



Vadakara MDMA case: Second accused Keerthana granted bail

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kozhikode

Keerthana, the second accused in the Vadakara MDMA case, was released from jail after the High Court granted her bail on September 5.

The court granted bail after noting that the investigation was almost complete and that the accused had no previous criminal cases. It directed her to fully cooperate with the investigation. She has also been ordered to appear before the investigating officer every Saturday between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. The court directed her not to influence witnesses or interfere with evidence. Keerthana has also been prohibited from leaving Kerala without the permission of the trial court.

The investigating team had found that Keerthana was allegedly handling the financial transactions linked to the sale...

CONTINUED ON >> P2

ED Seeks FIR against Pinarayi, Veena and Riyas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has taken an unprecedented step in CMRL-Exa logic bribery case by writing a letter to the state DGP seeking an FIR against Leader of Opposition Pinarayi Vijayan, his daughter Veena T and son-in-law P.A. Mohammed Riyas, apart from some others, on charges of corruption and bribery in the CMRL-Exa logic case, official sources said.

ED sent a report under Section 66(2) of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), citing findings from its ongoing investigation in the case. The probe agency sought a police FIR under relevant sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act and some other laws,



claiming it has statements from some accused who alleged that Vijayan took a bribe from CMRL during his tenure as Chief Minister through his daughter and Riyas subsequently transferred these funds to Dubai.

Sources said the ED named a total of 13 entities to be arraigned as accused, including the three Vijayan family members, Veena's now-defunct IT company Exalogic

Solutions, CMRL promoter S.M. Sasidharan Kartha, former CMRL CFO P. Suresh Kumar, a company named Empower India Capital Investments and some other individuals and unknown others.

Section 66(2) of the PMLA empowers the ED to share findings from its criminal investigation with a law enforcement agency for registering a fresh FIR or com-

plaint. The ED can book a PMLA case based on such a police case.

The ED has written DGP Ravada A. Chandrasekhar for registration of a police FIR, claiming its probe provided 'evidence' against the named entities. Subsequently the DGP confirmed that he had received the letter and said he would send it to the government for further actions.

The federal agency raided Veena, who was living with Vijayan at a rented accommodation in the state capital Thiruvananthapuram, in June and subsequently questioned her.

It had said in a statement in August that some 'hand-written' notes were seized during searches against Veena T. and that these contained details of...

CONTINUED ON >> P2



Letter to be examined as per law: Home Minister

Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala said the ED's letter to the state DGP seeking registration of an FIR against CPM leader Pinarayi Vijayan, his daughter T. Veena and son-in-law P.A. Mohammed Riyas would be examined and a decision taken as per law.

"The DGP will examine the letter. After examining the letter, a decision will be taken on what action needs to be taken as per law. If the DGP receives a letter, he will act as per the prescribed procedure," Chennithala said.

Prepared to face any probe: Riyas

P.A. Mohammed Riyas, CPM state secretariat member, has said that he is prepared to face any investigation in connection with the CMRL-Exalogic case and expressed confidence that his innocence would stand. He said he had already pointed out what he described as the political motives behind the Enforcement Directorate's

actions. Riyas said that the ED may proceed with whatever "script" it has prepared, but that he would not be intimidated by any level of investigation. He maintained that he had done nothing wrong and therefore had no reason to fear the ongoing proceedings. He also rejected the suggestion that the latest ED

moves had caused him or the CPM to become apprehensive. According to Riyas, no matter how many attempts are made to target or harass him, he will face them without fear and remains confident that his innocence will ultimately prevail. CPM state secretary M.V. Govindan alleged that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has been

trying to target Pinarayi Vijayan through the probe and reiterated that the agency's latest move is politically motivated. The party had already stated that the entire case was politically driven. "We had already understood where the case was heading when Pinarayi Vijayan's name was mentioned in the SFIO report," Govindan said.

State feels the heat as mercury crosses 36°C amid weak monsoon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Keralam is witnessing unusually high temperatures in September, with the mercury crossing 36 degrees Celsius in Punalur amid weak southwest monsoon activity across the state.

According to the latest data released by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Punalur in Kollam district recorded a maximum temperature of 36.2 degrees Celsius on Monday, which was 4.3 degrees above normal for the station.

Kottayam recorded the highest departure from normal, with the maximum temperature reaching 35.2 degrees Celsius, or 4.4 degrees above normal.

Palakkad recorded 34.2 degrees Celsius, 3.9 degrees above normal, while the Cochin International Airport (CIAL) station recorded 34.1



degrees Celsius, 3.4 degrees above normal.

The state capital also experienced above-normal temperatures, with Thiruvananthapuram city recording 33.8 degrees Celsius, 2.8 degrees above normal. Vellanikkara also recorded 33.8 degrees Celsius, which was 3.7 degrees above normal.

Other parts of the state also remained warmer than usual. Kozhikode recorded a maximum of 33 degrees Celsius, while Kannur recorded 32.7 degrees Celsius. Both stations recorded temperatures more...

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Above-normal heat pushes up power demand; curbs likely

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Above-normal temperatures amid a weak south-west monsoon have pushed up electricity consumption in Kerala, with the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) warning that partial power restrictions may become necessary during evening peak hours if power availability remains inadequate.

Several parts of the state recorded temperatures well above normal on Sunday. Kottayam recorded the highest departure, with the maximum temperature touching 35°C, 4.4°C above normal, according to India Meteorological Department (IMD) data.

Punalur recorded 35.2°C, 3.7°C above normal, while Vellanikkara and Palakkad registered 34.3°C each, with departures of 4.1°C and 3.9°C, respectively.



CIAL, Kochi, recorded 34°C, 3.1°C above normal. Kozhikode and Kannur recorded 33.4°C and 33.3°C, respectively, while Thiruvananthapuram city registered 33.3°C, 2.4°C above normal.

With the heat persisting, KSEB said electricity consumption has risen significantly compared with previous years. Peak-hour demand in recent days has been 500 to 800 MW higher

than the demand recorded during September in previous years. The pressure on the state's power supply has also increased amid a rise in electricity demand across the country, reducing the availability of power through the exchange. According to the Grid Controller of India, a shortfall of around 12,000 MW in electricity availability across the country has not been fully resolved.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

MLAs walk out of NCW workshop over Hindi-only sessions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi/Thiruvananthapuram

A group of women MLAs from Kerala walked out of an NCW workshop on Tuesday before its conclusion, protesting that the programme was conducted largely in Hindi, which they found difficult to follow.

The two-day capacity-building workshop for women legislators was organised by the National Commission for Women in Faridabad. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla inaugurated the workshop on Monday.

The women legislators alleged that conducting the programme in Hindi made it difficult for them to follow the sessions.

"We attended the programme expecting that, as legislators, we would get some new suggestions and practical guidance on how

to effectively participate in legislative proceedings," Deputy Speaker Shanamol Osman said.

Besides Shanamol, the women representatives from Kerala were Ministers Bindu Krishna and K.A. Thulasi, and MLAs K.K. Rema, Fathima Thahliya, Vidya Balakrishnan and Usha Vijayan. The sessions were conducted entirely in Hindi, Shanamol said, adding that participants from Kerala could not understand the language.

The Kerala legislators alleged that the National Commission for Women Chairperson maintained silence despite the protests. "The problem is not the Hindi language. Rather, the commission did not take steps to include all MLAs at the national level," a legislator said. The MLAs alleged that an MLA from...

CONTINUED ON >> P2

TN wants Centre to collect OBC details as per official list only

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chennai

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

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

The Minister said that if people used different names to denote the same caste, including regional variations, the data collected could become unclear. This could lead to difficulties in enumeration and may also prevent the full benefits of the census exercise from...

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Cong MPs to move President against 'purification'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Congress MPs from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities have intensified their protest over the alleged "purification" ritual conducted at the Haldwani Ramlila Ground after a rally addressed by party president Mallikarjun Kharge.

As many as 32 SC/ST Congress MPs have decided to submit a memorandum to President Droupadi Murmu, seeking her intervention and action over the incident. The MPs said the alleged ritual was not merely a political controversy but a serious issue concerning the dignity of Dalits, social equality and constitutional values.

The controversy erupted after a reported purification ceremony was ...

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Family alleges politics delayed police action in dowry death case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kannur

Fresh testimonies emerged on Monday in the case of 24-year-old K. Jyothisha, a native of Mangattidam, who died after jumping into a well at her husband's home in Pathiriyad, Thalassery, in March, with her family alleging that political influence delayed police action against her husband and in-laws for months.

The Pinarayi police registered a case on September 7 against Jyothisha's husband, Sajil (37), his mother, Chandri (55), and his sister, Juna (39), for abetment to suicide and dowry harassment - nearly six months after her death. Police had initially recorded the case as an unnatural



death, with formal charges following only after sustained complaints from the family and subsequent court intervention.

Jyothisha's brother, K.G. Jijesh, told media that she had faced physical and mental abuse since the early days of her marriage. He alleged that her in-laws confiscated and sold her gold ornaments, demanded...

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Need for meaningful gender audits to ensure inclusiveness

GEETHIKA GIRENDRA
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The concept of a gender audit remains largely under discussion in Kerala's mainstream conversations on rights, equality and social inclusion. At a time when institutions are increasingly expected to be more inclusive and gender-sensitive, it is perhaps time to look beyond policy declarations and ask whether these principles are actually reflected in everyday institutional practices.

Organisations across the state may have Internal Committees, gender policies and mechanisms intended to address discrimination and harassment. But do these

measures necessarily make an institution gender-sensitive? Not always. This is where the importance of meaningful gender audits comes in.

A gender audit is a systematic process of assessing how effectively an organisation, institution or community integrates gender equality into its structures, policies, programmes, practices and workplace culture. It looks beyond whether a policy exists on paper and examines how it works in practice.

It can examine the representation of different genders at various levels of an organisation, whether policies and practices are genuinely gender-sensitive, how resources and opportunities



are distributed, and, crucially, how people experience the institution in their everyday lives.

