

AG passes buck, ball in police's court on FIR against Vijayan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The Advocate General has left it to the state police to take a call on the Enforcement Directorate's report seeking action against former Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, his daughter Veena T. and her husband P.A. Mohamed Riyas in the alleged CMRL bribery case, sources said on Monday. The state government had sought the legal opinion of the Advocate General after the ED wrote to State Police Chief DGP Ravada A. Chandrasekhar seeking registration of an FIR under the Prevention of Corruption Act against Vijayan, Veena and Riyas on the basis of "evidence" gathered during its probe and searches conducted under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act [PMLA], according to sources.

Special bench to hear NHA plea against stray cattle shelters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to constitute a special bench to hear a plea of the National Highways Authority of India



and Additional Advocate General P. Muhammad Shah. In his opinion, the AG is learnt to have relied on Supreme Court judgments which states that, on receipt of information from the ED, the state police is bound to register an FIR if a cognizable offence is made out. If, on verification, no cognizable offence is disclosed but the police feel an inquiry is warranted, a preliminary inquiry can be conducted to assess whether a cognizable offence is made out.

Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala said on Saturday that the government had received the AG's legal opinion and was examining it. He said further steps would be taken after discussions with the Chief Minister.

Rain: Death toll rises to nine; Yellow Alert in six districts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Heavy rains have claimed nine lives and caused widespread damage across Kerala, with landslides and flash floods reported in several districts.

Malappuram has recorded the highest number of deaths, with the toll from a flash flood rising to five. The bodies of 23-year-old Sajjad, a resident of Wandoor Kottakkunnu, Rahim of Karuvarakundu and Rafeeq of Wandoor have been recovered. Search operations are continuing for a woman named Sajitha who remains missing.

In Idukki's Kottakamboor, siblings Balakrishnan (47) and Chinnu (38) were killed after a landslide buried a shed on farmland. A Chennai native Sangeetha (35) died in Kottayam's Teekoy after a landslide fell on a motorcycle, while 80-year-old Chelakkatt Joseph was killed when a landslide struck his house at Poonjar Thekkakara.

A special Disaster Management Force team has been deployed in the Nilambur-Amarambalam area to assist the ongoing rescue and search operations. Authorities have stepped up surveillance and preparedness in the affected districts in view of the continuing rain and the forecast of further heavy rainfall in parts of the state.

Meanwhile, the India

As rains intensify, CM orders hourly assessment of situation

As heavy rains intensified in Keralam triggering mudslides, landslides and flash floods that claimed five lives and left two persons missing, Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan ordered hourly assessment of the situation.

Following the Chief Minister's direction, Disaster Management Authority Commissioner Vigneswari IAS convened a meeting with the Collectors of Idukki and Kottayam districts to take stock of the situation, the Chief Minister's Office said in a statement on Sunday. SMS alerts have been issued in Idukki and Kottayam regarding the weather conditions, while the Collectors have been instructed to assess the ground situation and take necessary steps, including ground evacuation wherever required, it said. The CMO said the Chief Minister has



Kerala Chief Minister V. D. Satheesan visiting the flash flood site at T.K. Colony, Pookkottupadam, Nilambur on Monday. Also seen are IUML State President Panakkad Sayid Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal, Industries & IT Minister P. K. Kunhalikutty, PWD Minister P. K. Basheer and MLAs Aryadan Shoukath and V. S. Joy.

directed the district administrations to remain on high alert and ensure timely rescue and relief measures in vulnerable areas.

Control rooms in the

affected districts have been strengthened and officials have been asked to maintain close coordination with the Disaster Management Authority, it added.

Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast rain across Kerala over the next five days, with isolated heavy rainfall likely in several districts. A yellow alert was issued in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam and Thrissur on

Monday. No rain alert has been issued for Tuesday.

Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Pathanamthitta will be under yellow alert on September 23, while Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod.

On September 25, yellow

alerts were issued for Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod.

The IMD defines heavy rainfall as 64.5 mm to 115.5 mm of rain within 24 hours and has advised people...

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Chief minister V.D. Satheesan visits the house of Rafeeq who lost his life in the flash flood at TK Colony in Nilambur

CM visits flood-hit TK Colony in Nilambur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Nilambur (Malappuram)

Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan said that the government will ensure all possible assistance to the families of those who lost their lives in the flash flood at TK Colony in Chokkad. A final decision on the assistance will be taken at the Cabinet meeting, he said.

The Chief Minister was speaking to the media after visiting TK Colony in Nilambur, where the disaster occurred following the flash flood. The fact that the incident occurred without any warning is serious, he said.

Strict safety regulations will be imposed at unofficial tourist destinations across the state. Immediate measures will be taken to prevent accidents in such locations that have gained popularity through social media and attract large crowds.

An intensive search oper-

ation for those missing is continuing under the joint leadership of the NDRF, Fire and Rescue Services, police and the State Disaster Management Authority. The services of volunteers and other members of the public are also being utilised. The search will continue until the last missing person is found, the Chief Minister said.

In addition to the existing warnings issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), a special system will be put in place to forecast localised weather changes and extreme rainfall within a radius of 20 to 25 kilometres.

The government aims to establish one of the country's most effective disaster management models in the state. Technical assistance from research institutions such as CUSAT, voluntary organisations and the Central Government will be utilised for this purpose.

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AICC General Secretary and MP K.C. Venugopal

Congress launches 'Goy Rakkhon Yatra' to 'save' Goa

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

AICC General Secretary (Organisation) and MP K.C. Venugopal on Monday launched a sharp attack against the BJP government in Goa, stating that the coastal state is facing an "existential threat" under its rule.

In a post on X, Venugopal said Goa's land, environment, heritage and identity are on the verge of being wiped out by the BJP's "greed and corruption." "Goa is facing an existential threat under the BJP. Its land, environment, heritage and identity is on the verge of being wiped out by the BJP's greed and corruption," Venugopal wrote.

CONTINUED ON ►► P2

Congress attacks Modi over 'skyrocketing prices'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Congress on Monday attacked the Modi Government over "skyrocketing prices" of food items. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh shared a media report which claimed that the surge in the prices of various food items, along with pulses and cooking oil, has completely disrupted household budgets.

In his post in Hindi, Ramesh said, "The skyrocketing prices of food items in the country have broken the back of the middle and poor classes."

"In the past month, spice prices have surged by a massive 10% to 25%. Green cardamom has risen from Rs 4000 to Rs 4400/kg, black cardamom from Rs 2400 to Rs 2800/kg, and cumin has jumped from Rs 360 to Rs 400/kg. Mace prices have shot up directly from Rs 2500 to Rs 3000 per kg," Ramesh said.

From June to September, the all-India average retail price of onions rose from Rs 29.50/kg to Rs 53.78/kg - a staggering 82.3% increase in just three and a half months,



Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh

he said.

Due to rising inflation, pulses and essential food items are becoming out of reach in the homes of the poor, Ramesh said.

"But the Prime Minister remains silent on inflation. The country is asking, 'Where have the 'achche din' gone, Prime Minister ji?' Are they only left in sermons?" the Congress leader said.

The Modi government should immediately take strict measures against this uncontrolled inflation and provide relief to the common people, the Congress general secretary said.

The government, however, has dismissed the claims and pointed to the GDP numbers.

Trump decries communism as 'greatest threat ever'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Washington

Communism is the greatest threat the US has ever faced, President Donald Trump has said ahead of November's midterm elections. During the recent Republican midterm convention in Dallas, the president repeatedly branded opposition Democrats as communists, proclaiming, "It's going to be a communist country if they win."

"In state after state, the Democrat establishment has been overthrown and replaced by crazed lunatics and radicals," he said, adding, "America has beaten communism before, and we will beat it again."

However, the president himself has increasingly directed his administration to take large stakes in private companies to try to stimulate the economy — something even Republicans decry as corporate socialism. The White House secured agreements giving...

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EC S.S. Sandhu's name error in Delhi voter list fixed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Election Commissioner Sukhbir Singh Sandhu was identified for notice issuance because of a name discrepancy in the ongoing Delhi SIR, but after verifying documents, officials said on Sunday that his name will appear in the final electoral roll.

A resident of New Moti Bagh here, Sandhu is a voter of the Delhi Cantonment assembly constituency.

The officials said the



former IAS officer was one of those identified to be served notice due to a name mismatch.

While he has filled out the enumeration form as Dr S.S. Sandhu, his name in the voters' list is Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, they said.

Amid controversy, the District Election Officer said in a social media post that the details, facts and documents furnished by Sandhu have been duly verified.

"The electoral entry pertaining to Dr S.S. Sandhu, Election Commissioner of India, has already been validated and kept in the list for inclusion in the Final Electoral Roll which is scheduled for official publication on November 4, as per the schedule issued by the Election Commission of India," the post said.

'Method of disenfranchising Indians': Congress slams SIR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Election Commission's SIR exercise is a "method of disenfranchising Indians", the Congress said on Monday amid outrage over 33.13 lakh notices being issued in the national capital over "discrepancies" in details furnished by people in their enumeration forms.

The Opposition party was responding to a critical post over the name of late economist Bibek Debroy appearing in the list of voters being issued notices for discrepancies. This comes a day after the Congress flagged the issue of large-scale deletions during the ongoing SIR exercise and alleged that it is actually a massive "Shah Instigated Removal" of voters and an

"assault on the Constitution". Opposition parties have dubbed the SIR a ploy to target electors not aligned to the BJP and its allies.

The Election Commission, however, has maintained that the revision, being held after 22 years, will cleanse the voters' list of ineligible people, duplicate entries and include those eligible as per law to vote.

SC to urgently hear Mamata's plea against EC freezing party name, symbol,

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

The Election Commission on Friday had allotted separate names and symbols to the two rival factions following its interim decision a day earlier to bar both groups from using the 'All India Trinamool Congress' name and reserved its symbol pending a substantive determination of the dispute.

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BRS MLA moves SC against disqualification by Telangana HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

BRS MLA Danam Nagender on Monday moved the Supreme Court challenging an order of the Telangana High Court which disqualified him following his defection to the ruling Congress. The High Court had set aside an order of the Assembly Speaker in March this year dismissing petitions seeking his disqualification.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana was told by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the BRS MLA, that he was seeking urgent hearing of his plea. The top court agreed to list the plea for urgent



BRS MLA Danam Nagender

hearing. The High Court had declared Nagender, MLA from Khairatabad here, disqualified from April 23, 2024, as a member of the Telangana Legislative Assembly, having contested from Secunderabad Lok Sabha constituency on the Congress ticket in 2024, while being a MLA of the BRS.

The court passed...

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The Notebook that became India's first full sex-Ed brand

THREYAMBKA A.B
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Some businesses start with a market gap. This one started with a question that had no answer.

For founders Anjana M, the seed of "Safe Sports" was planted decades before it became a brand name. Growing up, she says, watching cases of abuse and rape affecting girls left a deep impression - but back then, there was no framework, no language, and no product to help a child navigate that fear. "There was no clear answer back then as to what could be done," she recalls.

It took nearly twenty years, a stable career, and the beginnings of her own family for that unanswered question to resurface - this time as a

plan. After landing a major job, Anjana found herself thinking obsessively about a hypothetical future child: what would she teach them, and when? What would she do differently from her own upbringing? She began writing it all down quietly. "Taking notes about future parenting before even being married felt awkward," she admits. Marriage didn't end the habit; it gave it an audience. The notes turned into informal guidance shared with cousins' and friends' children. A conversation with her husband proved the turning point: if these ideas were only reaching a handful of children in her circle, why not build a channel to reach many more? That question sent her into nearly a year of research, refining concepts



and studying how to communicate sensitive material to children.

Before building anything, the team checked if the idea already existed. It didn't.

"Even with the world developing so rapidly in every field, there was not a single brand dedicated to fully covering sex education," Anjana says, still sounding surprised

by the discovery. The result is a library of 21 books split across four age brackets: 3-6 (4 books), 6-10 (5 books), 10-14 (7 books, including a picture book), and 14-17 (5 books).

The subject matter barely changes across tiers, Anjana explains — what changes is the language. The youngest group is simply taught that bodies and feelings are normal conversation topics, "just like talking about food or playing games." By 6 to 10, the framing shifts to protection rather than shame, adding consent and personal boundaries. Ages 10 to 14, she says, is "the most curious age group" — children absorbing information from friends faster than

parents realise. This is where puberty enters the curriculum, split by gender into My First Period Book for Girls and Growing Up: A Guide for Boys, the latter tackling subjects — wet dreams, morning erections, genital growth —

that Anjana says are "rarely taught or discussed anywhere." By 14 to 17, the focus shifts to digital safety, drug prevention, and reproduction as applied, real-world guidance rather than abstract facts. "What they need is not basic definitions or awareness," she says, "but practical guidance on how to apply this knowledge in real life." Asked about the inevitable parental discomfort...

