaneshwari Yadav is hoping to carry her Glasgow experience into this month's Asian Games, where she has set her sights on bettering her personal best.

The 23-year-old from Chhattisgarh produced personal bests in both the snatch and clean and jerk for a total of 199kg (88kg+111kg) that handed her a silver medal in the 53kg category at the Glasgow Games in July.

"The preparation is going good. I want to get my personal best there. I had given my personal best of 199kg at the Commonwealth Games

and I will try and improve on that. "We haven't got a lot of time, just a month," Gyaneshwari told PTI in an interaction facilitated by SAI.

"I will try to improve in snatch. Even if I'm able to improve 1kg each in snatch and 1kg clean and jerk, it will be an achievement for me. For an athlete, getting a personal best is a huge thing."

Gyaneshwari, who is training at the Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports in Patiala, also hopes to use the experience of competing at the Commonwealth Games to her advantage in Japan. "The experience of CWG I will use in Asian Games," she said.

However, she will face stiff competi-

tion at the Asian Games, where traditional powerhouses such as China, South Korea and North Korea will be vying for the podium.

The Asian Games are scheduled to be held across Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, from September 19.

After the Asian Games, Gyaneshwari will face increased domestic competition in the 53kg category, as Olympic silver medalist Mirabai Chanu, who currently competes in the 48kg-49kg category, is set to move up to 53kg, which is the starting weight for women at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. Asian Championships silver medallist Bindyarani Devi has also said she will

Duleep Trophy: Kishan's 270 leads East Zone to 708 against South Zone

G UNNIKRISHNAN ■ Chennai

Ishan Kishan battled humid conditions to construct a monumental 270, reminding the selectors of his red-ball credentials and propelling East Zone to a mammoth 708 on the second day of the Duleep Trophy final against South Zone here on Monday.

Kumar Kushagra too struck his sixth first-class hundred (101, 132b), a shining support act for Kishan's epic, spanning 522 minutes and 334 balls across nearly two days.

South Zone will start fresh on the third day after plucking the final East Zone wicket in the closing minutes of the day. But the most compelling story of the day was of Kishan, whose effort came in the presence of three national selectors. Unfortunately, he could not join an elite club of batters who have scored triple hundreds in Duleep Trophy — Raman Lamba (1987) and Gagan Khoda (2001), but that would not take any sheen out of his knock.

There was something very Virender Sehwag-esque in his innings - the dazzling warmth, the effortless yet brutal acceleration and the innate canniness not to squander the benevolence of conditions. Kishan's first 100, which came on the opening day, arrived in 122 balls but he took 148 balls for the second hundred.

The slowdown was not forced by an exceptional spell or a tough pitch but a more deliberate attempt to wear down the bowlers, and to give his side



the best chance to put on board a total much beyond the opponents' reach. The second first-class double hundred of his career came in 270 balls, when he drilled part-time spinner Devdutt Padikkal for a boundary through the covers.

The only time he looked in discomfort was when left-arm pacer CV Milind managed to ping on his abdomen, which needed a quick medical attention.

But the self-imposed lid on his

batting came soon after going past the double century. He raced to 200 to 250 in just 31 balls. Spinners Shreyas Gopal and Tripurana Vijay suffered most in this Easterly Jet Stream, getting carted for two sixes each.

Kishan blasted 94 runs off 100 balls off Shreyas while Vijay leaked 70 runs off 88 balls, underlining the left-hander's domination. As it was on first day, pulls and drives remained his core run-making shots as 22 fours were made off them.

You get limited chances in Tests so nothing taken for granted: Padikkal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Aware that it is not easy to cement a place in the Indian Test XI amid "limited opportunities", Karnataka batter Devdutt Padikkal says he is not taking anything for granted despite back-to-back hundreds in the tour of Sri Lanka.

Due to regular No.3 Sai Sudharsan's foot injury, Padikkal



got the chance to play two Test matches in Sri Lanka and he grabbed it with both hands by scoring 328 runs in three innings.

"You get limited opportunities these days, and it's not very easy to cement a place in a side. Nothing is taken for granted. For me, personally, I just want to keep scoring runs and keep contributing to wins for the Indian Test side. As long as I'm doing that, I'm sure I'll have my place," Padikkal told JioStar.

India-Japan match important step in cricket's drive to become global: Saikia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia on Monday said the historic one-off T20 International between India and Japan this month will be a significant moment in cricket's journey to become a global sport by connecting to a new audience.

India and Japan are set to lock horns for the first time in a historic T20I in Japan on September 22, ahead of the men's cricket competition at the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya. The Games will start on September 19.