Dr Reshma Elizabeth Thomas, an ILO-Certified Gender Audit Facilitator and founder and CEO of Equig Solutions, says the difference between a meaningful audit

and a cosmetic exercise lies in participation. An audit based only on forms and checklists can overlook problems that employees may never record on paper.

This is particularly significant in workplaces where employees hesitate to report harassment or discrimination for fear of retaliation or losing their jobs. An Internal Committee may exist formally, but if employees do not trust it or know how to approach it, its presence offers little protection.

The same gap can emerge in discussions around inclusion. Kerala frequently projects itself as a socially progressive state, but marginalised communities can continue to experience stigma, exclusion and a lack of psychological safety. Inclusion, therefore, cannot be mea-

sured simply by representation at public events or the presence of facilities.

Participatory gender audits typically involve reviewing institutional documents, gathering employees' perceptions, conducting confidential interviews and workshops, and comparing formal policies with actual experiences. The findings can then be converted into a Gender Action Plan with specific responsibilities, timelines and measurable outcomes.

Gender budgeting is something which is equally important. Without resources, even well written policies can remain ignored. Examining where money is allocated can reveal an institution's actual priorities and whether commitments to equality are being implemented.

CONTINUED ON >> P2

Project Mittayi still on, says Kerala Social Security Mission

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The Kerala Social Security Mission (KSSM) on Monday rejected media reports claiming that medicines under its Mittayi project - a community-based initiative for children and adolescents with Type 1 diabetes - had been discontinued, calling the reports "baseless" and "factually incorrect."

The Mission said medicines were being distributed regularly through Mittayi clinics in all districts, with regular and analogue insulin available via government medical colleges and satellite centres. It added that the state continues to provide free comprehensive services to around 2,000 registered children. KSSM also dismissed separate reports questioning the quality of the medicines, saying all drugs supplied under the project are approved by a government-constituted medical committee.

The clarification comes amid a prolonged dispute with patient welfare groups over a change in insulin regimen. In mid-2025, the scheme shifted from costlier, rapid-acting insulin to a cheaper, slow-acting variant, a move parents and groups like the Type One Diabetes Foundation (Kerala) say disrupted school routines, forcing children to wait up to an hour after shots before eating lunch, leading to poor sugar control and, in some cases, diabetic ketoacidosis.

The row escalated after the Kerala State Commission for Protection of Child Rights recently directed KSSM to roll back the 2025-26 changes and restore the original rapid-acting insulin regimen. Notably, Monday's statement does not address the child rights panel's directive or parents' complaints about the insulin switch, leaving the core dispute unresolved. Mittayi - meaning "sweets" locally - is a flagship welfare scheme easing the medical burden on families of children with Type 1 diabetes.

Students held for morphing case also booked under POCSO Act

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kochi

Police on Tuesday said the two students who were arrested over the alleged morphing and circulation of obscene images and videos of teachers and female students have also been booked under the POCSO Act after child sexual abuse material was found on their devices.

Kochi City Police Commissioner S. Kaliraj Mahesh Kumar said the material was found on the phones of Sreehari V.S., a BBA student of Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara, and Sanesh, a student from



another college in Alappuzha. Both were earlier arrested for morphing and circulating obscene content of teachers and female students at the college. Kaliraj said the two ran a paid Telegram group set up to

generate money through such content. Sreehari was arrested last week, Sanesh on Tuesday. The accused now face charges under the POCSO Act, Section 67A of the IT Act, Section 79 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and

Section 119(1)(b) of the Kerala Police Act. Police said several others linked to the Telegram group are being questioned to ascertain their role in the dealings. Kumar added that some members may have joined unaware of the group's intent.

According to the FIR, Sreehari had been photographing and filming teachers and students since 2025, using his access via a student organisation's media cell before morphing and uploading the content to Telegram and Instagram. Investigation into the wider network continues, with further arrests possible.

Second arrest in morphing case; Telegram, Instagram network under lens

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kochi

The Kochi city police on Monday arrested a second person in connection with the alleged morphing and circulation of obscene images and videos of teachers and female students of Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara, widening the probe into a network operating through Telegram and Instagram.

Police identified the accused as Sanesh, 20, a B Com student from Mavelikkara in Alappuzha district, and named him a member of the Telegram group where the morphed content was shared. Investigators are also

probing his potential role in financial transactions linked to the distribution of the material.

The arrest comes a week after police took into custody Sreehari S., a second-year BBA Logistics student at the college and the main accused in the case. He was arrested after the college's principal-in-charge filed a complaint, following which a preliminary examination of seized devices revealed a cache of morphed photographs and videos of his classmates and teachers.

According to the FIR, Sreehari had allegedly been photographing and filming teachers and students on campus since 2025, morphing the material into obscene

content before uploading it to Telegram and Instagram for wider circulation. Police said he allegedly used his position in the media cell of a student organisation to access the images. Police believe the Telegram group had several more members and are working to identify them, while also examining whether money changed hands for supplying or circulating the content.

An eight-member Special Investigation Team formed by Kochi City Police is analysing digital footprints from seized devices and plans to approach Telegram to trace other participants in the chat groups. Police have not ruled out further arrests as the probe continues.

Ansar booked under KAAPA after initial laxity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kochi

Muhammed Ansar, at the centre of a case that triggered public outrage after he was initially released on station bail, has now been formally remanded to judicial custody, police said, amid mounting scrutiny of the force's handling of the case.

The Ernakulam Town North police have invoked Section 132 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita against Ansar, a provision dealing with the use of criminal force or assault to deter a public servant from discharging duty and carrying significantly heavier penalties than the police act section initially applied.

In a separate development, the Thrikkakara police registered a second FIR against Ansar following a fresh complaint linked to an August 22 incident at Padamughal, in which he allegedly waylaid and threatened motorist Rejins Chelattu. He has been booked under Section 126(2) of the BNS for wrongful restraint and Section 296(b) for obscene acts, and was arrested a second time in connection with the case.

Police have since gone a step further and formally invoked the Kerala Anti-Social Activities



Muhammed Ansar

(Prevention) Act (KAAPA) against Ansar, citing his history of violent conduct and past criminal cases involving theft. The move allowed authorities to detain him for an extended period as a habitual offender, marking a sharp escalation from the initial station bail that had sparked the controversy.

The case has drawn sharp criticism after it emerged that Ansar was initially let off on station bail despite allegedly assaulting a plainclothes Assistant Sub-Inspector. Questions have also been raised over why no action was taken when victims first approached police with complaints in August. The department is now reviewing the lapses in its earlier response as the case continues to draw public and media attention.

Attappadi double murder: Prime suspect arrested in West Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Palakkad

West Bengal Police, working in coordination with Kerala Police, have arrested the prime suspect in the Attappadi double murder case, in which the dismembered remains of a 30-year-old woman and her five-year-old daughter were found stuffed in plastic sacks in the Bhavani River near Cheerakkadavu.

The accused, Pravat Das, a plantation worker who had moved to a private nursery in Attappadi with the victims about 20 days earlier, was tracked down and apprehended in West Bengal after the Palakkad Cyber Cell traced his mobile movements following the crime. He has reportedly confessed to the killings during initial interrogation, though he first claimed to have known the woman for only two months and denied paternity of the child.

A Special Investigation Team led by Agali DySP R. Ashokan has since pieced together a timeline of the crime. Local residents last saw the woman and Das boarding a bus together, having told neighbours they were headed to Kottathara Hospital. Both victims went

missing soon after. Call detail records and cyber cell tracking showed Das deactivated his phone and left Kerala by train within hours of the killings, with investigators citing recurring disputes over the woman's ties to another man as the likely motive.

Police believe the murders did not take place on the riverbank itself. The SIT suspects the victims were killed at an isolated indoor location or plantation quarters, with the remains later moved to the river to be carried off by the current. The bodies were discovered after cattle herders noticed a foul smell from sacks trapped on a stretch of exposed riverbank. Post-mortem examinations are being conducted at Thrissur Government Medical College.

While the accused is a native of West Bengal, police confirmed the woman was originally from Assam, and are working to contact her family for formal identification. The Police have initiated proceedings to secure a transit remand from courts in West Bengal and are preparing to bring Das back to Palakkad for further interrogation and scene reconstruction at the plantation.

Botsa's Nephew Chinna Srinu Joins TDP Before CM Naidu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ (Tadepalli) AP

In a major political development in North Andhra, former minister and YSRCP leader Botsa Satyanarayana's nephew, former Vizianagaram ZP Chairman Majji Srinivasa Rao (popularly known as Chinna Srinu), joined the ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP) along with his followers.

■ **Welcomed by CM Naidu:** Chief Minister and TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu officially welcomed Chinna Srinu, his daughter Siri Sahasra, and their supporters into the party fold in Amaravati by draping them with the traditional yellow party scarf.

■ **Dignitaries Present:** Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha, Minister Kondapalli



Srinivas, Vizianagaram MP Kalisetty Appala Naidu, and other senior leaders were present during the event.

■ **Setback for YSRCP:** Prior to joining the TDP, Chinna Srinu resigned

from his primary membership of the YSRCP, his post as the YSRCP Vizianagaram District President, and his position as the in-charge for the Bhimili Assembly constituency.

UP STF arrests 2 absconding brothers in Rs 500-crore investment scam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Uttar Pradesh

In a major operation, the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (UP STF) Noida unit, alongside the Budaun police, arrested two absconding brothers accused of orchestrating a Rs 500-crore investment fraud.

■ **Accused Identified:** The brothers, Shashikant Maurya and Suryakant Maurya, were directors of a firm named Amar Jyoti Universe Nidhi Limited. They had been absconding for over a year and a half and carried a reward of ₹50,000 each on their arrest.

■ **Modus Operandi:** The duo lured over 35,000 investors across districts including Budaun,

Bareilly, and Pilibhit by promising high returns on investments through their company before embezzling the funds. Budaun alone accounted for around 15,000 affected victims.

■ **Legal Action:** Multiple cases were filed against them under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) covering cheating, criminal breach of trust, forgery, and criminal intimidation.