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‘Priyadarshini’, a new chapter in women dignity, completes 100 days

The ‘Priyadarshini’ free bus travel scheme, which has written a new chapter in the history of travel freedom and dignity for women in Kerala, will complete 100 days on September 22nd. This scheme, implemented by the UDF Government soon after coming to power, has brought significant changes to the daily lives of ordinary women. It is proof of how much positive change a government’s willpower can bring to people’s lives.

From June 15 to September 19 - a period of 97 days - a total of 12.54 crore (12,54,03,152) free journeys were made through the scheme. During this period, tickets worth Rs. 266.53 crore (Rs. 2,66,53,07,108) were given free to passengers. The fact that an average of 12.93 lakh people use this service every day gives the government immense confidence.

Enthusiastic Numbers of Women’s Participation

The number of daily passengers, which was 11.08 lakh in the first week, rose to 13.93 lakh by the 13th week. This shows an increase of 25.7%. The daily ticket value also increased from Rs. 2.36 crore in the first week to Rs. 2.95 crore in the thirteenth

week - an increase of 25.1% in ticket value.

Looking at month-wise figures, 12.12 lakh people travelled per day in June. This rose to 13.62 lakh in July and to 13.99 lakh from September 1st to 19th. In August, the daily average was 12 lakh.

A Record-Breaking September

The highest daily figure since the launch of the scheme was recorded on September 7th. On that day, more than 15 lakh people (15,52,761) travelled, and the value of Priyadarshini tickets was Rs. 3.29 crore. This broke the previous record of 15.28 lakh on July 6th.

In the six days of the 14th week (excluding Sunday), the number of daily passengers was 14.96 lakh. Compared to the first week, this is 29.4% ahead in terms of passenger numbers and 29.2% ahead in terms of value.

Along with this, the average daily collection in September is Rs. 5.75 crore. Compared to Rs. 5.45 crore in July and Rs. 5.43 crore in August, this is the best rate since the start of the scheme.

Space for Everyone

The share of free travellers in the total passengers



C.P. John
Transport Minister

on ordinary buses has increased from 62% in the first week to a stable 68.9% now. The figures also make it clear that the increase in free travellers has not affected those who travel by buying tickets.

The number of male passengers on ordinary services has remained stable, from a daily average of 6.09 lakh in the first week to 6.19 lakh in the thirteenth week - a slight increase. The total number of passengers on all services increased from 24.66 lakh in the first week to 27.63 lakh - a 12.1% increase in total passengers.

People’s Experiences, Government’s Satisfaction

In the capital, where KSRTC operates the most buses in the state, many women speak highly of the

scheme. As a public representative, I am very happy when they testify about the changes in their lives after travel expenses were eliminated.

The first example is Sharadamani, a lottery seller from Pettah who lives hand-to-mouth. Even if she walked for kilometres to sell lotteries, she had to pay at least Rs. 60 daily as bus fare. For her, being able to save this travel cost now is a great blessing. She realised the reality of this scheme when she got a zero-rupee ticket for her ordinary bus journey from Pettah to East Fort. It is a matter of pride for the UDF Government to hear her say that now, when she returns home in the evening, she can use the saved money to buy snacks or curry for her children.

I also heard the words of Anjali, a student from Nedumangad who comes to a college in the city to study. Anjali, who was hesitant to ask her father, a daily wage labourer, for a large amount of bus fare every day, often had to miss classes. More than the college fees, it was the travel expenses that troubled her. But Anjali says the free travel scheme has removed a huge burden. She said that seeing the board that says

‘Priyadarshini’ itself is a great joy, and that this scheme is a great support for her dream of studying and getting a job.

Sulekha, who works in three houses in the city, had a similar experience to share. When she had to travel by bus three or four times a day, in the morning and afternoon, a large part of her income was spent on it. But now she testifies that she can save money by travelling on KSRTC.

Sulekha said that the increase in the number of women in buses has increased the sense of security and that it has helped to avoid fear, especially during night travel. She openly expressed her great happiness with this decision of the government, which considers working women.

Social and Economic Changes

The most important socio-economic benefit of this scheme is that the amount saved on travel expenses has become direct income in the hands of each family. Lakhs of women who travel daily for work, studies, treatment, and to the market have been able to save a significant amount in their family budget every month. When the barrier of travel

cost was removed, women’s participation in the workforce increased.

Since two-thirds of KSRTC passengers are women, the fact is that the benefits of the scheme have directly reached every home in the state. More women have come forward for education, skill training, and entrepreneurial activities. The Priyadarshini scheme has also become a freedom to come out into public spaces with confidence and dignity, not confined within the four walls of the house.

A Big Boost to the Local Economy

When the travel expenses saved by women flow into local markets and small businesses, it gives a big boost to the local economy. Increased participation of women in the workforce strengthens family income and thus the overall economic growth of the state. The shift from private vehicles to public transport has significantly reduced fuel consumption, carbon emissions, and traffic congestion.

In short, the government can proudly say that the Priyadarshini scheme has become an important step towards Kerala’s green goals and economic growth.



Chief Minister V. D. Satheesan meeting Miss Universe India 2026 winner Kaziah Liz Mejo in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday. Kaziah from Mavelikkara is the first Keralite to win the Miss Universe India crown. - A V Muzafar

Govt yet to hand out aid to August-flood victims: Pinarayi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The UDF Government continues to show indifference and adopt an inhuman approach towards disaster victims despite the recurrence of natural calamities, Opposition Leader Pinarayi Vijayan said. Even after weeks since the floods in the first week of August, the government has not disbursed even the emergency financial assistance announced for flood victims in Alappuzha, Kottayam and Pathanamthitta districts. The delay in providing even emergency assistance reflects the govt’s extreme apathy towards the affected people, he said. The govt had announced financial assistance of Rs 10,000 to flood

victims. However, in Alappuzha district, of the more than 40,000 people who submitted applications, only 83 have so far received even half the amount, Rs 5,000. In Kottayam, it is shocking that the collection of details of disaster victims has not yet been completed, he said. Even one-and-a-half months after the government announced Rs 300 in financial assistance for those who lost their livelihoods due to the heavy rains, applications for the assistance have not even begun to be accepted. This exposes the government’s betrayal of the people, Pinarayi said. He demanded that the government ensure that the announced financial assistance is distributed to all eligible flood victims without any further delay.

18th IDSFFK: No film denied permission, Centre clarifies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Monday has clarified that no film had been denied permission for screening at the 18th Kerala International Documentary and Short Film Festival.

In a statement, the Ministry said it had only sought detailed synopses for six films and referred some films to the concerned departments for examination based on their subject matter.

The clarification came amid reports that the Centre had denied screening permission to 31 films selected for the festival. Congress MP Dr Shashi Tharoor had



expressed concern, calling the reported action shocking and an encroachment on freedom of expression.

The Academy had submitted a list of 347 films to the Ministry seeking exemption from certification requirements for screening films without censor certificates at the festival.

The controversy arose after 31 films were reportedly denied screening permission. The list included 18 films officially selected for the festival, nine in the International Non-Fiction section, three in the Festival

Winners section and one in the Nepal package.

The Malayalam film Globe was also among those listed. Other films reportedly affected included Parliament Street, Sanitized Republic: Cast and Contracts, Memories of a Window, Birds of War, Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk and Our Land. The Centre had earlier attributed the issue to the requirement for clearance from various ministries for certain films. The latest clarification came amid protests and criticism over the reported restrictions.

The festival, organised by the Kerala State Chalachitra Academy, is scheduled to be held in Thiruvananthapuram from September 25 to 30.

It’s official: Mangaluru to go fully under SWR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Ministry of Railways is set to change Mangaluru’s rail setup by bringing the entire area under the South Western Railway [SWR] zone. This was announced by Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw during a meeting with MPs from Kerala who had opposed the decision to bifurcate the Palakkad division by creating a new Mangaluru division.

Ashwini Vaishnaw said presently Mangaluru was divided among three different railway jurisdictions - Southern Railway, South Western Railway and Konkan Railway Corporation Limited [KRCL] - which was creating serious operational difficulties. To address the issues, the Railways is rationalising the Mangaluru railway area



Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in discussion with MPs from Kerala on issues related to the railway in Kerala on Monday.

and bringing it under a single railway zone - South Western Railway.

“A clear, unified operational boundary for the entire Mangaluru area by transferring the entire Mangaluru area to Mysore Division of South Western Railway will eliminate interchange con-

licts between zones, enabling smoother and more efficient operations,” the Ministry said.

To counter the political fallout, Vaishnaw shared a detailed report card of railway investment in Kerala. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had

increased the railway allocation for the state tenfold to Rs 3,795 crore for the financial year 2026-27, compared with the Rs 372 crore that Kerala used to receive for railway development before 2014.

He said projects worth more than Rs 20,000 crore are currently under execution in Kerala. These include 9 multitracking and new-line projects, 145 flyovers and underpasses and 19 station redevelopment projects.

A major bottleneck remains land acquisition. “Total land required for railway is 618 hectares and land acquired so far is 78 hectares - 13% of total and balance land to be acquired is 540 hectares [87%] in Kerala,” he said, adding Railways has deposited Rs 1,976 crore with the Government of Kerala.

Leaders pay tribute to Sree Narayana Guru on Samadhi day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan and Opposition Leader Pinarayi Vijayan and many other political leaders across the state on Monday paid tributes to social reformer Sree Narayana Guru on his Samadhi day.

The Chief Minister, in a post on X, said, “On the Samadhi day of Sree Narayana Guru, I respectfully bow down to his memory.”

Pinarayi Vijayan, in a Facebook post, said the Guru laid the foundation for Kerala’s renaissance. He said the Guru spread the light of knowledge and humanity in a society darkened by casteism and social evils. He said the Guru gave a new direction to the struggles for the rights of the downtrodden, helped marginalised sections achieve social and economic upliftment and guided people from traditional occupations towards industries and new employment sectors, paving the way for self-reliance. He added that the Guru’s vision of a caste-free and secular society continues to guide the journey towards a better future based on equality.

Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala, in a Facebook post, said that Guru “taught that human existence lies in humanity”. Chennithala also said that Guru was a ‘prophet’ of boundless humanity. “The dawn of oneness awakens where all distinctions fade away. With folded hands, I pay homage to the memory of that great light,” he said.

State Electricity Minister and KPCC president Sunny Joseph described the Guru as a visionary who transformed Kerala’s social conscience through his deeds and philosophy. He said the Guru’s ideals continue to serve as a guiding light for the future.

BJP state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar also paid tribute to the Guru, saying his teachings of “One Caste, One Religion, One God for Mankind” remain relevant even today.

Rain: Death toll rises to nine; Yellow Alert in six districts

in the affected districts to take necessary precautions.

With rains intensifying in the district, authorities have closed tourist destinations in Idukki and imposed a ban on night travel to hilly areas. The restriction will remain in place from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. The district administration has also directed that adventure tourism centres remain closed until the weather alerts are withdrawn.

CM visits flood-hit TK Colony in Nilambur

A strict protocol will be prepared to coordinate operations in three stages - accurately assessing weather forecasts, issuing timely warnings and immediately relocating people to safer places.

District-specific disaster management systems need to be developed by taking into account the unique circumstances of each district.

The government has initiated measures to make disaster management operations more scientific and efficient, particularly at a time when phenomena such as cloudbursts are becoming more frequent, he added.

Industries Minister P.K. Kunhalikutty, Revenue Minister A.P. Anilkumar, Public Works Minister P.K.

Basheer, MLAs Aryadan Shoukath, T.P. Ashraf Ali and V.S. Joy, District Panchayat president P.A. Jabbar Haji, District Collector Dr Vinay Goyal, Perinthalmanna Sub-Collector Sakshi Mohan, elected representatives and district-level officials were present.

Special bench to hear NHAI plea against stray cattle shelters

and V. Mohana was urged by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Authority, that a special bench be set up to decide on the matter.

The solicitor general said the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) had been directed to establish shelter homes for stray cattle across the country, which, according to the Authority, would involve an expenditure of approximately Rs 7,000 crore. “Our case is that it should be done by the local district-level administration. We cannot do it pan India,” he said.