The match will be played at the Sano International Cricket Ground in Tochigi Prefecture. Played under the banner of the Suzuki Cup, it will commemorate the 75th anniversary of India-Japan diplomatic relations.

Saikia said the match is an effort of ICC chairman Jay Shah to take cricket to newer territories. "Cricket's global journey is being shaped by moments that take the game beyond its traditional boundaries. The India-Japan T20I match on 22nd September, '26 is one such moment taking international cricket to Japan, connecting with a new audience and strengthening the game's presence in a region with immense potential," Saikia wrote on 'X'.

"It is also an opportunity to recognise the vision and groundwork laid by Shri Jay Shah during his tenure as BCCI Secretary, and now as ICC Chairman, in placing the global growth of cricket firmly at the heart of the sport's future.

"From expanding cricket into new territo-



ries to building a stronger pathway towards the Olympic movement, the ambition has always been clear: make cricket more accessible, more inclusive and truly global," he added. Saikia said BCCI is committed to working towards making cricket a global sport. "India-Japan is more than a cricket match. It represents the direction in which our sport is moving from a global ambition to a global reality," he said.

"The journey has begun. And there is much more to come." Ranked No.1, India are the reigning T20 World Cup champions, while Japan are placed 41st in ICC T20 rankings. The match will also help India acclimatise to Japanese conditions and give them valuable game time to fine-tune combinations and build momentum ahead of the Asian Games.

BEFORE, THE NOTARY PUBLIC, RANCHI

**AFFIDAVIT**

1. RAJKUMAR YADAV, Son of Lal Jee Yadav, aged about 40 years, Resident of Jamhiya, P.O-Kewal, PS-Barhi, District-Hazariabagh State-Jharkhand, Pin-825405, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as follows:-

1. That I am Indian Citizen by birth and residing at above mentioned address.

2. That my son's correct name is SHUBHAM KUMAR in his all documents.

3. That my son's name is wrongly mentioned as SUBHAM KUMAR in place of SHUBHAM KUMAR in his Aadhar Card vide Aadhar No-650780638206.

4. That this affidavit is made for the purpose of my son's name may be correct in his aforesaid Aadhar Card vide Aadhar No-650780638206 as well as SHUBHAM KUMAR in place of SUBHAM KUMAR.

5. That the statements mentioned herein above are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

SI No.-22, Date-07.09.2026

BEFORE, THE NOTARY PUBLIC, RANCHI

**AFFIDAVIT**

1. Mahendra Kumar S/o Krishna Prasad Mehta resident of Vill. Majuraha, P.O. Japla, P.S. Husainabad, Distt. Palamu, Jharkhand-822117 do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as follows:-

1. That I am an Indian citizen by birth.

2. That in Aadhar Card bearing Aadhar No. 351963642388 I am mentioned as ANANSIKA KUMARI which is wrong.

3. That my daughter's correct name is ANSHIKA VARMA according to her Birth Certified bearing Registration No. B202520023170000054 Date of issue 04/12/2025 issued from Grama Panchayat Doorkhurd.

4. That ANSHIKA VARMA and ANSIKA KUMARI both name are same and one person i.e. my daughter.

5. That this affidavit is sworn for the purpose of correction of my daughter's name ANSHIKA VARMA in place of ANSIKA KUMARI in my daughter's Aadhar Card.

6. That my above statements are true & correct.

SI No.- 704, Date-07.09.2026

The Notary Public, Lohardaga

**AFFIDAVIT**

1, Chhotu Prasad son of Sri Jugal Prasad, Tangra Toli near Balika School, Lohardaga, P.S. and Dist. Lohardaga Jharkhand. That I have obtained my UID Card No. 7082 1539 5151 in which my name is mentioned as Chhotu Prasad. That now I have changed my name as NIKHIL KHATRI from Chhotu Prasad. That from today I will be known to all by name as NIKHIL KHATRI. Vide affidavit no. 20158, date-05 September 2026.