■ **Arrest:** While the accused previously obtained a stay order against their arrest, the Allahabad High Court lifted the stay in April 2026, clearing the path for the joint STF operation that led to their apprehension.

ED Seeks FIR against Pinarayi, Veena and Riyas

certain fund transfers to Dubai.

Earlier ED had raided the houses and business firms of Pinarayi Vijayan, Muhammed Riyas and some close aides of Riyas in Kozhikode. The last raid in connection with the case was conducted in the various parts of Kozhikode simultaneously a month ago. The names included in the list of ED for the raid were close allies of Riyaz including the district secretariat member of CPM P. Nikhil, who is known as the right hand of Riyas in Kozhikode. The names of Nikhil and other friends of Riyas were found handwritten in a diary of Veena which was seized by ED in a raid.

Vadakara MDMA case: Second accused Keerthana granted bail

of MDMA. Keerthana, a former teacher at the Perambra BRC, had also allegedly involved other women teachers in the drug-related transactions.

So far, five people have been arrested in connection with the case. The investigation is focused on the alleged sale of MDMA and the financial transactions linked to the drug trade. BRC teachers Kavya and Neeshma, along with delivery agent Jijil Kuriyakose, are among those arrested. According to the police, Wayanad native Shinto is a key link in the MDMA distribution network. However, he remains at large.

FROM PAGE - 1

State feels the heat as mercury crosses 36°C amid weak monsoon

than two degrees above their respective normal levels.

The unusually high temperatures come during a period when Keralam would normally continue to experience the influence of the southwest monsoon. However, weak monsoon activity combined with above-normal temperatures has resulted in summer-like conditions in several parts of the state.

In Lakshadweep, Aminidivi islands recorded the highest maximum temperature of 33.4 degrees Celsius, 3.4 degrees above normal. Minicoy recorded 33 degrees Celsius, while Agathi recorded 31.6 degrees Celsius.

Above-normal heat pushes up power demand; curbs likely

KSEB has also reported an unexpected reduction in the availability of power from central generating stations.

The Board said that if adequate electricity cannot be procured through the power exchange and grid frequency falls, partial power restrictions may be required between 6 pm and midnight.

The situation comes as the southwest monsoon remains weak, with rainfall staying away from several parts of Keralam. The combination of elevated temperatures and increased cooling

demand is putting additional pressure on the power system.

MLAs walk out of NCW workshop over Hindi-only sessions

a Hindi-speaking state challenged them, saying that if they did not know Hindi, she could teach them.

They alleged that some MLAs from North India shouted that Hindi was the national language and that discussions would be held only in Hindi. They said that slogans such as "Jai Shri Ram" and "Bharat Mata Ki Jai" were later raised in the hall.

Following this, the Keralam members walked out of the programme just ahead of a session and the concluding ceremony, they said.

Need for meaningful gender audits to ensure inclusiveness

For Kerala, the growing emphasis on gender audits presents an opportunity to move from symbolic inclusion to structural change. But the effectiveness of the exercise will ultimately depend on whether institutions are willing to listen to uncomfortable experiences and, more importantly, act on what they hear.

A gender audit should therefore not end with a report. Its real purpose is to make institutions safer, more inclusive and more accountable in the everyday lives of the people they serve.

Family alleges politics delayed police action in dowry death case

additional dowry, and subjected her to cruelty and forced physical labour, which he said continued even during her pregnancy.

The family has publicly alleged that the delay in registering a formal case stemmed from Sajil's position as a local worker of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), claiming police were initially reluctant to act on their complaints because of his political affiliation. They said the case moved forward only after they escalated the matter through the courts.

Police said the investigation into Sajil, Chandri and Juna is now under way, following what has been described as significant public and legal pressure over the case's handling. Authorities have not yet issued a detailed response to the family's allegations of political interference.

Cong MPs to move President against 'purification'

held at the Haldwani venue following Kharge's August 8 rally. Congress leaders have alleged that the act amounted to caste discrimination and an insult to Kharge, who belongs to the Scheduled Caste community.

Congress MPs and leaders have demanded action against those responsible for the alleged ritual. On Tuesday Congress MP Mallu Ravi also

filed a complaint seeking registration of an FIR over the incident.

TN wants Centre to collect OBC details as per official list only

being realised. "Hence, the exercise must stick to official names alone as per the notifications of the state and union governments to ensure social justice and equal justice," he said.

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

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

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

It said: "In order to ensure social justice for all sections of society, this Assembly unanimously resolves to urge the Union Government to collect the caste details of Backward Classes, Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities during the second phase of the 2027 census of India, in the same manner as followed for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes."

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Minister warns theatres against unfair pricing, quantity violations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kochi

Kerala Food and Civil Supplies Minister Anoop Jacob on Tuesday warned of strict action against those found altering the quantity, weight or price of products sold in cinema theatres and markets in the state.

The Minister's warning comes days after the Legal Metrology Department conducted inspections at cinema theatres in malls following complaints of customers being charged excessively

for food items.

Minister was speaking while inaugurating the distribution of live certificates at a Panchayat and Municipality-level Autorickshaw Fare Meter Inspection Camp at Piravom Municipality in Ernakulam district.

The Minister's statement also comes amid complaints raised by Thiruvananthapuram Corporation Mayor V.V. Rajesh regarding alleged overcharging for movie tickets and food items at theatres.



Mayor had said last week that complaints about excessive

prices at theatres had been received frequently and that such practices had been continuing for years. He also raised concerns over the alleged use of dynamic pricing for cinema tickets, which can result in sharp increases during peak periods.

The mayor cited the case of a family in Thiruvananthapuram that allegedly paid Rs 6,048.94 online for seven tickets expecting recliner seats, but received seats priced at Rs 230 each.

While acknowledging that the Corporation has limited powers to directly regulate the prices of cinema tickets and food items, he said local authorities could intervene in other aspects related to theatres.

The latest warning from the Food and Civil Supplies Minister comes as authorities intensify inspections to ensure that consumers are not subjected to unfair pricing or discrepancies in the quantity and weight of products sold in theatres and markets.

State Information Commissioner warns officials over missing RTI files

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kozhikode

The State Information Commissioner T.K. Ramakrishnan has warned of strict action against officials who fail to provide information under the Right to Information (RTI) Act by claiming that the files concerned are missing or unavailable.

He said that the officials cannot evade their responsibility by stating that a file cannot be traced. The responsibility for maintaining official records rests with the concerned public authorities, he added.

He was speaking after an RTI hearing held at the district Collectorate conference hall.

"If a file is missing, legal action should be initiated.



Each file should have a designated custodian. Officials should ascertain from whose custody a file went missing and take appropriate action," he said.

He also announced that a training programme would be organised next month for district-level officials to raise awareness about the provisions of the RTI Act.

Acting on a complaint filed by Karanthur resident Abdul Kalam, Ramakrishnan directed the Public Information Officer of Kunnamangalam

panchayat to trace the relevant file and provide the information sought.

The Information Commissioner also criticised the Public Information Officer of Kozhikode Government Engineering College for failing to provide information and copies of documents despite the prescribed fee having been paid. The officer was directed to send the information to the complainant by speed post immediately.

The Public Information Officer of Nadapuram police station was directed to provide CCTV footage sought by an applicant. An official of the Malabar Devaswom Board was also instructed to provide information that had been denied on the grounds that it had not been compiled.

R. Karthik Verma appointed manager of Indian cricket team

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

In a proud moment for Kerala's sporting community, R. Karthik Verma has been appointed by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) as the manager of the Indian senior men's cricket team for its upcoming international series against Afghanistan. Karthik Verma will take charge of the team for the three-match India-Afghanistan series, beginning on September 13. His appointment marks a significant recognition for a Keralite who has been closely associated with cricket administration in the state and at the national level for nearly two decades. He has been actively

involved in the development of Kerala cricket since 2005. Over the years, he has held various responsibilities with the Ernakulam District Cricket Association and the Kerala Cricket Association (KCA). His contributions as Chairman of the KCA Finance Committee and General Convener of International Competitions earned him recognition for his administrative capabilities.

He is currently serving as the Honorary Secretary of the Ernakulam District Cricket Association. His long-standing involvement in cricket administration and experience in organising major competitions are seen as key factors behind his elevation to the national assignment.



Rising heat, power consumption triggered power crisis: Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Rising temperatures, a surge in electricity consumption and reduced power availability have triggered a power crisis in Kerala, Electricity Minister Sunny Joseph said on Tuesday.

The Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) has indicated that partial power restrictions may be imposed again, with electricity demand expected to rise by 800 to 900 MW. Restrictions, if implemented, are likely to be imposed between 6.30 pm and 12.30 am, when demand peaks. Power cuts lasting between 30 minutes and an hour were reported in several parts of the state on



Monday night, causing considerable hardship to consumers. With the supply situation expected to remain strained, further restrictions are likely in the coming days.

Explaining the reasons for the crisis, the Minister said

temperatures had risen across the country, not just in Kerala, leading to increased electricity consumption. At the same time, weak monsoon conditions have resulted in low water levels in the state's hydel reservoirs, reducing power generation.

The state is also facing difficulties in procuring additional power from northern states due to a shortage of coal for thermal power generation, the Minister said.

"Besides this, Kerala has to return 500 MW of electricity every day that it had borrowed during March-April this year. All these factors are contributing to the current power crisis," Minister said.

Edu dept. launches REVIVE scheme to address learning gaps

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The General Education Department, in collaboration with Samagra Shiksha Keralam (SSK), has launched REVIVE (Rejuvenation of Education through Visualisation, Interaction & Value-based Empowerment) to address learning gaps among lower primary and upper primary students in Malayalam, English and Mathematics.