He also sought reconstitution of the special bench comprising Justices Nath, Sandeep Mehta and N.V. Anjaria to hear the NHAI’s application. “There is a matter concerning stray dogs. I am moving an application on behalf of NHAI,” the solicitor general told the bench. He said the special bench

could not be constituted unless specifically directed by the CJJ. “We will constitute,” the CJJ said.

The development came during the hearing of matters concerning stray dogs and cattle, including measures for their management and the responsibilities of various government authorities.

Congress launches ‘Goy Rakkhon Yatra’ to ‘save’ Goa

The senior Congress leader alleged that over the last decade, nearly 1 crore sq.m. of land has been snatched away from Goans and handed over to big builders and industrialists close to the BJP.

“We are seeing a wholesale auction of every inch of Goan land,” he said.

Venugopal further alleged that Goa, under what he called the BJP’s “disastrous regime”, is witnessing an unprecedented rise in crime, violence, rapes, and day-to-day corruption.

He said the ordinary Goan is bearing the double burden of unemployment and massive inflation, while the BJP is playing “dirty tricks of political sabotage and unconstitutional purchase of MLAs” to keep its government afloat.

“The people of Goa are fed up and know that this is a now-or-never moment for this great state’s survival,”

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he added.

Announcing a statewide outreach program, Venugopal said the Congress, to protect Goa from the ills that have befallen it, is embarking on the Goy Rakkhon Yatra, starting Tuesday, September 22.

“The Congress, to protect Goa from the ills that have befallen upon it, is embarking on the Goy Rakkhon Yatra, starting tomorrow 22nd September! I appeal to everyone to extend their support to this people’s movement to protect Goa from the BJP,” his post read.

The Congress is expected to release the detailed route map and schedule of the Yatra on Tuesday.

BRS MLA moves SC against disqualification by Telangana HC

the order while dealing with petitions filed by BJP floor leader in Assembly Alleti Maheshwar Reddy and P. Kaushik Reddy of BRS.

The petitioners sought to quash and set aside the Speaker’s order and to declare that Nagender be disqualified as MLA as per the 21(1)(a) of the Tenth Schedule from the date of filing of the nomination affidavit for the 2024 General Lok Sabha elections.

Telangana Legislative

Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar on March 11 dismissed petitions seeking the disqualification of Danam Nagender as legislator.

Trump decries communism as ‘greatest threat ever’

the federal government stakes in more than 30 companies - including nuclear power producers, metals and element concerns and chip-maker Intel.

Additionally, he is rolling out the red carpet this week for Chinese President Xi Jinping, the leader of the world’s most powerful communist country. Even as he criticizes Democrats for cozying up to communists, Trump has bragged about his close relationship with China’s leader.

Trump has also in the past boasted about his warm relationships with North Korea’s Kim Jong Un, Viktor Orbán in Hungary and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The contradictions between Trump’s words and actions risk muddying Republican attack on Democrats.

This comes in the face of a series of drags on the popularity of Trump and his party with Election Day looming. Those include an increasingly unpopular war in Iran,

concerns about inflation remaining high and Trump’s approval ratings retreating to near historic lows.

The Notebook that became India’s first full sex-Ed brand

around explicit topics like erections, Anjana doesn’t dodge it. “This discomfort comes from awkwardness,” she says. “We need to eliminate body shame and realise these are natural biological functions.” Every book, notably, comes with a personal letter she writes by hand to both parent and child, explaining why the material matters. She’s blunt about a common misconception - that teens aged 15 to 17 are “too young” for reproduction education. “Children actively explore these topics starting around age 12 without parents knowing,” she counters. “A misconception parents have is thinking that as long as they don’t talk about it, everything is okay.”

Her theory is almost counterintuitive: silence doesn’t suppress curiosity, it inflames it. “Sex is something everyone engages in but no one discusses, which drives up children’s curiosity,” she says - and accurate, age-appropriate information “satisfies that curiosity safely rather than encouraging misuse.” The content was developed with

input from psychologists, doctors, teachers, and child-safety experts. For all the sensitivity of the subject, Anjana says the real challenge lay in matching how a child thinks at each age. Books for the youngest readers are designed as shared reading, giving nervous parents a script to lean on.

With the brand now introduced to the public, Anjana frames the mission simply: “Our goal is to build a good generation - one where saying ‘no’ needs no justification, where there is awareness about everything, and where people can handle emotions and rejection in a healthier way.”

SC to urgently hear Mamata’s plea against EC freezing party name, symbol,

The poll panel allotted Mamata’s faction the name ‘Mamata All India Trinamool Congress’ and the ‘Football Player’ symbol for the October 6 bypolls to Nandigram and Rejinagar. The rival faction led by Roy was allotted the name ‘Democratic Trinamool Congress’ and the ‘Envelope’ symbol.

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

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Labour codes will be implemented, says CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan on Monday said the state will implement the Labour Codes, stating that failure to do so would leave workers in a legal vacuum. "If the Labour Code is not implemented, workers will have no protection. We will implement it," the Chief Minister said.

He said the government will consider suggestions from the INTUC before framing rules, and asserted that the government will not take an anti-labour stand anywhere. The Chief Minister was speaking at the INTUC state leadership meet where he shared the stage with INTUC state president R. Chandrasekharan for the first time after the government granted sanction to pro-



cute Chandrasekharan in the cashew import corruption case. Addressing the gathering, Chandrasekharan heaped praise on the Chief Minister. "He is an energetic Chief

Minister," he said, adding that the Chief Minister's absence at the last conference was a big loss. Responding to it, the Chief Minister said he could not attend the previous event due to the Assembly session. "I couldn't even have food that day," he said. The Chief Minister also reiterated that privatisation of public sector organisations is not the government's policy. "We will not allow public sector insti-

tutions to be drained. You cannot loot wealth in the name of it," he said.

He said private entrepreneurs are coming forward to invest in various sectors and the government is in talks with them, but added: "We welcome the private sector, but there will be no compromise on workers' rights. We don't want any project that does not protect workers and nature," he said.



Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan offers respects at Maha Samadhi in Sivagiri, during his visit there as part of Sree Narayana Guru Samadhi observation on Monday. Sivagiri Mutt President Satchidananda Swamy and General Secretary Shubhangananda Swamy are also seen .

Loka Kerala Sabha will not continue : CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan said the government had not changed its decision to discontinue the Loka Kerala Sabha which was held under the previous LDF administration.

The state government was not considering organising the Loka Kerala Sabha as it was done during the time of the LDF Government, Satheesan said in a statement.

Loka Kerala Sabha (LKS) is a platform created for the cultural, socio-political and economic integration of the Non-Resident Keralites across the world with their home state.

Satheesan's statement comes in the wake of reports that the UDF Government has taken a u-turn and decided to hold the Loka Kerala Sabha, which it had criticised and boycotted

when the Left was in power.

The CM said that the government has not allocated a single rupee for the sixth edition of the Loka Kerala Sabha.

He said that the Loka Kerala Sabha Secretariat currently has an office and funds have been allocated only for its administrative expenses and for certain programmes, including the Business Leadership Meet organised through the Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NORKA) department.

"Expatriate welfare schemes are a matter of top priority for the government. Funds have also been allocated for the initial work of implementing such proposals," he added.

State Electricity Minister and Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) chief Sunny Joseph said there was no 'u-turn' on the part of the government on the issue.

"There is a right turn. By right, I mean a correct turn. The government is considering incorporating its good aspects by avoiding the extravagance associated with it. A decision has not yet been taken," he told reporters.

He claimed that the UDF was not opposed to the idea of the LKS; it was only against the extravagant manner in which it was held.

The KPCC chief said that funds have been allocated to the LKS in a manner to avoid any extravagance or unnecessary activities including advertising it. "Crores (of rupees) were spent on its preparations in the past. We had not opposed its name or the idea behind it. We were against the manner in which it was held. It would be good to include the LKS members and Keralites across the world in the development and progress of Keralam," he said.



Rs 60 lakh in gold, Rs 3.5 lakh in cash stolen from bizman's home

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thrissur

A major burglary was reported at the locked residence of businessman Hassan Ali in Koorkkencherry (Vadookkara) here, with thieves making away with 55 sovereigns of gold and Rs 3.5 lakh in cash while the family was away. The break-in occurred around 1:30 AM on Sunday night, with the intruder prying open the front doors to gain entry. Hassan Ali and his family were at a hospital in Emakulam at the time, attending to their son's surgery. The stolen cash had reportedly been set aside to repay a bank loan. The gold alone is estimated to be worth over Rs 60 lakh.

The family discovered the theft on Monday morning upon returning home from the hospital. CCTV footage from the house captured a suspect scaling the compound wall at the time of the break-in. Although the intruder attempted to disable the home's security cameras during the burglary, footage retrieved from nearby cameras in the neighbourhood offered clear visuals of the suspect fleeing over the wall.

The Nedupuzha Police, along with a special squad constituted under the Thrissur City Police Commissioner, have launched a joint investigation into the case.

Calicut FC defender Rijohn Jose dies in accident

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kozhikode

Calicut FC defender Rijohn Jose, 29, died in a road accident on the Gandhi Road flyover near Malabar Christian College here on Sunday night, days before the club's second-season SLK campaign was to begin.

Around 10:40 PM, the motorcycle carrying Jose and teammate Gani Ahmed

Nigam, a Santosh Trophy player, collided head-on with another two-wheeler. Both were thrown onto the road. Preliminary investigations point to heavy rain and poor visibility, with the oncoming bike reportedly drifting into their lane.

Jose suffered severe chest injuries. Both players were rushed to Kozhikode Government Medical College Hospital. Jose succumbed to his injuries at

around 12:15 AM Monday. Nigam remains hospitalised but is reported stable. Four people across both motorcycles were injured overall. Following a complaint by the Calicut FC manager, Nadakkavu police have registered a case against the other motorcycle's rider.

A native of Ollur, Thrissur, Jose had earlier played for Forca Kochi, FC Deccan, Wayanad United, and George Telegraph.

11-member gang of thieves from UP arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kochi/Thrissur

An 11-member interstate gang from Uttar Pradesh that allegedly flew into Kerala in groups to carry out planned thefts has been arrested in a joint operation by police teams from Kochi, Thrissur, and Kannur.

The gang, comprising members from Meerut and Baghpat in Uttar Pradesh, allegedly targeted houses under construction, large generators containing copper strips, and telephone exchange booths across various districts of the state. To avoid suspicion, the accused dressed as construction workers while scouting and executing the thefts, and such clothing was recovered from their possession.

In a carefully planned operation, the gang shipped their two-wheelers from Delhi to Kerala via train parcel service ahead of their arrival. The members then flew into Kochi in groups, collected the pre-shipped motorcycles, and dispersed across different districts to identify targets.

The operation began unraveling when a gang member, identified as Rehan, was arrested during an attempted theft in Thrissur.



The operation began unraveling when a gang member, identified as Rehan, was arrested during an attempted theft in Thrissur. During interrogation, he revealed that his associates were stationed in Kochi. Acting on this information, Kochi City Police, coordinating with Thrissur police, raided a lodge in Kalamassery and arrested five more members. Based on further inputs, five others operating out of Kannur were subsequently arrested with assistance from Kannur police.

During interrogation, he revealed that his associates were stationed in Kochi. Acting on this information, Kochi City Police, coordinating with Thrissur police, raided a lodge in Kalamassery and arrested five more members. Based on further inputs, five others operating out of Kannur were subsequently arrested with assistance from Kannur police.

Police recovered cable cutters, specialised keys, mobile phones, watches, cash, and identity docu-

ments from the accused, along with four two-wheelers used in the thefts. Police said some of those arrested already had prior cases registered against them at the Thrikkakara police station. The operation was coordinated by Kochi City Police Commissioner Kaliraj Mahesh Kumar, with teams from Thrissur East police station, the Kochi City Squad, the Kalamassery station shadow team, and the Kannur City crime team taking part.

Mortal remains of Malayali women murdered in US brought home

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kochi

The mortal remains of two women from Kerala, allegedly murdered by a close friend in California last month, arrived at the Cochin International Airport on Monday and were handed over to their relatives.

The victims have been identified as Ann Mary Mathew, 35, a native of Kesavadasapuram in Thiruvananthapuram, and Anjana Hari, 35, from Thrissur. Both women were allegedly killed by their friend Anila Baby, 32, of Kottayam, in two separate attacks carried out within roughly 90 minutes of each other on August 28 in the

South Bay cities of San Jose and Milpitas, California.

According to US law enforcement, Baby allegedly attacked Ann Mary Mathew inside a San Jose apartment before driving to Milpitas, where she allegedly ran over Anjana Hari with an SUV in an apartment parking lot. She was arrested the same day and was initially charged in connection with the Milpitas killing.