**शपथ-पत्र**

मैं, रब्बानी अंसारी, (Rabbani Ansari) पिता-कमलूद्दीन अंसारी, उम्र लगभग 20 वर्ष, निवास ग्राम-नया बस्ती, पोस्ट-बोकारो धर्मल, थाना-बोकारो धर्मल, जिला-बोकारो (झारखण्ड) शपथपूर्वक बयान करता हूँ कि:-

1. यह कि, मेरी राष्ट्रियता भारतीय है।

2. यह कि, मेरा नाम झारखण्ड अधिविध परिषद रॉय एवं जन्म प्रमाण पत्र में मेरा नाम रब्बानी अंसारी (Rabbani Ansari) दर्ज है परन्तु आधार कार्ड संख्या-7180 1497 2333 में मेरा नाम गलती से रावणी अंसारी (Rawni Ansari) दर्ज हो गया है।

3. यह कि, मेरा सही नाम रब्बानी अंसारी (Rabbani Ansari) है मैं अपने आधार कार्ड संख्या 7180 1497 2333 में अपना सही नाम दर्ज कराने हेतु यह शपथ पत्र बनवा रहा हूँ जो सक्षम पदाधिकारी के समक्ष प्रस्तुत किया जाय सके।

SI No.-02, Date-23.07.2026

**TATA CAPITAL HOUSING FINANCE LTD**  
Regd. Office: 11th Floor, Tower A, Peninsula Business Park, Ganpatrao Kadam Marg, Lower Parel, Mumbai-400013. CIN No. U67190MH2008PLC167552

**DEMAND NOTICE**  
Under Section 13 (2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 ("Act") read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 ("Rules").

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Tata Capital Housing Finance Limited (TCHFL) under the Act and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Rules already issued detailed Demand Notice dated below under Section 13(2) of the Act, calling upon the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) (all singularly or together referred to as "Obligors"/Legal Heir(s)/Legal Representative(s) listed hereunder, to pay the amount mentioned in the respective Demand Notice, within 60 days from the date of the respective Notice, as per details given below. Copies of the said Notices are served by Registered Post A.D. and are available with the undersigned, and the said Obligor(s)/Legal Heir(s)/Legal Representative(s), may, if they so desire, collect the respective copy from the undersigned on any working day during normal office hours.

In connection with the above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Obligor(s)/Legal Heir(s)/Legal Representative(s) to pay to TCHFL, within 60 days from the date of the respective Notice(s), the amount indicated herein below against their respective names, together with further interest as detailed below from the respective dates mentioned below in column (d) till the date of payment and / or realization, read with the loan agreement and other documents/writings, if any, executed by the said Obligor(s). As security for due repayment of the loan, the following Secured Asset(s) have been mortgaged to TCHFL by the said Obligor(s) respectively.

| Sr. No. | Loan Account No.                             | Name of Obligor(s) /Legal Heir(s)/Legal Representative(s)                             | Total Outstanding Dues (Rs.) as on below date* | Date of Demand Notice Date of NPA |
|---------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1.      | TCHHF053500100174452, TCHHN053500100351994   | Lalan Shukla (Borrower) Mrs. Jaya Shukla (Co-Borrower) Mrs. Mira Shukla (Co-Borrower) | Rs. 17,37,735/- & Rs. 4,58,227/-               | 02-09-2026<br>01-09-2026          |
| 2.      | TCHHL0545000100375448, TCHHN0545000100376947 | Subodh Kumar (Borrower) Mrs. Komal Kumar (Co-Borrower)                                | Rs. 43,17,922/- & Rs. 2,33,561/-               | 02-09-2026<br>01-09-2026          |

**Description of the Secured Assets/Immovable Properties/ Mortgaged Properties :** All That Piece And Parcel of Raiyati Land Measuring Area 2 Katha, Situated In Mouza Iohhapur, in Portion of Plot No. 1458, Recorded Under Khata No. 131, Ward No. 8, P.s. Adityapur Nac, District Singhbhum, Which is Bounded As Follow As:- North : Niji; South : MotiAli; East: Sushila Devi; West: Nij.

**Description of the Secured Assets/Immovable Properties/ Mortgaged Properties :** All That Piece And Parcel Land Measuring 3.71 Decimals, Situated At Mouza - Samlong, Thana - Namkum, Thana No. 212, Ward No. 13, Holding No. 013000480700020, District- Ranchi, Under The Jurisdiction of The District Sub-registrar, Ranchi Being Khata No. 17, Plot No. 21, Sub-Plot No. 21/A-2, Purchased Area: 3.71 Decimals, Nature of Land: Residential. The Entire Land Measuring 3.71 Decimals Has Been Sold And Shown As Sub-Plot No. 21/A-2. The Boundaries of The Property Are As Follows: North : 10 Feet Wide Proposed Road, South : R.S. Plot No. 22, East : Sub-plot no. 21/A-1, West : Sub-Plot No. 21/A-3

Date: 08.09.2026  
Place: Jharkhand

Sd/-Authorised Officer,  
For Tata Capital Housing Finance Limited