The initiative, part of the State Government's 100-Day Action Plan themed "Orumikkam, Praythnikam, Munneram" ("Unite, Endeavour, Advance") aims to improve foundational skills before the second-term examinations. The programme will supplement existing SCERT textbooks and learning materials rather than separating students from the regular curriculum. In Malayalam, diagnostic assessments will identify difficulties in reading and writing, including letter confusion, punctuation and sentence construction. Existing initiatives such as Malayalam Thilakkam and

Vaayanachangaathi, along with creative journaling, will be used to improve language skills. The English component, SMILE (Stren ghtening Meaningful, Inclusive and Innovative Learning in English), will promote learner-friendly classrooms through storytelling, rhymes, role-play and gamification, while also enhancing teachers' interactive teaching skills.

The mathematics component will focus on conceptual understanding and computational thinking instead of rote learning. Localised learning materials, skill-based worksheets and digital tools such as GeoGebra will be introduced, particularly at the upper primary level. Post-testing will be completed by December 15. Preparations and training began in August, with school-level implementation scheduled to start on September 28. At least 100 expert teachers, 50 each from LP and UP sections will be trained in every district, along with BRC trainers and Cluster Coordinators.

Govt. announces cash rewards for Asian Games medal winners

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Sports Minister O.J. Jeneesh on Tuesday announced a cash reward package for the state's athletes competing at the 20th Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, set to be held from September 19 to October 4.

Speaking at a function here, Jeneesh said gold medal winners from the state would receive Rs 50 lakh, silver medalists Rs 30 lakh, and bronze medalists Rs 20 lakh. Every athlete from Kerala participating in the Games, regardless of the outcome, will be given Rs 1 lakh in advance to support their preparation. The Minister also announced matching incentives for the coaches of medal-winning athletes - Rs 50 lakh for a gold medal, Rs 30 lakh for silver and Rs 20 lakh for bronze; describing the move as recognition of the role coaches play behind every athlete's success. Jeneesh noted that cash rewards for winners of such international competitions had in



the past been announced only after delays, and said this time the state government was making the announcement well in advance of the Games. Of the Indian contingent heading to Aichi-Nagoya, 28 athletes are from Kerala, with the state's largest representation coming from athletics, which has 11 competitors. The Kerala contingent also includes prominent names such as cricketer Sanju Samson. The announcement is being seen as part of the state's continued push to support its sportspersons on the international stage ahead of what is expected to be a high-profile edition of the Asian Games.



A two-wheeler rider wearing a ski mask instead of a helmet, while other riders follow helmet rules, at Vazhuthacaud Junction in Thiruvananthapuram
-A V Muzafar

CM Revanth is criminal minded for trying to attack KCR's residence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Hyderabad

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, calling it a tragedy for the people of Telangana to have a "criminal-minded politician" heading the state.

Addressing the media alongside BRS MLAs, KTR strongly condemned the recent treatment of senior women leaders and MLAs Sabitha Indra Reddy and Sunitha Laxma Reddy. He alleged that they were sub-

jected to a heinous attack, physically mishandled, and humiliated in a manner reminiscent of the Dushasana Parvam. He further charged Revanth Reddy with hiding his administration's failures by playing cheap politics behind the shield of the Assembly Speaker and his caste.

KTR clarified that an MLC from their party had not made any disparaging remarks against the Speaker. However, following the directions of BRS chief K. Chandrashekar Rao (KCR), the MLC had already issued a

BRS Working President KTR



public and written apology 24 hours prior, expressing respect for the Speaker and regret if any sentiments were

"Congress goons" led by party MLAs under police escort to storm KCR's Gajwel residence. Expressing deep outrage over statements made during the rally, KTR stated that two Congress MLAs, emboldened by Revanth Reddy, openly wished for KCR's death-a remark that has deeply hurt the people of Telangana. "Why should KCR die? Is it because he achieved Telangana statehood and secured a bright future for millions of youth?" KTR questioned.

"A Fate Worse Than Hitler Awaits Revanth"

Warning the Chief Minister, KTR stated that Revanth Reddy would face a fate worse than Hitler's. "You only have 823 days left in power, Revanth Reddy, and we will not let you off the hook," he asserted.

KTR added that while BRS leaders were detained at the Bowenpally Police Station while attempting to visit KCR, Congress leaders tried to incite mobs to attack them in police custody. He concluded that the ruling Congress party has absolute disregard for the law and the judicial system.

A cowardly escape by the Congress govt

Legislative Council opposition leader Sirikonda Madhusudhana Chary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Hyderabad

The Leader of the Opposition in the Telangana Legislative Council, Sirikonda Madhusudhana Chary, termed the recent proceedings in the legislature as a "dark chapter" in parliamentary history. Speaking to the media on Tuesday, September 8, 2026, along with fellow BRS legislators, Madhusudhana Chary launched a blistering attack on the Revanth Reddy-led Congress government, accusing it of using brute police force on members and fleeing from democratic debates. "The Congress government is currently in a state of utter political degradation. They deployed hundreds of police personnel



inside the legislative complex, making it resemble a highly militarized national border, only to orchestrate physical aggression against elected members," the opposition leader remarked. He stated that the ruling party completely failed to provide logical answers when the BRS cornered them over administrative failures on Monday, which is why they designed a deliberate strategy to run the house without the principal opposition party. Madhusudhana

Chary exposed the government's desperate tactics during Tuesday's session with a detailed timeline of events:

The Core Dispute: The BRS fiercely demanded a formal legislative discussion regarding the highly inappropriate handling of senior women MLAs Sunitha Laxma Reddy and Sabitha Indra Reddy by the police, alongside the unconstitutional suspension and registration of criminal cases against MLCs Tata Madhu and Naveen Reddy.



Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala unveiling the winners' trophies at the opening ceremony of the 9th Vendra Cup 2026 at the Jimmy George Indoor Stadium Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday, Sports Minister O.J. Jeneesh and Director of Fourth Wave Foundation Diana Vincent are also seen.



Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala arriving at the Inauguration of the 47th Kerala Police State Athletic and Games Meet held at Chandrasekharan Nair Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday. State Police Chief Ravada A Chandrasekhar is also seen .

Supplyco gift card irregularities: Seven more employees suspended

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kochi

Seven more Supplyco employees have been suspended in connection with the alleged misuse of Onam gift cards to transfer subsidised sugar to a private company. The action was taken on the directions of Food Minister Anoop Jacob.

The sugar was allegedly supplied from the Supplyco Perumbavoor depot to a private company, Keerthi Nirmal. Maveli custodian at the Perumbavoor depot, Rajeesh Ravindran, had earlier been suspended in connection with the incident.

Those suspended now are Supplyco Head Office Deputy Manager Sajeev Paul; Arakkappady Maveli Store outlet-in-charge Anju Vijayan; Thiravoor Maveli Store outlet-in-charge Sandhya A.S.; Divya M.R. of Palissery Maveli Store; Soumini S. of Ponjassery outlet; Manju Antony of Karukutty Maveli Store; and Basil Cheriya A. of Sreemoolanagaram Maveli Store. They have been suspended pending inquiry.

Minister Anoop Jacob said



such irregularities would not be tolerated and that strict action would be taken against those responsible, irrespective of their position.

Under Supplyco's Onam gift card scheme, the private company Keerthi Nirmal had been issued 1,000 coupons worth Rs 1,000 each. The coupons were allegedly used entirely to purchase non-subsidised sugar.

According to the findings of the inquiry, Maveli custodian Rajeeesh Ravindran issued sugar from the Perumbavoor depot to the Supplyco outlets at Thuravoor, Palissery, Karukutty, Sreemoolan agaram, Ponjassery and Arakkappady. The sugar was subsequently billed through these outlets.

However, records showed that the sugar required for billing had been transferred to the respective outlets, while the actual stock was

retained at the depot. This was detected during an inspection led by a Supplyco vigilance officer.

The outlet employees were suspended for allegedly facilitating the large-scale sale of sugar to a private company when a significant gap existed between controlled and market sugar prices, as well as for irregular stock handling.

According to the Managing Director's order, Deputy Manager Sajeev Paul was suspended for allegedly encouraging subordinate employees to facilitate the large-scale movement of stock despite the substantial difference in sugar prices in the market.

The order also stated that he had conveyed the impression that such actions had the knowledge and approval of senior officials at the Supplyco headquarters.

Pioneer Keralam Wins State Onam Pookkalam Competition



The Pioneer Keralam team, winners of the first prize in the Pookkalam competition held as part of the State Government's Onam week celebrations, receives the award from Tourism Minister P.C. Vishnunath at a function held at the Thycaud Guest House on Tuesday.

From ministers to celebs, 1980s nostalgia takes over Kerala

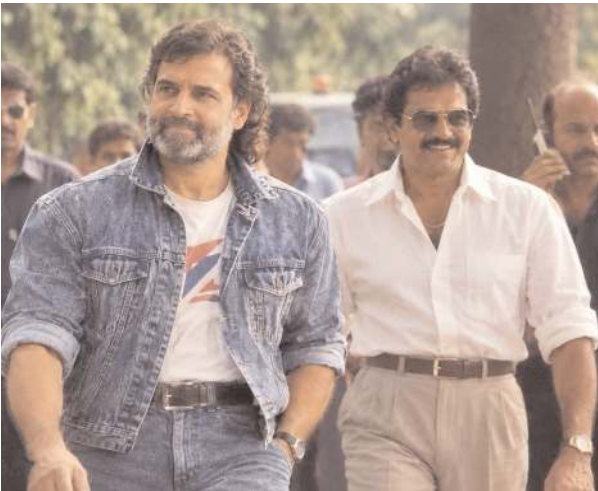
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Nostalgia lovers in Kerala are turning to artificial intelligence to recreate the charm of the 1980s. The viral trend of AI generated vintage photographs has made its way into the social media profiles of state ministers, film actors, influencers and young netizens.

Using AI tools, people are transforming their photographs into retro versions of themselves, recreating the fashion and style of the era. Baggy jeans, Kerala handloom sarees, retro printed shirts and bell bottom trousers have become popular choices, while messy shaggy hairstyles, braided buns and jasmine flowers tucked into the hair add to the vintage look.