On September 8, prosecutors additionally charged her with murder in Ann's death, citing the high degree of violence and premeditation involved. She remains remanded at the Santa Clara County Main jail. Reports from the US indicate that all three



Ann Mary Mathew (35) and Anjana Hari (35), allegedly murdered by friend Anila Baby (32) in California on August 28

women had celebrated Onam together just days before the killings.

The bodies were transported from San Francisco to Los Angeles and brought

to Kochi via Dubai, with the repatriation process facilitated through the state government's NORKA-Roots department, the Indian Consulate in

San Francisco, and Union Minister Suresh Gopi. Officials at the airport said the remains were handed over to relatives by around 11 am on Monday.

Ann Mary Mathew's body was taken to her husband's residence in Kottayam and will be kept at the mortuary of Kottayam General Hospital, with her funeral service scheduled to begin at the residence on Tuesday at 11 am. Anjana Hari's body was taken to her husband's residence at Vilanganur in Thrissur, where a public homage was held on Monday afternoon. Her cremation is scheduled to take place later in the evening at her parental home in Mudikkode, Mannuthy.



A security personnel holds an umbrella for Transport Minister as he arrives to attend U.Vikraman commemoration meeting held at Thiruvananthapuram Press Club for the on Monday.
-Prathyash Vipanchika

Minister for action on Sabarimala aravana shortage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Devaswom Minister K. Muralaeddharan on Monday criticised the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) over the shortage of aravana payasam at the Sabarimala temple and said the government would take appropriate action after discussing the matter with Chief Minister V.D. Satheesan.

Muralaeddharan said the government could not remain a bystander as it had a responsibility to ensure that devotees received prasadam whenever the temple was open. He said the government was also considering bringing its concerns over the shortage before the High Court.



Devaswom Minister K. Muralaeddharan

The Minister said the shortage had occurred as the aravana manufacturing plant was undergoing renovation. He questioned the decision to carry out the work while the temple was open, saying repairs and renovations should ideally be completed

during the period when the shrine remains closed or alternative arrangements should be made.

Responding to the TDB's explanation that the renovation was being carried out ahead of the Mandalakala-Makaravilakku pilgrimage season to avoid disruptions, Muralaeddharan questioned whether devotees visiting the temple before the pilgrimage season should be denied aravana.

He said the government was also considering, with the permission of the High Court, whether to appoint a special team to oversee arrangements for the upcoming pilgrimage season.

Muralaeddharan said issuing statements on the shortage would not resolve

the issue and that concrete steps were required to ensure uninterrupted supply of prasadam to devotees. He reiterated that the government would decide on further action after discussions with the Chief Minister. The shortage of aravana has worsened at Sabarimala as the temple prepares to close after the Kannimasa pooja. Only around 5,000 packets of aravana are currently in stock, while about 15,000 devotees are expected to visit the shrine, according to online booking figures. The number of pilgrims could cross 17,000 if spot bookings are also taken into account, further intensifying concerns over the availability of the temple offering.

Cultural gathering against Zoo relocation at Museum compound

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

A cultural gathering held at the Museum compound on Monday opposed the proposal to relocate the Thiruvananthapuram Museum and Zoo, with speakers calling for the preservation of the historic institution.

Municipal LDF parliamentary party leader S.P. Deepak alleged that commercial interests were behind the move and said the Museum and Zoo were an integral part of the capital's heritage. He said the institution, which dates back to the erstwhile royal period, had been preserved by successive governments and remained a landmark of the city.

Deepak said the Museum and Zoo were part of



Thiruvananthapuram's heritage along with the Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple and Kanakakkunnu Palace. He alleged that attempts to relocate the institution were aimed at opening up valuable land for commercial purposes.

Actor Sudheer Karamana

said the Zoo was among the city's important heritage institutions and maintained that its conservation was essential. Former Vyloppilly Samskrithi Bhavan vice-chairman Pradeep said the Museum served as a vital public space for residents, offering

Deepak said the Museum and Zoo were part of Thiruvananthapuram's heritage along with the Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple and Kanakakkunnu Palace. He alleged that attempts to relocate the institution were aimed at opening up valuable land for commercial purposes.

a place of relaxation and recreation for people across generations.

Poet Murukan Kattakada questioned the rationale behind relocating the Zoo and raised concerns about the impact such a move could have on animals and their habitats.

Municipal councillor G. Venugopal proposed the vote of thanks at the gathering.



INTUC State President R. Chandrasekharan presenting a memento to Chief Minister V. D. Satheesan on his arrival to inaugurate the INTUC state leadership camp in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday.

-A V Muzafar

KU not seeking ban on student politics: Panel convenor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala University will not approve any draft that seeks to ban student politics or deny students a platform to voice their views, Ajay Juel Kuriakose, convenor of the sub-committee examining the draft Code of Conduct regulating student politics, said on Monday.

He said the draft currently circulating in the media is not an officially issued document of the university. "Such a draft was brought to deliberately to create a misunderstanding," Kuriakose, a Congress leader, said in a video message.

The clarification comes amid reports that a draft code of conduct, banning political activities on campuses, had come up for consideration before the syndicate.

Kuriakose said all members of the sub-committee had unanimously stated that the draft to be submitted should be student-friendly, recognise student organisational activities and contain proposals acceptable to them. "No matters regarding banning student organisational activities, or banning them to deny stu-

dents a platform to voice their reactions, were ever discussed in that sub-committee," he said.

The sub-committee comprises Kuriakose as convenor, R.S. Sasikumar, Sibi C. Babu and Ahamed Fazil Y. from the Congress, Nazeeb S., Rahim K. and Pramod N. from the CPI(M), and Vinodkumar T.G. Nair from the BJP.

Kuriakose said the document that has emerged was only a preliminary draft which will be discussed in detail by the sub-committee, following which a second draft will be prepared and sent to all student political organisations to invite their views and concerns in writing. The suggestions received would be considered before a final draft is prepared and placed before the standing committee. It would then be discussed in detail at a syndicate meeting chaired by the Vice-Chancellor before officially notified. "With so many stages remaining, portraying an internal draft as a final order is not correct," he said, adding in a Facebook post on Sunday that the university had not finalised implementing any regulation on the matter.

Govt yet to hand out aid to August-flood victims: Pinarayi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The UDF Government continues to show indifference and adopt an inhuman approach towards disaster victims despite the recurrence of natural calamities, Opposition Leader Pinarayi Vijayan said.

Even after weeks since the floods in the first week of August, the government has not disbursed even the emergency financial assistance announced for flood victims in Alappuzha, Kottayam and Pathanamthitta districts. The delay in providing even emergency assistance reflects the government's extreme apathy towards the affected people, he said.

The government had announced financial assistance of Rs 10,000 to flood victims. However, in Alappuzha district, of the more than 40,000 people who submitted applications, only 83 have so far received even half the amount, Rs 5,000. In Kottayam, it is shocking that the collection of details of disaster victims has not yet been completed, he said.

LDF Govt facilitated failed Messi event, says Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kollam

Sports Minister O.J. Janeesh on Monday alleged that the previous LDF Government and his predecessor V. Abdurahiman facilitated the failed football event featuring the Lionel Messi-led Argentina team, and said the SIT investigation would look into their role.

"Wasn't it the then sports minister himself who initiated all the discussions based on unauthorised emails? After that, under instructions from the government, sports officials also intervened. This led to the stage where all gov-

ernment facilities were provided," he said, while talking to reporters here.

Janeesh said the issue was not about the government suffering financial loss, but whether government machinery had been used to lend credibility to Reporter Broadcasting Company (RBC), the sponsor of the event now being probed by the SIT.

"That is where the corruption lies - in allowing a private sponsor to misuse government machinery," he charged.

Janeesh said the previous government and the Left Front had publicly promoted the event, including claims



Sports Minister O.J. Janeesh

that Messi would attend the event, meetings at the level of the Chief Secretary and the involvement of district collectors and police machinery. This helped create credibility for the event and an opportunity for people to invest

money, he said.

On claims that crores of rupees had been spent on the event, Janeesh said, "crores and lakhs were collected; they were not spent."

Asked whether GCDA officials would also come under the SIT probe in view of alleged irregularities in the tender and tripartite agreement, Janeesh said the agency was controlled by the Left Front when the event-related discussions and announcements were made.

"At that time, GCDA was led by the Left Front. The government was led by the Left Front. All these discussions

were conducted politically and announced politically by the Left Front," he said, adding that the Left Front had a responsibility to answer questions regarding the event.

The Minister was visiting the Lal Bahadur Shastri Corporation Stadium and the Olympian Suresh Babu Indoor Stadium here to assess plans for their renovation. He said the state government was looking to improve sports infrastructure across Kerala and, if public funds were insufficient, it would explore private participation and joint ventures for the purpose

Ministers are human too: UDF defends foreign trips

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The UDF leadership on Monday hit back at opposition criticism over foreign trips undertaken by its ministers, asserting that none of the travel was funded by the state exchequer and that ministers were entitled to short personal visits as long as official duties were not compromised.

The response came after opposition leaders targeted ministers including Sports Minister O.J. Janeesh, Ramesh Chennithala and K.M. Shaji for travelling abroad within three months of the UDF Government assuming office.

Speaking to reporters here, Sports Minister O.J. Janeesh questioned the narrative that ministers should not have personal time. "This idea that ministers shouldn't have any personal moments - what era is this mindset from? Aren't we all human beings?" he

said. Janeesh, 37, said he had undertaken two overseas trips after being invited by welfare organisations and that both were personal in nature. During his recent visit to Qatar, he said he had met with the ambassador to take up the issue of Malayalis lodged in prisons there.

"Over 700 expatriates are in prison there. Among them, I had applications from 32 Malayalis requesting intervention for their release," Janeesh said, adding that the matter would be taken forward as per state government protocol. KPCC president Sunny Joseph also defended the ministers, stating that no large delegations or extravagant tours had been undertaken like during the previous LDF Government.

"Nobody has gone by spending government money. Going to the Gulf is not such an expensive journey. Only Ramesh Chennithala went to America. He returned

within a week. That was a very important wedding to which I was also invited, hosted by a Congress leader there," Joseph said.

Joseph said it was natural for ministers to accept invitations from Malayali organisations abroad.

"If the Tourism minister is invited to Dubai or Bahrain, shouldn't he go? K.M. Shaji is someone who used to travel that frequently even before becoming a minister," he said.

On the controversy over Local Self-Government Minister K.M. Shaji allegedly using a friend's Range Rover as his official vehicle, Joseph dismissed it as a petty issue raised due to lack of substantive criticism against the government.

"What Shaji did now was save money - he saved government money. If this Kerala State car is taken, it needs diesel, repairs, tyre changes, and the driver needs to be paid. In a way, Shaji saved the government's money," he said.

No saree distribution on 100 days of Priyadarshini

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

KSRTC Chairman and Managing Director Dr. P.S. Pramoj Shankar on Monday dismissed reports that sarees would be distributed at the KSRTC depot as part of the 100th-day celebrations of the 'Priyadarshini' free travel scheme, calling them baseless.

In a statement, the CMD clarified the official programme for the celebrations scheduled for September 22. As part of the event, Transport Minister C.P. John will visit the Thampanoor depot on September 22 at 10:00 AM. Following the visit, KSRTC employees will distribute sweets to passengers, he said.

Later in the day, a formal function will be held at 7:30 PM where the Minister will officially inaugurate two new luxury packages of the

KSRTC Budget Tourism Cell - to Lakshadweep and Hyderabad. The Minister will also launch the new software and waiting list system developed for the Budget Tourism Cell. With this, passengers will be able to book tickets for budget tourism packages online.

In another major reform, KSRTC will introduce a waiting list system for ticket reservations on the lines of the Indian Railways. During the function, the Minister will honour ten passengers selected for the inaugural Lakshadweep trip, along with employees and units that demonstrated outstanding performance at the state level during July and August.

Thampanoor Ward Councillor R. Hari Kumar will preside over the function. KSRTC CMD Dr. P.S. Pramoj Shankar, senior department officials and prominent political figures will attend.

Mayor seeks probe into building tax fraud

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Mayor of Thiruvananthapuram Corporation V.V.Rajesh has filed a complaint with the Thiruvananthapuram City Police Commissioner seeking a comprehensive investigation into alleged attempts to commit building tax fraud within the Corporation on Monday.

According to the complaint, the administration has received crucial information regarding the alleged scam. The allegations surfaced after a fake building tax certificate was reportedly found to have been issued from the Valiyavilla ward, while a fake building permit was detected at the Nemom Zonal Office. BJP leader and Mayor V. V. Rajesh has demanded a thorough inquiry into the matter. He has also called for an exam-



Mayor of Thiruvananthapuram Corporation V.V.Rajesh

ination into whether similar fraudulent practices have taken place in other zones and wards of the Corporation. Meanwhile, on the issue of relocating the Zoo, he clarified that if the government officially seeks the Corporation's opinion on the matter, a stand will be taken after discussion in the Council.



General Education Minister. N. Samsudheen pushing a child on a swing (oonjal) after inaugurating 'Vamakkoodaram', the pre-primary block completed under the Samagra Shiksha Kerala (SSK) scheme at Kadangod GHHSS on Monday. Sandeep Warrier MLA is also seen.

Worry over NH soil excavation causing landslides

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Idukki

Civil Supplies Minister Anoop Jacob on Monday said authorities would examine whether soil excavation carried out as part of National Highway works contributed to landslide concerns along the road to Munnar and nearby areas in Idukki.

Jacob, who is also the minister in charge of Idukki, spoke to the media after visiting the hospital in Adimali where Mariamma, who was injured in a mudslide at Vattavada, is undergoing treatment. On Sunday, Mariamma's husband Balakrishnan and his sister Chinnu, both natives of Kottakamboor near Vattavada, died after a mudslide flattened a shed where they had taken shelter from the rain. Mariamma was also injured in the incident.



Food and Civil Supplies Minister Anoop Jacob visiting the site of the landslide at Pazhampillychal near Adimali in Idukki district on Monday.

The minister visited Mariamma and met the

District Collector to assess the situation following torren-

tial rain in the district.

According to the Minister, the incident appeared to have been caused by accumulated water suddenly flowing down with force rather than a conventional landslide. "All officials, including the collector, are here. We are assessing the situation," he said. On concerns over soil excavation for National Highway works and its possible link to landslides along the Munnar route, the Minister said the matter would be seriously examined. "The possibilities or circumstances behind the soil excavation need to be examined very seriously. We will certainly inspect it. If there is any irregularity, we will investigate it," he said. An orange alert was in force in Idukki until Monday afternoon, with more rain expected over the next two days.

'Innovation in academia should be institutionally supported'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala has long been recognised as a literate state, with impressive achievements in education, especially in school education. Every successive government that has ruled the state has taken utmost care to promote quality, affordable education for every section of society. Yet, beneath this impressive educational record lies a disturbing paradox: the higher a student climbs in Kerala's education system, the less intellectually adventurous the learning experience can become. This has been the main reason for the exodus of students to other states for higher education.

The problem is particularly visible in the arts and science sector. Consider the journey of an average student. By the time a student completes Class X, whether studying the Kerala State syllabus, NCERT, CBSE, ICSE or the International Baccalaureate, he or she has

already encountered concepts that are reasonably sophisticated for that age. Modern school curricula increasingly emphasise inquiry, experimentation, problem-solving and multidisciplinary learning.

Then the student enters a college for a BA or BSc degree. Instead of encountering a dramatic expansion of knowledge, the student often encounters something strangely familiar. Concepts studied at school are repeated, sometimes with greater terminology but not necessarily with greater intellectual depth. A syllabus designed decades ago still dominates classrooms, while the world outside the classroom has changed dramatically.

The irony is that many students do not complain.

Why would they? If the immediate objective is a government job, a teaching position, or simply obtaining a degree, there is little incentive to demand a curriculum that is difficult, experimental or

connected to contemporary society. When examination success becomes the principal measure of learning, memorising becomes more valuable than questioning. This creates a dangerous vicious cycle. Students do not demand change because the system does not reward intellectual risk; teachers hesitate to introduce change because students may resist it; and universities continue with familiar curricula because changing them requires institutional effort.

The consequences are becoming increasingly visible. An average undergraduate student should be able to answer a simple question: How does what I am studying contribute to society? Unfortunately, many students struggle to make that connection. A student studying chemistry should see its relationship with pharmaceuticals, environmental monitoring, materials science, food technology or biotech-



Dr. Biju Dharmapalan

nology. A physics student should understand its connections with electronics, renewable energy, instrumentation, space science and emerging technologies. A biology student should encounter biotechnology, conservation, genomics, public health and climate science.

Similarly, students of history, economics, political science, sociology, literature and other humanities disci-

plines should be able to understand how their knowledge interacts with governance, public policy, media, cultural industries, development and social transformation.

But such linkages are often peripheral rather than integral to the curriculum. Industry exposure is limited, practical learning remains inadequate, and interaction with practitioners outside academia is often treated as an optional activity rather than an essential component of education.

The contrast becomes particularly evident when Kerala students move to cities such as Bengaluru or Delhi for higher studies. They encounter ecosystems where universities, industries, research institutions, startups, cultural organisations, laboratories and professional networks interact more closely. Why should Kerala students have to leave Kerala to experience this?

Kerala has the best-qualified

academic manpower. Many young, highly qualified assistant professors with doctoral degrees from reputed national and international institutions join government and aided institutions with enthusiasm, ideas, and contemporary academic exposure. Some want to redesign courses, introduce innovative teaching methods, develop community projects, establish industry connections or create interdisciplinary programmes.

But innovation within a traditional institutional culture can be difficult. If any teacher attempts to bring change, they face fierce resistance from the student and teaching communities. The major hindrance is student and teacher politics. Politicians need puppets to run the show, so they won't allow students to improve. Senior teachers who have spent years in the system often see innovators as their primary enemy. Ultimately, these energy-rich teachers

feel isolated.

This is where educational institutions and government should proactively interfere. Teachers who innovate should be institutionally supported, not socially punished. Academic leadership should recognise curriculum development, community engagement, research, industry collaboration and innovative pedagogy as meaningful academic contributions.

Kerala does not need to abandon its tradition of accessible higher education. Nor does it need to blindly imitate Bengaluru or Delhi. It needs to build its own model—one that combines Kerala's social commitment to education with contemporary academic practices.

Kerala's challenge is therefore not a shortage of educated people. It is the danger of producing educated people without sufficient intellectual exposure. The state has already demonstrated that it can take education to the

masses. The next challenge is much harder: making higher education intellectually exciting, socially relevant, and globally competitive. That transformation will not happen through a committee with politically aligned members at its core.

It will happen only when government, universities, and management give absolute academic freedom to each teacher capable of bringing innovations in teaching pedagogy and academic culture. Kerala's educational success story should not end with high enrolment and impressive literacy figures. It should move toward an intellectual renewal.

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BJP slams Congress over ex-VP Ansari’s remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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



BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi

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

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

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

He alleged that the Muslim leaders endorsed by the

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

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

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

Responding to a query

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

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

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

Shah to inaugurate national conference of ANTFs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Row over Vande Mataram in Karnataka Assembly

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

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

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

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



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

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

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

J&K Assembly adjourned amid uproar on first day

MOHIT KANDHARI
■ Jammu

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

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

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



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

demanding restoration of Statehood in response.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SSC has no data on candidates affected in 13 phase exams

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

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

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

accountability and reforms in the examination process.

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

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

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

In its written submission



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

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

nal reports prepared on these issues.

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

It said the section monitors the examination during its conduct.

The SSC further disclosed that the examination was originally scheduled from

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

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

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

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

3 TMC leaders held for 2020 Nadda convoy attack

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
■ Kolkata

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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

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

The investigators said both men are close associates of

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

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

tual driver associated with the same Saharanpur chest.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Editor's
TAKE

UN: Trust is running out, reforms cannot wait

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The UN needs peace, not endless speeches

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



SANTHOSH
MATHEW

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Daiv Vani

WISDOM FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE

Let Wisdom Come From Every Side

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

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

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

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

-DAIV

The denial mode: The elephant in the room



LUCKY
KULKARNI

2ND OPINION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Because organisations rarely collapse overnight.

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tata sons uphold its governance framework

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

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

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

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

VANDANA | CHANDIGARH

Odisha's 'living ghosts' expose system gaps

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

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

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

RANGANATHAN SIVAKUMAR | CHENNAI

DUSU result offers fresh perspective

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

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

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

N SADHASIVA REDDY | BENGALURU



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

PHOTO: PTI

TN assembly is not a stage!

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



RAVIKUMAR CHOCKALINGAM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SEMICON India 2026: From silicon to systems



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



The writer is a political analyst



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

opment, education, cultural protection and national unity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a columnist based in Colombo

Mamata faction unveils new logo with football symbol

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kolkata

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

ownership into a contest between two different names and symbols on the ballot.

For the Mamata faction, the choice of name itself carries an unmistakable political message. "Mamata" has been inserted into the party's interim identity, putting the leader's name where the old organisational label had stood, while the football-player symbol gives the faction a new visual marker to take to the electorate.

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

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

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

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

The dispute has also acquired a

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

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

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

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

BJP-Congress clash during campaign for Nagaon bypoll in Assam



Gaurav Gogoi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Nagaon

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ED raids Jaisalmer sites over Belgian entity fund

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Campus security beefed up after IIT student protests

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FACULTY HOLD MARCH IN DOOLLA'S SUPPORT

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

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

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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Raipur/Panji/Mumbai

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

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

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

Several BJP leaders have criticised Mani's skit, alleging



Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

attacks on parents or elders.

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

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

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

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

the Congress party have crossed all limits of political decency, he charged.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Monday came out in support of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over a stand-up comedy act mimicking Prime Minister Narendra Modi at an event in Indore, stating that the Leader of Opposition's "arrow has pierced the BJP's heart".

Speaking to reporters, the Rajya Sabha MP said the ruling party leaders were rattled because Gandhi attacked the prime minister.

A row has erupted after stand-up comedian Pulkit Mani mimicked PM Modi while performing a skit with Gandhi during his 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' youth outreach programme in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city on Saturday.

The Congress, which shared the video on social media, has defended the act as satire/mimicry.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

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

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

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



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

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Guwahati

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

ing knowledge in space technology," the CM said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FROM THE WORLD

NEPAL

PM to attend UNGA session

Nepal Prime Minister Balendra Shah is scheduled to leave for the US on Tuesday, leading a high-level Nepali delegation to attend the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

This will be Shah's first foreign visit since he assumed office in March.

Shah is scheduled to address the General Debate of the UN General Assembly on September 24, foreign ministry officials said on Monday.

The Nepali delegation to the UN will include Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal, Foreign Secretary Amrit Bahadur Rai, Prime Minister's Chief Advisor Kumar Byanjankar and other senior government officials, according to officials in the foreign ministry.

Earlier, a delegation led by Khanal left for New York on Sunday. (PTI)

CANADA

Two Indian students killed

Two Indian students have been killed in a tragic air accident in Canada during their flight training, the Indian mission has said.

Manoj Sivakumar from Tamil Nadu and Srisaran Thirugnanasambantham from Puducherry died while they were on their flight training.

The Consulate General of India in Vancouver on Sunday expressed condolences over their death." The Consulate General of India, Vancouver, expresses its deepest condolences on the tragic demise of Shri Manoj Sivakumar and Shri Srisaran Thirugnanasambantha, two Indian students from Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, who lost their lives in a tragic air accident in Canada during their flight training," the mission said in a post on X.

Our heartfelt sympathies are with their bereaved families and loved ones during this difficult time. (PTI)

Nepal Govt discusses safe resettlement of Bhotekoshi flood victims: Minister

SHIRISH B PRADHAN

Kathmandu

The Nepal Government said on Monday it is holding discussions with local authorities on resettling Bhotekoshi flood victims in safe places as most of them cannot be settled in their original locations devastated by the floods.

Minister for Information and Communication Bikram Timilsina said the government was collaborating and coordinating with various agencies on relief, relocation and reconstruction for people affected by the Bhotekoshi flash floods. Flash



floods, originating near the Nepal-Tibet border on August 26, devastated towns

and villages in northern and central Nepal. The Bhotekoshi River, which

flows south from the Himalayan border region, carried the floodwaters

Russian drones hit Zaporizhzhia after Ukraine's 1,000-drone barrage

SAMYA KULLAB

Kyiv

Russian drones blasted Ukraine's southern city of Zaporizhzhia, a day after Kyiv's forces fired more than 1,000 drones at Russia, officials said Monday.

The war's relentless daily attacks underscore the absence of any significant progress in diplomatic efforts to stop the fighting, more than four years after Russia invaded its neighbour.