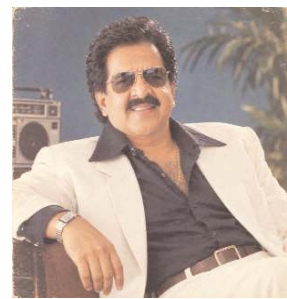
What began with the simple question, 'What would I look like in the 1980s?', has evolved into the viral '1980s ChatGPT Photo Trend'. Initially popular among influencers and social media users, the trend has now found a wider audience, with several Indian film celebrities also joining the nostalgia wave.

The trend is simple to recreate. Users upload a



recent photograph to ChatGPT and provide a detailed prompt describing the desired look. The AI then reimagines the image with elements associated with

the 1980s, including period clothing, hairstyles, studio settings and the visual texture of analogue photography. Warm tones, film grain and vintage backdrops



Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala has also joined the 1980s nostalgia trend. Created with the help of an AI chatbot, his image shows him wearing a coat and sunglasses, recreating the distinctive style of the era.



“Why should we turn to AI to keep up with the trend? Lal and I were already trendy back then. Here's a real 90s trend,” Shibu Baby John wrote.

Several other political leaders and film personalities have embraced the trend, including ministers Roji M. John, N. Samsudheen, V. Sivankutty and V.N. Vasavan, A.A. Rahim MP and V. Joy MLA. Actors Sharafudheen, Jayasurya, Bhavana, Miya George and Surabhi Lakshmi are also among those who have shared their retro avatars on social media.

an old photograph of himself with actor Mohanlal, showcasing their vintage style, on Facebook.

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National Highway safety inspection finds a host of violations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Alappuzha

A joint inspection led by the Motor Vehicles Department to assess safety conditions along the National Highway in the district began on Tuesday with three squads carrying out inspections at various locations. The first squad inspected 60 locations between Aroor and Mararikulam, while the second squad conducted inspections from Ochira to Kottamkulangara. The third squad covered the stretch from Kommady to Kalithattu in Ambalappuzha taluk. The inspection identified several violations and safety con-



cerns, including persistent unauthorised parking, traffic disruptions caused by the opening and closing of highway dividers, violations related to ongoing road works, encroachments on the road and unauthorised parking near workshops. Officials warned that notices would be issued

through the respective local self-government institutions from Wednesday if the violations identified on the first day are not rectified. If the violations continue despite the notice, stringent action will be taken after 48 hours.

Each squad will submit its inspection report to the District Collector on Thursday.

A review meeting will subsequently be held to assess the findings and decide on further action.

Cherthala MVI A. Tahiruddin is leading the first squad, MVI S. Vageeshwaran the second squad and MVI (Enforcement) T. A. Stanley the third squad. Enforcement RTO Jerson T. M. has been entrusted with coordinating the activities of all three squads.

The decision to constitute the squads and conduct the inspection was taken at a meeting held at the Collectorate under the leadership of District Collector Shaji V. Nair to discuss safety measures along the National Highway.

Telangana seeks to increase rice exports and trade with the philippines - Uttam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Telangana Minister for Irrigation and Food & Civil Supplies Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy met Mr. Francisco P. Tu Laurel Jr., Secretary of Agriculture of the Republic of the Philippines and a member of the Philippine Cabinet, in New Delhi on Tuesday. (Mr. Francisco P. Tu Laurel Jr.'s position in Philippines is equivalent in India to that of a Union Cabinet Minister responsible for irrigation, agriculture and food.)

The two leaders held detailed discussions on the possibility of increasing rice

exports and also increasing trade between Telangana and Philippines.

Uttam Kumar Reddy explained that Telangana had emerged as one of India's leading paddy-producing states and possessed the production capacity, modern rice-milling infrastructure and experience required to supply high-quality rice in substantial quantities.

Secretary Laurel responded positively to the proposal and indicated that the Philippines would examine the possibility of sourcing larger quantities of rice from Telangana. The two sides discussed how the proposal could be taken forward through the appropriate gov-



The discussions assume importance in view of the Philippines' substantial requirement for imported rice and its efforts to diversify its international sources of supply. Uttam Kumar Reddy said Telangana could offer

competitive prices, dependable quality and timely delivery and could emerge as a trusted long-term supplier of rice to the Philippines.

The meeting also covered rice varieties, quality standards, pricing, procurement mechanisms, logistics, certification procedures and sanitary and phytosanitary requirements. Both sides agreed that officials and industry representatives should examine these issues and prepare a practical roadmap for translating the discussions into concrete trade opportunities. Secretary Laurel also expressed interest in procuring meat products and quality seeds from Telangana.

Attack on Speaker an Inerasable Stain on Democracy: Telangana Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Hyderabad

Expressing deep outrage, Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka stated that the behavior and derogatory remarks made by opposition BRS members against Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar are an inerasable stain on democracy. He emphasized that this was not merely an insult to an individual, but a grave humiliation to the entire Legislature.

Extending full support to the resolution moved in the Legislative Assembly by Minister Damodara Raja Narasimha, the Deputy CM remarked that the person occupying the Speaker's Chair symbolizes the dignity, freedom,

and democratic spirit of the House. Insulting the Speaker, he stressed, amounts to insulting the entire Assembly and constitutes a direct breach of privilege. He reminded the Assembly that Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar was unanimously elected by members of all parties. While his rise from the Dalit community adds to his prestige, Bhatti noted that he represents the Speaker of the entire Assembly, not just a specific community.

Bhatti stated that the incident is clear proof that the BRS has failed to shed its feudal mindset. "Failing to respect a Speaker from the Dalit community reflects the true nature of the BRS," he remarked, adding that out of frustration over losing power, the BRS leadership is resorting to conspiracies

to regain control over the state.

'Farmhouse Conspiracy' Against Democracy

The Deputy CM alleged that the chaos in the Assembly was not accidental but part of a larger plot. He claimed that the BRS Parliamentary Party held a meeting at a farmhouse a day before the Assembly session, where this "Farmhouse Conspiracy" to attack democratic norms was hatched. He accused select BRS legislators of acting as mere "role players" while the top BRS leadership acted as the main orchestrators.

Bhatti also called out BRS members for wearing slogan-printed T-shirts and black shirts inside the Assembly, pointing out that the rulebook prohibiting badges and promotional



created by their own previous government.

'Insulting a Mother Attacked Telangana's Culture'

Condemning the inappropriate remarks directed at the Speaker's mother, Bhatti called it an insult to Telangana's culture, values, and respect for women. At a time when the state government is driving socio-economic and political empowerment for women, using derogatory language against a woman and specifically the Speaker's mother is deeply painful and unacceptable.

'Respect Demanded Even in Opposition'

Recalling his 10 years in the opposition, Bhatti noted that even when denied a micro-

phone or obstructed from entering the Assembly, his party never compromised on democratic values. "Not once did we resort to abusive language; we always upheld the sanctity of the Speaker's Chair," he stated, cautioning that the BRS's current conduct damages the core spirit of democracy.

'BRS Ideology a Threat to Democracy'

Warning that BRS's tactics pose a danger to democratic governance, Bhatti urged the House to unequivocally condemn the "Farmhouse Conspiracy." He expressed regret that BRS leaders showed no remorse after the incident and continued to target the Speaker's Chair. Reaffirming that Telangana was born out of a struggle for self-respect, he

warned that any attempt to reintroduce feudal, landlord, or authoritarian mindsets would be resisted. He emphasized that under the Constitution authored by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, values of social, economic, and political justice must be protected.

Call to Distance BRS at the Grassroots

Calling on the public to remain vigilant against forces attacking social equality and Telangana's self-respect, Bhatti urged citizens to isolate the BRS not just within the Legislature, but in every village across the state. He concluded that as Telangana moves forward on the path of development, divisive politics must not be given any space.

■ States Focus ■



VP PAYS TRIBUTES TO BOSE AT INA MEMORIAL IN MANIPUR

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Bihar floods worsen: Over 34 lakh people affected

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Patna

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

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

Floods have affected

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chennai

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

the minister noted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

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

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

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

Government jobs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

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

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

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

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

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

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

The ED investigators are



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

According to ED sources,

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

immediately find satisfactory supporting records.

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

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

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

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

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

MP hooch tragedy: Death toll rises to 15

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Sagar (MP)

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

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

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

He said that the police



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

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

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

Villagers claim that 30 people from the village are

still hospitalised.

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

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

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

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

BJP demands resignations of Mann over Punjab villager's suicide

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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



remarks," the BJP leader added.

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

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

from his post," Bhatia said.

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

He demanded that all those named by Singh in the

video be booked for abetment of suicide under BNS.

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

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

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

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

6 killed as speeding truck collides with SUV in Maharashtra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gondia

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

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

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



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

direction, he said.

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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



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

and minorities remain highly vulnerable.

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

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

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

Editor's TAKE

When negligence turns into a death trap

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Delhi: A bipartisan record of neglect

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



KUSHAN MITRA

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Delhi's own disaster management author-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Daiv Vani

WISDOM FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE

The Limits of Self-Reliance

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

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

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

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

—DAIV

God has his door open for all of us



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

2ND OPINION

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

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

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

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



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

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

And Arjuna was wise enough to keep on enquiring,

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

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

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

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

The writer is a spiritual teacher and columnist

PIC TALK



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

PHOTO: PTI

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

When negligence costs lives

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

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

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

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

BIJU BHUSHAN GOYAL | LUDHIANA

Biogas can strengthen energy security

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

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

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

SM JEEVA | CHENNAI

ISRO must evolve, not retreat

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

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

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

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

P VICTOR SELVARAJ | TAMIL NADU

Himalayan Day: Guarding the roof of the world

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



KRIPA NAUTIYAL

Every year on Himalayan Day, we pause to celebrate a mountain system that has shaped civilisations, sustained economies, and defined the northern edge of the Indian subcontinent for millennia. Yet this year, celebration alone feels insufficient. Behind the postcard images of snow-capped peaks and terraced valleys lies a quieter, more urgent story - one of emptying villages, sinking towns, warming glaciers, overwhelmed hill stations, and a national security question that has crept up on us largely unnoticed.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Empty borders indeed are dangerous borders

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

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

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

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

When parents need a break, society must step in



ARCHANA DATTA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

The NCRB numbers challenge Akhilesh's crime narrative



VIKRAM SINGH

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

Clear improvement in crime rates

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

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

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

Stronger police performance on chargesheets

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



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

Highest conviction rate in crimes against women

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

rejection

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

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

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

Institutions deserve respect, not political

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

The numbers speak for themselves

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

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

MEA distance itself from Eiffel Tower BAPS temple controversy

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

French union representatives reportedly objected to arrangements under which



MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal

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

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

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

The operator said such arrangements should not have been permitted.