There is no sign the war is abating as world leaders gather this week at the UN General Assembly.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he expects to meet with US President Donald Trump at the annual event in New York. Russian President

Vladimir Putin isn't due to attend. European leaders, fearing Moscow has malicious intentions on their continent, are keen to put further pressure on Putin to withdraw from Ukraine, but the Russian leader has given no indication he is ready to give up his goals. The Russian bombardment of Zaporizhzhia late Sunday hit apartment blocks, a university and a shopping mall, among other sites, and wounded five people, Zelenskyy said on social media Monday.

Russia also struck nine other regions of Ukraine, he said."Russia is not backing down from its escalation and is sending many signals that it is ready to expand the war," Zelenskyy said."At

the UN General Assembly, we will discuss how we can achieve peace through joint efforts."

The Russian military overnight targeted Ukrainian logistics hubs, warehouses and ports, among other military-related sites, the Russian Defence Ministry said in a statement Monday.

The attacks came after Ukraine launched a huge swarm of drones at Russia from Saturday to Sunday, including hundreds aimed at Moscow, as voters turned out for the third and last day of a carefully orchestrated parliamentary election.

The Russian Defence Ministry said Monday that its air defences overnight downed 244 Ukrainian



A rescue worker puts out the fire at intratrade centre after Russian drone strikes on Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine on Monday

World leaders meet at UN as planet grapples with war

instead. Russian President Vladimir Putin isn't coming either, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has backed out. France's UN ambassador, Jerome Bonnafont, said it is "extremely critical" for world leaders this week to support the UN as the place where the world's nations meet—especially at a time of such polarisation.

"We believe in multilateralism," he said, "and we believe that the high-level week is the occasion for countries in the world to reaffirm that they prefer cooperation and dialogue to confrontation."

There is no doubt it's been a tough year for the world body. It has been pushed to the sidelines when it comes to its key responsibility of ensuring international peace and security and trying to end major conflicts in the Mideast and Ukraine. The US failure to pay billions of dollars in outstanding arrears has left the organisation's finances in rocky shape.

But veteran UN watcher Richard Gowan, the International Crisis Group's global issues and institutions program director, says 2025 was even worse.

A year ago, he said, people were contemplating that Trump would use his UN speech to announce that the United States would leave the world organisation. Trump didn't announce a pullout last September and the UN muddled through the past 12 months with financial troubles that forced cutbacks to its peace-keeping operations and humanitarian aid.

In recent days, the US paid \$725 million of its dues to the UN's regular operating budget for this year, enough to keep the Trump administration from losing its vote in the General Assembly. The payment was a strong indication Trump will keep the US in the United Nations.

The UN is no longer "in freefall," Gowan said, but it "is stuck in an open-ended or permanent crisis." (AP)



Tuesday along with dozens of ministers. Among the headliners will be US President Donald Trump and French President Emanuel Macron. Both will speak Tuesday after Guterres' opening "state of the world" address.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian speak Wednesday. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

— whom New York Mayor Zoran Mamdani wanted arrested for his treatment of Palestinians in Gaza until he learned he has no such authority — will address the assembly on Thursday. For a second year, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas won't be coming to the UN because the US has refused to give him a visa. He will nonetheless address the assembly by video the same

day. The United States, under its agreement with the UN to host the organization, is required to allow diplomats from all member nations to attend meetings.

Equally telling is who else isn't coming. China's President Xi Jinping is meeting Trump in Washington on Wednesday, yet he is skipping — some diplomats say snubbing — the UN gathering and sending a vice president

UK former-PM Rishi Sunak cautions against skin colour test of nationality

ADITI KHANNA

London

Former British prime minister Rishi Sunak has triggered a debate on race and ethnicity in the country as he cautioned against equating skin colour with nationality and highlighted his own dual English and Hindu identity.

The first politician of Indian heritage to serve at No. 10 Downing Street reflected upon the topic in his regular 'Sunday Times' column, referencing a lecture he delivered at Lord's Cricket Ground last week. Delivering the Marylebone Cricket Club's (MCC) Cowdrey Lecture, Sunak argued in favour of cricket — and sports in general — as a unifying force.

"I worry that Britain's great democratic achievement is coming under strain," writes Sunak.

"There are challenges that we must address: those posed by Islamism and exposed by the reaction to October 7 [attack in Israel], alongside those caused by the failure of those of us in government in recent years to adequately control immigration. "There is, though, something else going on: a risk that we start equating skin colour with nationality. Or that we create different classes of Briton, treating



Former British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

those who arrived more recently as incapable of ever being as British as those who were here in 1707, regardless of how well integrated or patriotic they are," he notes.

With reference to the infamous Tebbit Test, coined by Tory MP Norman Tebbit in April 1990 to claim migrants continuing to support the countries of their heritage over the England cricket team was symbolic of a lack of integration and assimilation within British society.

"For all the criticism I received, this was a Test that anyone could pass. If you supported England because you now saw it as home, you were part of the team regardless of the colour of your skin," reflects Sunak. "Ten-year-old me passed the test without even knowing about it. Born in Southampton, I

would have found it odd not to support England, Hampshire and the Saints... In Britain we've created the world's most successful multi-faith, multi-ethnic democracy. I was a beneficiary of that. Whatever issues people had with me as PM — and there was no shortage of those — neither my race nor my religion was among them.

"No one was outraged by my role in appointing Church of England bishops. I could read a lesson at the King's coronation or light Diwali diyas in Downing Street with my daughters without controversy," he states. The Conservative MP for Richmond then goes on to lament comments from sections of British society during his tenure as PM about whether he can be English while being a "brown Hindu". (PTI)

Merz struggles after regional poll defeat



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz

GEIR MOULSON

Berlin

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz faced a struggle to stabilize his position and keep his agenda on track Monday after voters inflicted two more defeats on his party, ejecting it from a state legislature for the first time in its eight-decade history.

The unpopular Merz vowed to stay on and push through reforms to Germany, Europe's biggest economy, minutes after polls closed Sunday in regional elections in Berlin and in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, a largely rural eastern region on the Baltic Sea coast.

Still, final results underlined the extent of what Merz conceded was a "disaster" in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. His center-right Christian Democratic Union fell just below the 5% of the vote needed to keep seats in the regional parliament, the first time that has happened in 77 years of modern Germany's federal republic, after losing more than half its support.

The CDU also dropped to second place in Berlin behind the hard-left Left Party, which is in pole position to lead the next city government — though Merz's party could, depending on how coalition talks go, still retain city hall.

Neither state is one of Germany's political heavyweights. The CDU's 2023 win in Berlin was its only one in the past 25 years in the capital, which has tended to lean left, and the party was already weak in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

But the manner of its defeat in the latter in particular adds to the headwinds Merz faces after a stinging defeat by the far-right Alternative for Germany two weeks ago in Saxony-Anhalt, another region in the formerly communist east, damaged his authority and set off speculation that he might be replaced. Alternative for Germany, or AfD, emerged as the strongest party in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, but the center-left Social Democrats — the junior party in Merz's national governing coalition — were fairly close behind after a campaign focused squarely on the state governor, Manuela Schwesig, as a bulwark against the far-right party. That polarization helped squeeze other mainstream parties, including the CDU.

A left-leaning three-party coalition under Schwesig would have a majority in the new regional legislature.

Schwesig and others in the governing parties have cast doubt on aspects of the federal Government's reform agenda, which is meant to bolster a chronically sluggish economy.

The reform plans include a potentially painful overhaul of the creaking pension system, a reduction of Germany's stifling bureaucracy and cuts to income tax for low- and middle-income families. The head of the Social Democrats' group in the national parliament, Matthias Miersch, said it was clear that "we need reforms." (AP)

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RBI issues Basel III market risk capital norms for banks

Banks will not be allowed to reclassify instruments between trading book and banking book for regulatory arbitrage with the intention of achieving lower capital requirements, according to the RBI's directions on minimum capital requirements for market risk. The directions, issued on Monday, aim to align the market risk guidelines with the revised Basel III framework, while ensuring simplicity of regulations, and providing flexibility, and ease of adoption. The directions are applicable to all commercial banks, except small finance banks, payments banks and local area banks. RBI said the directions will take effect from April 1, 2027, ensuring sufficient lead time for banks. "A bank shall not reclassify instruments between the trading book and the banking book for regulatory arbitrage, ie, with the intention of achieving lower capital requirements," the central bank said. It further said that banks will have to use the simplified standardised approach (SSA) for computing risk-weighted assets for market risk.

Next-generation leaders stress on preserving culture

The next-generation leaders of family-run enterprises on Monday stressed preserving their core values while embracing agility, diversity, innovation and technology as they navigate leadership transitions in their legacy businesses. Participating in a panel discussion, Lakshmi Venu, Vice Chairman of Tractors and Farm Equipment Ltd (TAFE), Rama Kirloskar, Joint Managing Director of Kirloskar Brothers Ltd (KBL), and Laxit Awla, Executive Director and CEO of SAEL Industries Ltd, shared their perspectives on leadership, succession, workforce diversity and the evolving business landscape. Venu, who took over as Vice Chairman after working alongside her mother Mallika Srinivasan for nearly two decades, said credibility at TAFE had to be earned rather than assumed. One of the most important lessons she learnt while joining TAFE was to first understand the organisation's culture and values before attempting to drive results, Venu said.

Chouhan suspends marketing officer over bribery allegations

Union Agriculture Minister Shriraj Singh Chouhan on Monday ordered the immediate suspension of a marketing officer in the ministry, following a complaint of bribery in Madhya Pradesh's Sehore district. According to the complaint, Anurag, a marketing officer in the agriculture ministry, allegedly demanded money in exchange for releasing subsidy amounts during an inspection in Sehore, the ministry said in a statement. He allegedly sought ₹1 lakh from Shivay Warehouse in Bhairunda tehsil and ₹60,000 from Shri Krishna Warehouse in Beherakhedi village in Rehti area, it said. The complaint was brought to the notice of the Union minister, who took a "serious note" of the allegations and directed immediate action. "Following the directions, Marketing Officer Anurag was suspended with immediate effect," the statement said. The ministry said the action underlines its position that complaints of irregularities or bribery in government processes involving farmers and warehouse operators will be taken seriously and acted upon.

Maruti Suzuki to raise women's intake to 30% at institute

Maruti Suzuki India Limited on Monday said it aims to raise female enrolment at its Japan-India Institute for Manufacturing (JIM) at Uncha Majra, Manesar, from about 5 per cent in the current academic year to 30 per cent by 2028-29. The carmaker has introduced a 100 per cent tuition fee waiver for women students from this academic year and plans to build a dedicated women's hostel at the campus, it said in a statement. The Manesar institute is one of four JIMs operated by the company, the others are at Mehana and Gandhinagar in Gujarat and Sonipat in Haryana. The JIM

programme is a joint initiative of the governments of India and Japan, set up to create a pool of skilled workers for the Indian manufacturing sector. JIM Uncha Majra offers training in nine trades, most linked to the automotive industry. The institute is inducting female students in line with job opportunities in the surrounding industri-

The Pioneer

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM | TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

Sensex jumps 564 pts, Nifty gains for 4th day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Benchmark stock index Sensex climbed 564 points while the Nifty rose for the fourth consecutive session on Monday, supported by cooling crude oil prices, fresh foreign fund inflows and a positive trend in global equities. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 564.03 points, or 0.76 per cent, to settle at a more-than-a-week high of 74,858.99. During the day, it surged 692.44 points, or 0.93 per cent, to 74,987.40. Rising for the fourth day, the 50-share NSE Nifty closed higher by 67.90 points, or 0.29 per cent, at 23,414.30. Among the 30 Sensex firms, UltraTech

Cement jumped 4.11 per cent. HCL Tech, Eternal, Titan, ITC and Tech Mahindra were also among the prominent winners. Bharti Airtel, Power Grid, Infosys and Adani Ports were among the laggards. "Indian equity benchmarks closed higher today, extending their recent recovery as easing crude oil prices and broad-based buying improved market sentiment. The moderation in energy prices offered some relief on concerns over India's import bill, inflation outlook and corporate margins, although the broader backdrop remained cautious amid persistent geopolitical uncertainty," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

The BSE MidCap Select index went up by 0.35 per cent, while SmallCap Select index dipped 0.05 per cent. Among the BSE sectoral indices, Realty jumped 1.71 per cent, Consumer Durables 1.55 per cent, Healthcare 1.12

per cent, FMCG 1.07 per cent, Housing Finance 0.80 per cent and Top 10 Banks 0.71 per cent. Utilities, Auto, Insurance, Power, MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt and MidSmall Private Banks were