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

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

mutual respect and service.

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

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

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

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

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

Delhi traffic advisory issued ahead of BRICS summit rehearsal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Restrictions will also apply

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CRPF to replace Indian Army in Jammu anti-terror operations



MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Srinagar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

BJP confident of winning West Bengal by-elections

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

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

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

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

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



West Bengal CM Suwendu Adhikari

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

political analyst.

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

Senior Bengal minister Dilip

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

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

Kashmir offers stories beyond landscapes: Pankaj Tripathi, Divyendu

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Srinagar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Ali said he was happy that the film continued to remain

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

The estimates also suggest that while the population

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

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

An international team of

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

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



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

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

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

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

“The numbers mean that despite a fall in the adjusted rates, the absolute number of people exposed to passive smoking is still increasing. This can have long-lasting effects across multiple organ systems, not just the respiratory system,” Dr Neetu Jain, pulmonologist and senior consultant at Pushpawati Singhanian Hospital and Research Institute, New Delhi, said.

FROM THE WORLD

CHINA

Climate change behind flood

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

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

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

PAKISTAN

Hate banners target Ahmadis

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

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

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

SAMY MAGDY ■ Cairo

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

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

Weeks of clashes have



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

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

Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.

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

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

Eiffel Tower shut as staff strike over controversial Hindu group visit

ADITI KHANNA ■ London/New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

and I want to tell them that their discontent is legitimate," Gregoire said on X.

"It is not acceptable that such conditions can be tolerated. These are neither my values, nor those that the Eiffel Tower should uphold, where everyone - regardless of gender - should be able to move about and act freely, without distinction between women and men.

It is urgent that full light be shed on the facts that led to this mobilisation." "Equality between women and men will never stop at the foot of our historical monuments, nor anywhere in this city.

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

Indian envoy Trivedi meets Bangladesh president

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dhaka

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

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



Indian High Commission said in a social media post. "The discussion underscored the deep-rooted bonds between India and Bangladesh, built on shared history, close cultural ties

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

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

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

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

Flights to Indonesia's Capital resume after volcano activity

NINIEK KARMINI/EDNA TARIGAN ■ Jakarta

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

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

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



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

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

Bangladesh SC warns ICT prosecutor over sub judice remarks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dhaka

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

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

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

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



Rajnath arrives in Sri Lanka on three-day visit



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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

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

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

He will also be interacting with the Indian diaspora.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kathmandu

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

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

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



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

according to NDRRMA.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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BUSINESS10

India faces higher fuel costs as global crude oil prices soar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

India faces the prospect of a higher oil import bill and renewed inflationary pressure after international crude prices surged on Tuesday, with Brent approaching \$100 a barrel as escalating West Asia tensions raised concerns about disruptions to global supplies.

Brent futures rose more than 2 per cent to around \$99 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate crude gained almost 3 per cent to about \$94. The latest development followed attacks on Saudi energy infrastructure and heightened tensions involving Iran and the US, raising concerns about further disruption to oil flows. India, the

world's third-largest oil importing and consuming country, is particularly exposed to swings in international crude prices.

It imports over 88 per cent of its crude — raw material for making fuels like petrol and diesel — requirements. A sustained increase in prices

raises the country's dollar-denominated import bill and can put pressure on the trade balance and the rupee, analysts said.

Higher crude prices can also feed into domestic inflation through fuel, transport and other energy-related costs, they said, adding that

impact on consumers and the wider economy depends in part on how much of the increase is passed through to domestic fuel prices and how long international prices remain elevated.

For now, retail petrol and diesel prices remain on freeze for over three months.

Rates were last revised on May 25 when they were hiked by ₹2.61 a litre for petrol and ₹2.71 per litre for diesel. Those hikes were part of the revision in rates that happened in the second half of May in response to international prices rising due to the war in West Asia disrupting energy flows from the Gulf countries. In all, petrol price was raised by ₹7.35 a litre and diesel by ₹7.53 in four instalments.

NSE NIFTY

Intra-day on Sept 8, 2026

High: 23,758.95
Previous close: 23,779.15
Open: 23,743.10
Close: 23,635.10
Low: 23,623.10
-144.05 (-0.61%)

BSE SENSEX

Intra-day on Sept 8, 2026

High: 76,012.11
Previous close: 76,132.81
Open: 75,970.28
Close: 75,577.58
Low: 75,553.35
-555.23 (-0.73%)

Sensex tanks 555 points

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Tuesday, extending losses for the second straight day, as rising crude oil prices and the US-Iran hostilities kept risk appetite subdued.

Selling in blue-chip stocks ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries also dragged the markets lower.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 555.23 points, or 0.73 per cent, to settle at 75,577.58. During the day, it tanked 579.46 points, or 0.76 per cent, to 75,553.35.

The 50-share NSE Nifty ended 144.05 points, or 0.61 per cent, lower at 23,635.10.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank were the major laggards.

Bharat Electronics, Adani Ports, Hindustan Unilever

and Inter Globe Aviation were the gainers.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 1.45 per cent to \$98.36 per barrel.

"Indian equity markets ended lower on a weak note, extending their slide to a seven-week low and maintaining the prevailing bearish trend as elevated crude oil prices and persistent geopolitical uncertainty continued to weigh on investor sentiment. Selling pressure remained visible through the session," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said. The BSE MidCap Select index climbed 0.79 per cent, while the SmallCap Select index ended flat, down 0.06 per cent.

Among the BSE sectoral indices, Insurance declined 1.05 per cent, Top 10 Banks 0.97 per cent, Private Banks index 0.88 per cent, Financial Services 0.80 per cent, Oil & Gas 0.64 per cent, Bankex 0.63 per cent and Energy 0.48 per cent.

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

The rupee fell 28 paise to close at 94.84 (provisional) against the American currency on Tuesday as geopolitical tensions in West Asia and rising Brent crude prices nearing \$99 per barrel weighed on investor sentiment.

Forex traders said the Indian rupee declined on a surge in crude oil prices amid fresh attacks on Aramco's facilities by Yemen's Houthis.

Moreover, rising geopolitical tensions in West Asia and a weak trend in domestic equities further pressured the rupee. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.49 against the US dollar.

The local unit touched an intraday high of 94.49 and a low of 94.89. The rupee finally settled at 94.84 (provisional),

Rupee vs Dollar

₹ per US \$

94.95 +0.27
94.73 +0.22
94.51 +0.22
94.43 +0.08
94.56 -0.13
94.84* -0.28

September 2026
(Inverted scale) KBK Infographics

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

currency. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on escalation of tensions in the West Asia and worries over rising crude oil prices. Risk aversion in global markets may also pressurise the rupee.

"However, a weak dollar and foreign inflows may support the rupee at lower levels. Investors may now focus on inflation data from the US and India.

Price is expected to trade in a range of 94.60 to 95.10," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 98.96, lower by 0.21 per cent.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading higher by 1.39 per cent at \$98.35 per barrel in futures trade.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

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

In the case of a non-vegetarian meal, a 10 per cent jump in broiler prices pushed

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

Onion prices jumped 43 per cent in August 2026 to Rs 40 per kg, compared with the

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

to tight rabi supplies and delayed kharif arrivals," its director Pushan Sharma said.

Month-on-month, there was a 17 per cent jump in onion prices, but the impact of the same was limited by a 7 per cent decline in tomato prices, it said.

The Shravan month, considered by the Hindus as holy, led to a 4 per cent decline in broiler prices, resulting in the 1 per cent month-on-month decline in the price of the non-veg thali, it said.

RBI launches key surveys to get inputs for monetary policy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

The Reserve Bank on Tuesday launched three key surveys to gauge inflation expectations and consumer confidence in the country and gather key inputs for its monetary policy.

The next bi-monthly monetary policy is scheduled to be announced on October 7.

The September round of the Inflation Expectations Survey of Households (IESH) is aimed at capturing subjective assessments on price movements and inflation, based on individual consumption baskets, across 19 cities. The Urban Consumer Confidence Survey (UCCS) seeks qualitative responses from households about their sentiments on the general economic situation, employ-

ment scenario, price level, households' income and spending. This study too will be conducted across 19 cities.

The central bank also announced the launch of the Rural Consumer Confidence Survey (RCCS). It is aimed at collecting current perceptions and one-year-ahead expectations of households on the general economic situation, employment sce-

nario, overall price situation, own income and spending in the rural and semi-urban areas across 31 states/UTs.

The 19 cities are Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Chennai, Delhi, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Jammu, Kolkata, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur, Patna, Raipur, Ranchi and Thiruvananthapuram.

Only 22% Indian firms have AI governance: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Enterprise AI investment in India has surged by 119 per cent over the past year, surpassing the global average of 110 per cent, yet only 22 per cent of Indian organisations have established the necessary governance frameworks to manage the technology, according to a report.

The 'ServiceNow Enterprise AI Maturity Index 2026' revealed a widening gap between rapid capital deployment and the foundational auditing, testing, and risk-assessment processes required to scale AI safely. The report, which surveyed 4,500 senior leaders, including 350 from India, projected that AI will account for more than 21.3 per cent of the average Indian IT budget by 2027, up from the current 16.6 per cent.

However, the lack of good governance is already impacting operational depth. While 54 per cent of Indian organisations are deploying AI agents, only 11 per cent have transitioned to autonomous work-

flows. "India has proven it can commit to AI at a scale few markets can match.

The next leap will be defined by how Indian enterprises pair that ambition with governance, connection data and workflows that let AI take on more consequential work. The organisations that build these foundations first will unlock AI's

next tier of value for India," said Kulmeet Bawa, Managing Director and Group Vice President, ServiceNow India and SAARC.

The study identified several hurdles to AI adoption, with 60 per cent of respondents citing transparency and misinformation as top concerns. Regulatory and compliance complexity (55 per cent) and

data privacy and security (50 per cent) also emerged as significant concerns. Infrastructure remains another bottleneck. Only 18 per cent of Indian organisations have replaced fragmented legacy systems with integrated platforms.

Consequently, India's overall AI governance score stands at 55 out of 100, trailing behind "APAC Pacesetters", who score 78 out of 100. These leading regional peers are reportedly achieving a 149 per cent return on investment (ROI) on AI today.

"AI maturity is entering a new phase in India. As organisations scale AI across the enterprise, the opportunity is moving beyond individual use cases to reimagining workflows, decision-making and operating models.

That requires equal attention to the foundations that make AI scalable and trusted, including data, talent, governance and accountability," Ashvin Vellody, Partner, Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer at Deloitte India, said.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Total area sown under paddy is running 3.71 per cent lower at 421.82 lakh hectares (ha) so far in the ongoing 2026 kharif season, against 438.19 lakh ha a year ago, mainly on account of lower coverage in Karnataka and Telangana, according to data released by the Agriculture Ministry on Tuesday.

The biggest shortfalls were reported in Karnataka (4.28 lakh ha), Andhra Pradesh (1.91 lakh), Telangana (3.61 lakh), Jharkhand (1.38 lakh), Uttar Pradesh (1.84 lakh), Madhya Pradesh (1.75 lakh), Tamil Nadu (1.32 lakh ha) and Maharashtra (1.15 lakh ha).

Assam (0.52 lakh ha) and Odisha (0.29 lakh ha), however, posted higher acreage. Experts said the lag

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

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

for paddy grown this kharif season. A marginal dip in coverage is unlikely to be a concern given adequate rice stocks with the Government.

PULSES, OILSEEDS IN FOCUS

The bigger worry, however, is the acreage under pulses and oilseeds, for which India depends significantly on imports to bridge domestic shortfalls.

Pulses sowing has improved, edging past last year's level to 117.13 lakh ha as on September 4, compared with 115.30 lakh ha a year earlier. Tur acreage rose marginally to 45.66 lakh ha from 44.93 lakh ha, while urad area increased to 25.15 lakh ha from 22.46 lakh ha over the same period. Moong acreage, though, was lower at 33.19 lakh ha. The largest gains in pulses coverage came from

Uttar Pradesh (3.97 lakh ha), Jharkhand (0.98 lakh ha) and Telangana (0.90 lakh ha).

Oilseeds acreage, on the other hand, slipped to 191.99 lakh ha from 193.06 lakh ha a year ago, with soyabean area trailing slightly at 121.82 lh.

CEREALS, COMMERCIAL CROPS

Among cereals, jowar and bajra acreage was marginally higher at 13.58 lakh ha and 64.86 lakh ha, respectively, while maize sowing declined to 91.09 lakh ha.

Among commercial crops, cotton acreage held steady at 109.17 lakh ha, while jute/mesta area rose to 6.34 lakh ha. Overall, the area sown to all kharif crops stood lower at 1,086.31 lakh ha, compared with 1,104 lakh ha in the corresponding period last year.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

India leads global hiring confidence for the October-December quarter of this year as a significant number of employers are planning to increase staffing during the period, a report said on Tuesday.

According to staffing firm ManpowerGroup's latest Employment Outlook Survey, India's employment outlook strengthened in the last quarter of this year, driven primarily by expansion by companies, while expected decreases are led by automation, technology and economic challenges.

The survey of 3,055 employers conducted from July 1 to 31 across India indi-

cated that the country's Net Employment Outlook (NEO) for Q4 CY2026 stood at 54 per cent.

The Net Employment Outlook (NEO) is derived by taking the percentage of employers anticipating an increase in hiring activity and subtracting from this the percentage of employers

expecting a decrease in hiring activity.

Around 65 per cent of employers in India plan to increase staffing between October and December, compared with 11 per cent anticipating reductions.

Among the participants, 24 per cent expect staffing levels to remain unchanged.

DCC approves TRAI’s satcom spectrum recommendations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

al levy would be applicable to services in rural areas.

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

IGDTUW, DMA sign MoU for academia-industry collaboration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Samsung India begins job cuts; trims workforce at senior level

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Noida

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

In the first phase, the company has laid off around



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

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

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

HDFC MF showcases Pharma and Healthcare Fund

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

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

The fund is diversified across pharmaceuticals, hospitals, healthcare service



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

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

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

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

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

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

CM Sukhu meets Manohar Lal, discusses key issues

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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



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

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

prior to the Hydropower Policy, 2008.

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

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

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

Ghaziabad development gets boost with property auction

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ghaziabad

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

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

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



ment in Ghaziabad's rapidly evolving urban landscape.

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

The successful bids received for these properties

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

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

SBI plants 200 trees in Shahdara, Surajmal Vihar



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The State Bank of India's (SBI) Home Loan Centre East Delhi (15811) has planted 200 trees/saplings at CBD Shadara and Surajmal Vihar areas on Tuesday. It is one of the key focus areas under the Bank's CSR initiatives. Plantation has been done at suitable, identified places in coordination with DDA and local authorities.

Adequate arrangements for post-plantation care, including watering, protection and regular monitoring, have been assured by the respective authorities.

The event was graced by AGM Rao Anil Singh, Chief Manager Nidhi, Manju and all staff members of HLC East Delhi (Karkardooma) unit. The event was successfully organised by Chief Manager VPS Rawat.

Tata Power Solarroof crosses five lakh rooftop solar installations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Tata Power Solarroof has surpassed 5 lakh rooftop solar installations across India and facilitated over ₹8,500 crore in solar financing in the country. According to a statement on Tuesday, the company has completed 5,19,673 installations (as of July 31, 2026), representing a 14 per cent market share, and is targeting 30 lakh installations by 2029.

Tata Power Solarroof has so far facilitated financing worth over ₹8,500 crore through a network of more than 25 financing partners, helping more consumers and businesses access rooftop solar solutions, it added.

Tata Power Solarroof, part of Tata Power Renewable Energy Ltd (TPREL), a subsidiary of Tata Power Company Ltd, has crossed the milestone of 5 lakh rooftop solar installations across India, marking a sig-



nificant step in the adoption of distributed renewable energy across residential, commercial and industrial segments.

With rooftop solar emerging as an increasingly attractive solution for reducing electricity costs and enhancing energy resilience, Tata Power Solarroof is expanding access through its nationwide ecosystem of over 700 channel partners and more than 250 authorised service partners.

This network enables the company to provide

localised support across the customer journey, from consultation and system design to installation, commissioning and after-sales service.

Under its 'Quality Lifelong' promise, Tata Power Solarroof combines high-efficiency solar modules with comprehensive warranties, financing options, insurance protection and service support.

Its solar modules come with 25/30-year performance warranties, while systems are backed by a minimum five-year warranty.

BRIEFLY

Junior hockey: India men beat South Korea in Asia Cup



Captain Anmol Ekka struck twice as the Indian junior men's hockey team ripped through South Korea's defences in a late surge for a 7-3 triumph that left it within touching distance of a semifinal berth in the Asia Cup here on Tuesday. The contest remained finely balanced for much of its duration, with South Korea matching India goal for goal, but the defending champions raised the intensity with a decisive three-goal burst in the final quarter.

The victory took India's tally to seven points from three matches, including two wins and a draw. India will face Chinese Taipei in their last pool match on Wednesday, knowing that a victory will seal their place in the last-four stage. Anmol once again led India's scoring effort, netting twice to take his tournament tally to eight goals. The match was an even battle in the opening three quarters. (PTI)

Mumbai City FC rope in Lazar Cirkovic on one-year deal



Mumbai City FC on Tuesday roped in Serbia's Lazar Cirkovic on a one-year deal for the 2026-27 Indian Super League season. The 34-year-old defender has previously played for Chennaiyin FC and Jamshedpur FC in the Indian Super League, apart from spending time at various clubs in Serbia. Cirkovic began his journey at Serbian SuperLiga club Rad in 2010 and later on moved to Palic on a loan. In 2014, Cirkovic joined FK Partizan and went on to make his debut at the UEFA Europa League fixture against Tottenham Hotspur.

During his four-year stint at FK Partizan, Cirkovic was a member of the sides which won two Serbian SuperLiga titles and one Serbian Cup. He has also represented FC Luzern in Switzerland, Maccabi Netanya FC in Israel and Kisvarda FC in Hungary, before moving to India to play for two different ISL teams. (PTI)



There is perhaps no more difficult decision in sport than knowing when to walk away. For an ordinary athlete, retirement is often dictated by declining performance, injury or the emergence of a better player. For the truly great, however, the equation is considerably more complicated. When you have spent two decades redefining your sport, winning almost everything there is to win and becoming an institution rather than merely an athlete, when exactly are you supposed to say enough is enough?

Lionel Messi's decision to retire from international football brings that question sharply into focus. At 39, Messi has decided that his journey with Argentina is over, following a 2026 World Cup in which Argentina reached the final before losing to Spain. Remarkably, his decision does not come because he can no longer compete. Messi was Argentina's standout player in the tournament.

His international career once appeared destined to be defined by disappointment. He lost the 2014 World Cup final and the Copa América finals of 2015 and 2016. After the latter defeat, at just 29, he even announced his international retirement.

He returned, of course, and what followed transformed his legacy. Argentina won the Copa América in 2021, the World Cup in 2022 and another Copa América in 2024.

Novak Djokovic finds himself facing a different version of the same dilemma. Djokovic has achieved virtually everything tennis could offer him. In 2023, at 36, he won his 23rd and 24th Grand Slam titles, establishing himself as the record holder for singles grand slam titles in the

Knowing when to go: The hardest decision for sporting greats

Open era. In 2024, he finally added the Olympic singles gold medal that had eluded him.