India, Canada to resume trade talks from October 5: Goyal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The next round of talks for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and Canada will be held from October 5, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Monday. "...the next 90 days should be a very defining period in the Canada-India relationship," he told reporters here. The fourth round of negotiations concluded here on September 18. The talks are moving at a faster pace as both the countries are targeting to conclude the negotiations by the end of this year. "Both sides have resolved to fast-track negotiations, in view of which our team is now slated to go for the fifth round on October 5," Goyal said. The five-day talks will

end on October 9. Canada's International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu was in Mumbai last week to hold talks with Goyal. India's major exports to Canada include pharmaceuticals, iron and steel, seafood, cotton garments, electronic goods and chemicals. Key imports from Canada include pulses, pearls and semi-precious stones, coal, fertilisers, paper and crude petroleum. India's services exports to Canada are led by telecommunications, computer and information services, and other business services. Two-way trade reached \$30.4 billion in 2025 and the target is double that to \$70 billion by 2030. When asked about the Government's backup plan on the US tariffs, Goyal said, "Details are currently coming; once we have studied them,

and at an appropriate time, we will discuss with you." US President Donald Trump on September 18 signed the Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act, which authorises the President to impose tariffs of up to 100 per cent on countries buying Russian oil and gas, including China and India. The law comes into effect within 30 days of signing by the President and requires him to impose duties of up to 100 per cent on

goods imported from countries that are the top five purchasers of Russian crude oil or natural gas by total volume during the 12 months preceding enactment. Exporters have expressed serious concerns over the law, stating that if high tariffs are imposed by the US on Indian goods, it could hurt trade ties. The US is the largest trading partner of India. During April-August 2026-27, India's merchandise

exports to the US grew 6.17 per cent to \$42.8 billion, while imports increased 29.6 per cent to \$28 billion. In 2025-26, bilateral trade grew 6.5 per cent to \$140.76 billion from \$132.2 billion (exports \$87.3 billion and imports \$53.45 billion) in 2024-25. Think tank GTRI has said that the new US law puts India at direct risk of tariffs of up to 100 per cent and may be used to pressure New Delhi to cut Russian oil purchases and accept an unequal bilateral trade agreement, perhaps in return for restoring the 18 per cent rate offered in the February 6 joint statement. According to the think tank, in July 2026, Russia supplied India with crude worth USD 7.27 billion — 51.1 per cent of its total crude imports of \$14.21 billion. On the India-EU trade pact,

Goyal said it is expected to come into force in the coming months. Goyal said the pact is expected to be ratified by the EU parliament in the next three months or so and is likely to come into effect within the next six-seven months. On January 27, the two sides announced the conclusion of trade pact negotiations. Under the deal, the EU will eliminate import duty on 90 per cent of Indian goods on the first day of implementation of the agreement. On three per cent, levies will be eliminated in a phased manner in seven years. On the India-Chile trade agreement, the minister said Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal recently visited Chile to review the progress of talks. "I believe in the coming few months, we will hear some good news," he added.

AI adoption, reskilling key to future growth: Industry leaders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Industry leaders on Monday said businesses should adapt quickly to changing market conditions and invest in technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) to build resilience and agile for long-term growth. Businesses are now operating in an era of uncertainty driven by geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, and rapid regulatory changes, they said while speaking during a panel discussion titled "Leading Through the Next Disruption: Growth, Resilience and Reinvention" organised by the All India Management Association (AIMA). Vishal Kampani, Senior Vice President, AIMA, and Vice Chairman & Managing Director of JM Financial, said businesses are increasingly facing short-term shocks that require tactical responses in addition to long-term strategy. "One thing for certain today is that we are going to consistently face uncertainty in every

form. Tact in business is becoming as important as strategy," Kampani said. On AI funding, Kampani said a large share of global AI investment was going into compute and energy capacity, an area where India would find it difficult to compete with the US and China. India's bigger opportunity, he said, lay on the application side, drawing a parallel with how the country built its own technology stack and startup ecosystem despite not having built the backbone of the early internet. Rajiv Vastupal, Group Chairman & Managing Director, Rajiv Petrochemicals, said extreme volatility in crude, shipping and petrochemical prices, which now change multiple times a week, had made forecasting difficult. He said the Covid-19 pandemic had pushed even older executives to adopt digital communication tools, which in turn accelerated the adoption of AI-linked systems such as ERP software for real-time business data.

Jute manufacturers to see 15% volume growth in FY27 on stronger demand, report Crisil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Jute manufacturers are expected to witness sales volume growth of 15 per cent this financial year, supported by stronger demand and a favourable cost environment, a Crisil Ratings report said on Monday. India's jute industry is set for a meaningful recovery this fiscal after two challenging years marked by weak demand, high raw material costs and pressure on profitability, the report said. A revival in domestic demand, improving export prospects and softer raw jute prices are expected to drive growth, improve profitability and support the industry's credit profiles. It said sales volumes are projected to grow around 15 per cent this fiscal year, reversing an annualised decline of around 10 per cent over the previous two fiscals. The recovery is expected to be supported by stronger demand and a more favourable cost environment, it added. The report further said domestic demand is projected to increase about 20 per cent this fiscal, reversing a cumulative decline at a similar pace over the preceding two years.

The downturn was largely triggered by a sharp rise in raw jute prices, which manufacturers passed on to customers, dampening demand and prompting a shift towards lower-cost alternative packaging materials, it said. With input costs now moderating, product prices are expected to soften, supporting a recovery in demand. The rating agency said that export demand is also beginning to show signs of improvement. Growth in downstream sectors such as home textiles, lifestyle products and other value-added jute applications is expected to support exports. In addition, the rationalisation of US tariffs from the elevated levels seen last fiscal could improve the competitiveness of Indian jute products in global markets. "While improving demand will support revenue growth, profitability

is likely to receive an even larger boost from easing raw material costs. Better crop output has improved domestic availability of raw jute and led to softer prices despite subdued imports. This is significant because raw jute accounts for 60-65 per cent of the industry's operating expenses. Lower fibre costs and improved capacity utilisation should drive up profitability. Consequently, operating margins are projected to expand by 130 basis points (bps) to nearly 9 per cent in FY27, Crisil Ratings Senior Director Rahul Guha said. Raw jute prices had risen by more than 10 per cent last fiscal because of supply constraints; however, higher minimum support prices encouraged farmers to increase acreage, resulting in better crop output this year.

"The expected improvement in profitability this fiscal, combined with limited debt-funded capex, should strengthen credit metrics. Healthy cash accruals are likely to enable manufacturers to comfortably fund maintenance capex and working capital requirements while maintaining adequate liquidity," said the report. Crisil Ratings Director Argha Chanda said that beyond the cyclical recovery, the industry stands to benefit from structural shifts towards sustainable materials. "Growing environmental awareness, tighter rules on single-use plastics and rising preference for biodegradable alternatives are creating new opportunities for jute-based products. Emerging applications in geotextiles, agro-textiles, home decor, industrial packaging and other value-added segments are gradually expanding the addressable market. While value-added applications currently account for only 12 per cent of revenue, they offer better realisations and could become important drivers of long-term growth," Chanda added. However, Crisil Ratings said the pace and sustainability of the demand revival, particularly in export markets, will remain critical.

AI must serve humanity, humans should be in control, says Microsoft India chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

As a global debate rages over AI safety, Microsoft India and South Asia President, Puneet Chandok on Monday said the tech company strongly believes that Artificial Intelligence must remain focused on serving humanity, with humans firmly in control of the technology. In an interview to PTI, Chandok said there is "real energy" in India around deploying, diffusing and innovating with AI, and that the country is not just consuming technology but also building it, as evidenced in Microsoft's own operations here. The company has more

Microsoft India and South Asia President Puneet Chandok

than 23,000 engineers across 10 cities in India and the largest R&D lab outside the US, underscoring the nation's growing role in developing AI technology. Microsoft has topped up its India commitment with a fresh \$17.5 billion investment over 2026-29, taking its total pledge to \$20.5 billion. The fresh investment, announced

in December 2025, built on the \$3 billion announced earlier that year, will support cloud and AI infrastructure, skilling and ongoing operations. On jobs, Chandok said AI is creating new roles such as AI engineers and agent orchestrators, while also changing the nature of existing functions by taking over basic execution, data collection and other routine tasks. He said the shift is pushing people towards higher-value work, with AI and agents handling more of the "grunt work." "The work is changing, not ending," Chandok emphasised. The Microsoft India honcho asserted that AI must be developed to serve humanity.

Rising steel demand to boost local production: Naveen Jindal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

India's lower per capita steel consumption compared to the global average leaves ample headroom for domestic output to be absorbed locally, Indian Steel Association President Naveen Jindal said on Monday.

India's per capita steel consumption is significantly lower at around 107 kg annually compared to the world average of 220 kg, Jindal told reporters on the sidelines of the 53rd National Management Convention organised by All India Management Association (AIMA).

"India is a very big market in itself. There is a huge scope to grow that is why the government has a target of producing 300 MT by 2030. The Government is working on infra all over the country," he said in reply to a question if protectionist measures being taken by various countries will impact the Indian steel players.

Jindal, who is also the Chairman of Jindal Steel,



Indian Steel Association President Naveen Jindal

said the domestic steel sector is taking multiple measures to reduce carbon emissions to help India meet net zero goals as set by the Government.

On the West Asia crisis, he said, "Wars do not help anyone. These are very destructive, and that's why PM Narendra Modi has been focusing on Atmanirbhara (self-reliance) in energy security. Although we are dependent on fuel, in energy we have enough sources in

the country; there is no shortage. Compared to other large economies, India is doing very well."

Steel prices have gained momentum over the last few weeks due to a coking coal rate increase of \$50-60 per tonne. Steel makers are expecting the price trend continue in the next quarter as well.

Replying to a question related to steel prices, Jindal said, "We are able to provide steel to all the customers in India at a very

competitive price. There is lot of competition in India and if you compare the steel prices in the last 20 years, they have gone up by only 10 pc in the last 20 years if you compare it to other metals."

As per official data, India's crude steel output continued its upward trajectory in 2025-26, growing by over 10.7 per cent year-on-year to around 168.4 million tonnes during April-March, reflecting sustained industrial momentum.

IOC board clears ₹2,449 crore gas pipeline project

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The board of directors of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has approved an investment of ₹2,448.70 crore for the construction and operation of a 424.65-km natural gas pipeline connecting Kochi in Kerala with Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu, according to a regulatory filing on Monday.

The Kochi-Kanyakumari-Thoothukudi Pipeline (KTPL) will run from Kochi to Thoothukudi and have a system capacity, including common-carrier capacity, of 6.84 million standard cubic metres a day (mmscmd), the company said.

At least 1.71 mmscmd of the pipeline's capacity will be available as common-carrier capacity, allowing third parties access to the network in line with applicable regulations. The investment approval was granted at the board meeting held on Monday, the company said.

The project will strengthen the natural gas pipeline network along India's southern coast, connecting gas infrastructure in Kerala with demand centres in southern Tamil Nadu.



Tata Steel wants discussion with UK Govt over delayed EAF project: Narendran

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Tata Steel is looking to have a discussion with the UK Government to discuss issues being faced in timely implementation of the electric arc furnace (EAF) project at Port Talbot, the company's CEO TV Narendran said.

The company official noted that there is no delay from Tata Steel in construction of 3.2 million tonne project being set up at an investment of 1.25 billion pounds.

"We are in conversation with the UK Government to say let's have a discussion on what can be done," Narendran told media on the sidelines of the 53rd National Management Convention organised by All India Management Association (AIMA).

He made the remarks while replying to a question on the future course of action for the UK project, which is facing delays in securing power supply. In August, Narendran had said Tata Steel UK is expecting to secure access to electricity for its 3.2 million tonne electric arc furnace by 2029.

In May 2024, Tata Steel signed a connection offer with the Electricity



System Operator (ESO). The agreement involves National Grid building new electrical infrastructure capable of powering the 3.2 million tonne electric arc furnace by the end of 2027.

The project — being built at 500 million pounds of Government support — aims to reduce site-level CO2 emissions by 90 per cent — equivalent to 5 million tonnes annually. On whether Tata Steel has sought fresh funds from the UK Government, Narendran, without denying, said "it is too early to say where we are but there is a conversation to share with them regarding concerns."

On the outlook for the sector, he said while international markets are still struggling, India is witnessing a rising demand.

Govt pushes harmonised data infrastructure: MoSPI Secretary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Government is taking steps to build a harmonised data infrastructure to ensure that information can be systematically discovered, understood, connected and utilised, MoSPI Secretary Saurabh Garg said on Monday. Garg was addressing a session at AIMA's 53rd National Management Convention here.