Yet the last two years have been different. Djokovic has not won a Grand Slam since 2024, while his 2026 US Open ended in extraordinary fashion with a first-round defeat, his first opening-round loss at a Grand Slam since 2006. Physical problems have also increasingly become part of the story.

At 39, the question is no longer whether Djokovic can still produce flashes of his old brilliance. Of course he can. The question is whether he can sustain the physical demands required to win seven matches at a Grand Slam.

That is a subtly different question, and one that another sporting giant confronted more than a decade ago.

Before the 2011 World Cup, Sachin Tendulkar was

still one of the most complete cricketers in the world. He had recently scored his 50th Test century, an unprecedented landmark, and yet one significant trophy remained missing from his cabinet: the ODI World Cup.

The 2011 tournament provided what seemed like the perfect ending. Tendulkar was India's leading run-scorer and, on April 2, 2011, India won the World Cup in Mumbai, his hometown. A few days short of turning 38, Tendulkar had finally achieved the dream that had eluded him through five previous World Cups.

It would have been almost cinematic had he announced his retirement that night.

But he didn't. And who could really have told him to?

Tendulkar was still good enough to play international cricket. He continued for another two and a half years, scoring his 100th international century in 2012 before eventually playing his 200th and final Test in Mumbai in November 2013.

More than a decade later, the retirement question will increasingly confront India's two modern batting giants, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

Rohit is already 39, while Kohli turns 38 in November. Both have retired from Test and T20I cricket, leaving ODI cricket as their remaining international stage.

And, much like

The author is a sports management consultant with over a decade of experience in sports promotion and development. His work across both the private and government sectors gives him a well-rounded view of India's sports ecosystem.

Tendulkar in 2011, there is a major unfinished chapter ahead: the 2027 ODI World Cup.

Rohit has never won an ODI World Cup, while Kohli was part of India's victorious 2011 squad, albeit as one of its younger players, long before he became the batting giant he is today. The 2027 tournament (subject to selection) could therefore become their equivalent of Tendulkar's 2011 moment, a final challenge that makes continuing worthwhile.

What connects Messi, Djokovic, Tendulkar, Rohit and Kohli is not simply longevity. All were identified as exceptional talents remarkably young and have spent close to two decades operating at the highest level. Their longevity is a product not only of extraordinary ability but also of an almost obsessive competitive instinct.

And therein lies the paradox. The mentality that makes champions great can also make retirement almost impossible. They have spent their entire lives refusing to accept decline, constantly searching for another challenge, another record, another trophy.

For sporting immortals, the hardest part of retirement is not knowing whether they can still compete. It is knowing when they no longer need to.

Mandaviya asks hockey teams to target Olympic qualification

MONA PARTHSARATHI ■ New Delhi

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has asked the Indian hockey teams to focus on identifying and rectifying their shortcomings rather than dwelling on World Cup performance, with the Asian Games now the priority to secure qualification for the Los Angeles Olympics.

Mandaviya held a review meeting on Monday with men's team coach Craig Fulton, captain

Harmanpreet Singh, women's team coach Sjoerd Marijne and captain Salima Tete and Hockey India officials following India's campaign at the recently concluded FIH World Cup.

According to a ministry source, the meeting at the SAI headquarters lasted around an hour and was attended by captains and coaches of both teams. Sports Secretary Hari Ranjan Rao, Hockey India president Dilip Tirke, secretary general Bholanath Singh, TOPS CEO NS Johal and senior officials of SAI were present. (PTI)

Women's hockey team departs for Asian Games



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

Fresh from a historic fifth-place finish at the World Cup, the Indian women's hockey team on Tuesday departed for the Asian Games in Japan, with their sights firmly set on winning the gold medal and securing a direct berth at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympic Games.

Led by captain Salima Tete and coached by Sjoerd Marijne, India produced one of its finest performances in decades as the team finished fifth, its best World Cup result since the inaugural edition in 1974. The attention now shifts to the Asian Games, where the stakes are even higher.

Under the FIH's LA 2028 qualification system, the highest-placed eligible team in the women's hockey competition at the Asian Games will earn an Olympic quota place, provided it has not already qualified through another pathway.

"We are going into the Asian Games with a lot

of confidence, but we also know that every tournament brings a new challenge," said Tete, who has led India to the Nations Cup title and the historic World Cup fifth-place finish this year, in a release. "The Nations Cup and the World Cup have given us belief in what we can achieve together, and now our focus is on taking that one step further. "Our goal is very clear - we want to fight for the gold medal and earn direct qualification for the Los Angeles Olympics. We know it will require consistency, discipline and giving our best in every match, and as a team we are ready for that challenge," Tete said.

India has been placed in Pool B alongside Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, and Uzbekistan. The team will open its campaign against Uzbekistan on September 20, followed by matches against Indonesia on September 21, Thailand on September 23, Japan on September 25, and Singapore on September 27.

India enter quarterfinals with 7-0 win over Japan in Women's Junior Asia Cup



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Moqi (China)

The Indian junior women's hockey team continued their dominant run at the Asia Cup, cruising to a commanding 7-0 victory over Japan in their third elite pool match to secure a place in the quarterfinals here on Tuesday. With nine points from three matches, India currently sit at the top of the Elite Pool. They will face China on Wednesday in their final pool match, which will determine the top position in the pool. China currently have six points from two matches.

Having opened their campaign with a 4-1 win over Korea before registering an 11-1 victory against Malaysia, India carried their attacking momentum into the clash against Japan and took control of proceedings right from the start.

India's early pressure was rewarded in the fifth minute when Krishna Sharma found the back of the net for a 1-0 lead. India doubled their advantage in the ninth minute after a foul by a Japanese defender inside the circle resulted in a penalty stroke. Supriya stepped up and made no mistake from the spot to put India 2-0 ahead.

India continued to dominate proceedings and

added a third goal just before the end of the opening quarter. Purnima Yadav scored a field goal in the 14th minute as India finished the first quarter with a commanding 3-0 lead.

Japan came out with greater attacking intent in the second quarter as they looked to find a way back into the contest, while India continued to search for opportunities to extend their advantage. However, neither side was able to add to the scoreline, and India went into the half-time break with a comfortable 3-0 lead.

Japan began the third quarter with renewed attacking intent, looking to register their first goal of the match. However, the Indian defence remained resolute and effectively nullified Japan's attempts. India then shifted the gears once again, scoring three goals in the space of five minutes. Geeta Yadav smashed a field goal in the 41st minute to make it 4-0 before completing her brace in the 45th minute, further strengthening India's commanding position.

India added another goal just a minute later. Purnima found the back of the net in the 46th minute to complete her brace and take the lead to 6-0 at the end of the third quarter. (PTI)

DAILY SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★☆

HOW TO SOLVE IT

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



SOLUTION (8.9.26)								
5	2	7	3	6	4	8	1	9
9	4	3	8	5	1	7	6	2
8	6	1	2	9	7	3	5	4
4	3	2	7	8	5	1	9	6
1	8	5	9	2	6	4	7	3
7	9	6	1	4	3	2	8	5
6	1	4	5	7	2	9	3	8
2	7	9	6	3	8	5	4	1
3	5	8	4	1	9	6	2	7

DOUBLE CROSSWORD WEDNESDAY | SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

1			2		3		4		5		6
					7						
		8		9							
10							11		12		13
			14				15		16		
17	18					19			20		
					21						
				22				23	24		25
26		27						28			
29							30				
							31				
32											
							33				

ACROSS

- On the road, it's an honour to be in a car (6)
- There's nothing Oriental about it (8)
- Attorney given thanks for the facts (4)
- Out to succeed, Ted was a twister! (6)
- Hate having only half a side for a match (6)
- Give extra publicity to the grand finale (3)
- Drive the enemy out! (5)
- As expected, rather like Julie (4)
- A heady trophy (5)
- Take over (5)

DOWN

- Took a broken crate to the trading centre (6)
- Drink that goes snappily with a biscuit (6)
- Dora's eccentric way (4)
- At night, is seen to be a bright little thing (7)
- No, and that's final (5)
- Stipulate the condition (5)
- Face the possibility of being laid up (4)
- Just the chap to make hay? (3)
- It's best worn above the waist (3)
- Hit ten again? (5)
- For which cars can be broken up - at a

- Not a goldfish, but maybe silver or bronze (5)
- Finish work during September, making a beehive (4)
- African river longer than an English one (5)
- Fierce word of reproach? (3)
- Complete in diplomacy (6)
- His Pilgrim was Christian (6)
- Spheres in which one's little brothers circulate (4)
- Agrees the competition is dishonest (8)
- Makes edgy progress with boys (6)

- parking place? (5)
- Such guerrillas are less than urbane (5)
- Understand the sense (3)
- Member of a popular movement (3)
- Spot that's a bit ticklish in a permissive way (7)
- Every brazen hussy has one (3)
- Sailor whose crime is serious (6)
- To the House? (4)
- Are their tails specially hairy? (6)
- The nothing we get from America (5)
- Pieces written in difficult times? (5)
- It may fly somewhat furiously (3)
- An outstanding leader (4)

SOLUTION (8.9.26)			
ACROSS	19, Damon	DOWN	15, H-AB-it
1, Pleas	20, Le-ere-d	2, Loudly	16, Mate-d
6, Bingo	22, A-ire	3, Assert	18, Colon
9, Sh-opp-ed	24, Sa-d	4, Shy	19, D-evil-ry
10, Hussy	25, Jousted	5, O-pens	21, E-aster
11, SE-N-SE	26, SI-MO-n	6, Best man	22, Ast-u-te
12, Knots	27, Stea-L	7, I'd-ES	23, Region
13, Florins	28, Put in	8, G-ashed	25, Joint
15, He-M	29, Iron out	12, Knead	26, Sail
17, Eyot	30, Truly	13, F-eels	28, Pup (rev.)
18, Can-Ada	31, Penny	14, O-ozed	