A harmonised data infrastructure is extremely necessary to ensure that data can be systematically discovered, understood, connected and utilised, said the Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, noting that at times two words have different definitions.

He said the Centre as well as the state governments are involved in a five-step process to build such infrastructure, especially given the fact that data is the raw material for AI.



MoSPI Secretary Saurabh Garg

"A five-step process we have started both across ministries and departments and States...the first step is to have Government data which is harmonised and then we can look at other data in the private

sector and others can join in," Garg said. The second step is maintaining metadata, he added.

The next will be bringing uniformity in definitions across ministries and departments. The fourth

is to have identifiers so that different data sets can be compared. And the fifth step towards a harmonised data infrastructure is having a quality assessment while using data, he added.

Garg said the availability of updated data is necessary for the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047. To ensure data harmonisation, it is important that the quality of data is universally recognised.

Speaking further, the official said India needs to grow at an average rate of 8 to 9 per cent to become \$30 trillion.

"Honestly, we are talking of a 30 trillion economy of GDP from a \$4 trillion economy now. We have been growing at around 7-8 per cent for the past few years. If we need 30 trillion, we need to grow at around 9 per cent. So, it is not something which is unachievable. We have been growing at 7-8 per cent real growth," he said.

Govt dissolves 37-year-old Digital Communications Commission

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Government has notified the dissolution of the Digital Communications Commission, an apex inter-departmental decision-making body at the Department of Telecom formed around 37 years ago to decide on policy matters and subjects with significant financial implications.

Formed in 1989 as the Telecom Commission, it was renamed as the Digital Communications Commission in 2018. "...the Government of India has decided that the Digital Communications Commission be dissolved. Now, therefore, with effect



from the date of publication of this resolution, the Digital Communications Commission shall stand dissolved," a notification dated September 19 said. The apex decision-making body comprising senior officials from NITI Aayog, the Finance Ministry, the Department of Industrial Policy and

Promotion and other departments helped resolve contentious issues. The Commission firmed up decisions on the majority of telecom matters before they were sent to the Cabinet for final approval.

The Commission helped in taking decisions on matters like spectrum price and recommendations by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India. The body held its last meeting on September 3, where it firmed up the decision on satcom spectrum. Elon Musk-led Starlink, Bharti Group-backed Eutelsat OneWeb and Reliance Industries Ltd's Jio Satellite Communications have received permission to start satcom services in India.

Balmer Lawrie plans ₹500 crore capex over 3 years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Kolkata

Diversified public sector enterprise Balmer Lawrie & Co Ltd is rolling out a capital expenditure programme of nearly ₹500 crore over the next three years, driven primarily by an aggressive expansion in its rail, Third-Party Logistics (3PL) and travel footprint, a top company official said on Monday.

Of the total estimated ₹500 crore outlay, the railway logistics segment will absorb ₹200-₹250 crore, while around Rs 100 crore is allocated towards routine operational capex across other existing verticals: packaging, greases and lubricants, and chemicals, Chairman and Managing Director Adhip Nath Palchaudhuri said on the



sidelines of the 109th AGM.

The company is also deploying ₹50-₹60 crore towards expanding its 3PL operations, alongside investments in cold chain facilities and grease and lubricants small packaging units, and introducing new product variants in packaging and travel businesses, he said.

Under its logistics roadmap, Balmer Lawrie

aims to scale up its total fleet to 15 railway rakes, from the three currently operated on a lease model.

In a first, the company will directly acquire three rakes, and tenders have been floated for these. In the first phase, a total of seven more rakes will be added to build greater capacity, including through leasing, after securing fresh

rail freight business from iron-ore miner NMDC.

"Railway logistics has emerged as a very strong segment for us where we are putting in significant capex. We are right now running three rakes, and we intend to grow much more, aiming to bring that to around 15 rakes," Palchaudhuri said.

"With one rake typically costing around ₹20 to ₹25 crore, acquiring railway assets will account for a major chunk of our ₹500 odd crore capex over the next few years," he said.

In the 3PL vertical, the company is establishing a hub-and-spoke logistics network anchored by a central hub at Dankuni, with spokes expanding to locations such as Siliguri, Guwahati and Bhubaneswar to strengthen regional reach.

ONGC strikes gas in Mahanadi deepwater well

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhubaneswar

Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) has struck gas in a deepwater well off India's eastern coast, with the discovery's proximity to Odisha potentially allowing faster development if appraisal confirms commercial viability, the State-run explorer said on Monday.

ONGC made the discovery on September 18 at the MN-DW18-1-H-D well in the Mahanadi Offshore Basin, about 43 km off Konark, as part of its Samudra Manthan deepwater exploration campaign, the company said in a statement.

The well, the first drilled by ONGC in the Mahanadi Basin under the campaign, encountered gas at a depth of 1,441-



1,452 metres after being drilled to a target depth of 1,623 metres. The well has been flowing gas for the past three days, with "encouraging flow and reservoir pressure," ONGC said. The discovery is subject to further appraisal and commercial evaluation, the company said. Its relatively short distance from the Odisha coast could

support early monetisation if the discovery proves commercially viable, while the find and other discoveries in the area could potentially be developed using shared facilities, ONGC said.

Such development could be enabled under the Petroleum and Natural Gas Rules, 2025, allowing deepwater resources in the area to

be brought into production through shared infrastructure.

The discovery adds to ONGC's push to expand exploration in India's deepwater basins as the country seeks to increase domestic hydrocarbon production and reduce reliance on imports.

The well was spudded on July 25 using drillship Platinum Explorer. The discovery comes as ONGC expands its focus on frontier offshore acreage, where successful deepwater finds can require significant investment in appraisal and infrastructure before commercial production begins. For the Mahanadi Basin discovery, the next steps will include further appraisal of the reservoir, assessment of recoverable resources and a commercial evaluation before any development decision is taken.

Delhi Gharana Tabla exponent concludes Europe tour

New Delhi: Delhi Gharana tabla artist Suraj Nirwan has concluded his month-and-a-half-long Europe Tour 2026. The tour featured solo performances, jugalbandi, workshops, studio recordings and a documentary shoot, presenting the Gharana's distinct do-ungli-baaj, peshkar, kayadas, gat-fard and relas to Western audiences.

It opened in Munich with 'AETERNA KALA-SUTRA' organised by WIN-World in Nations and SK events. He then performed in Dornbirn, Austria, at Netzwerk Tanz for Secret Garden Yoga with a recital



and Naad Yoga session.

The core Italy leg included L'Associazione Radici's 'MUSICHE DAL MONDO' festival, 'NAMASTE ITALIA' at Factory Zero, Senigallia, a jazz recording in Arcevia with Motswako Jazz Collective, and concluded in Falconara with 'Indian Confluence' at Centro Pergoli by AMAT. (PNS)

NHAI issues guidelines for access-controlled highways

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

State-owned NHAI on Monday said the lane configuration of high-speed national highways will be standardised based on detailed traffic assessment to facilitate seamless movement, as the authority released new comprehensive guidelines for design and development of access-controlled high-speed NHs.

The authority released new comprehensive guidelines that seek to bring uniformity in standards for preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) of high-speed NH corridors and bring greater consistency in technical standards, strengthen road safety, and improve operational efficiency across the National Highway network, an official statement said.

The guidelines will apply to all upcoming 4/6 lane Greenfield and Brownfield high-speed access-controlled National Highways, it added.

NHAI said the guidelines are



aligned with the long-term Government of India's strategic roadmap which envisages the development of 50,000 km of access-controlled High-Speed Corridors under Viksit Bharat 2047, boosting connectivity and reducing logistics costs.

At present, there are no separate standards and specifications governing planning and designing of access-controlled High-Speed National Highways, other than Expressways.

Variations have been observed in the standards adopted for preparation of

DPR for such corridors. The new guidelines address this requirement by providing a uniform set of technical and safety provisions, it said.

NHAI said a key focus of the guidelines is on incorporation of additional safety measures appropriate with high-speed traffic conditions on corridors. Special provisions have been prescribed for advance notification of exits and entries, enabling National Highway users to anticipate and safely navigate upcoming access and egress points.

RPF busts laptop theft bid at New Delhi station

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

In a significant breakthrough in curbing the theft of passengers' belongings, particularly laptop bags, at New Delhi Railway Station and onboard trains, the Railway Protection Force (RPF), Delhi Division, has apprehended a suspected laptop thief and recovered stolen property during a sustained CCTV-based surveillance operation.

Several complaints regarding theft of laptop bags from passengers travelling by train and from New Delhi Railway Station had been received through the Rail Madad/139 helpline. Taking the matter seriously, RPF, Delhi Division, constituted two dedicated teams to identify and apprehend the persons involved in such thefts. The teams undertook continuous and intensive CCTV surveillance and analysis of suspicious movements at New Delhi Railway Station. During the course of surveillance, one suspect was identified.



On Sunday, the RPF teams successfully apprehended the suspect red-handed with one laptop bag at the Foot Over Bridge (FOB), New Delhi Railway Station. The apprehended person has been identified as Shadab S/o Shamsad, aged about 25 years, R/o Village/PO/PS Mundali, District Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. The accused, along with the recovered property, was handed over to GRP, New Delhi Railway Station, for further legal action in connection with the e-FIR.

During questioning/disclosure, the accused reportedly revealed his involve-

ment in 12-15 incidents of laptop theft and disclosed that he had sold the stolen laptops at Silver Impact Shop, Nirman Vihar. Acting promptly on this information, the GRP and RPF team conducted further proceedings and recovered 11 laptops from the said shop.

Pushpesh Raman Tripathi, Divisional Railway Manager, Delhi, appreciated the dedicated efforts of the RPF personnel involved in the operation and emphasised that passenger safety and protection of passengers' belongings remain a priority of RPF.

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar
Expression of Interest (Eoi) Notice
The Department of G.N.D.U, Amritsar invites Sealed (Eoi) for the following:

Sr. No.	Expression of Interest (Eoi)	Closing Date & Time
1	Allotment for e-lobby (near Administrative Block)	01-10-2028
2	Allotment for administrative Block Canteen	01-10-2028
3	Allotment for Food Court Unit-4 (Fast Food outlet)	01-10-2026

For more details log on to <https://digital.gndu.ac.in>
2426/12/2026-27/15396 Dated CHD - 21/09/2026

BRIEFLY

This bronze medal is more than my life: Suchika Tariyal



"I can now die happily," an emotional Suchika Tariyal said on Monday after becoming India's first Asian Games medal winner in Mixed Martial Arts. The 36-year-old Suchika settled for a bronze in the women's traditional 60kg mixed martial arts event as Singapore's Hui Hoon Teo was awarded the semifinal on the basis of her lesser weight after the two fighters drew a fiercely-contested bout.

"This is more than my life. I will never forget that I came to Japan and got a medal for my country. I can now happily die," Suchika, who hails from Kilo village in Haryana's Rohtak district, told PTI in an exclusive interaction after her bout. "I have played in Commonwealth Games (2022) in judo, where I missed the fight of the bronze. So, I wanted to get a medal for my country, so that people know me. I am also a world champion in Jiu-Jitsu. And I also played Asian Games in Kurash, but I could not get a medal there. Then I got a second chance to represent myself here," she said. (PTI)

Asian Games: Srihari finishes 10th in 50m backstroke final



Srihari Nataraj finished a disappointing 10th in the 50m backstroke final at the Asian Games as Indian swimmers endured another forgettable day with most of them failing to make it beyond the heats here on Monday.

Nataraj, a two-time Olympian, clocked 25.52 seconds to finish last in the final, slower than his 25.37-second effort in the heats earlier in the day.

China's Jiayu Xu smashed the Games record enroute the gold medal. He clocked 24.04 to erase Japanese swimmer Junya Koga's mark of 24.28 set at the Incheon edition in 2014.

Nataraj had clocked 25.37 seconds, the same as Iran's Homer Abbasi, to finish third in his heat and joint ninth overall and qualify for the final.

The 25-year-old, competing in his third Asian Games, has a personal best of 25.18 seconds in the event, which he set in Belgrade in June 2021. (PTI)

Beyond the medal table: Why the Asian Games matter to India's place in Asia



The 20th Asian Games will officially get underway in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, on September 19, bringing together the best sporting talent from across the continent. For India, the immediate objective is obvious, build on the historic performance in Hangzhou and once again establish itself among Asia's leading sporting nations.

But the Asian Games represent something larger than a collection of medals. For India, success in Nagoya is also about positioning itself within Asia, not merely as an economic, technological or geopolitical power, but as a country whose sporting capabilities increasingly match its broader ambitions.

At the Hangzhou Asian Games, held in 2023 after being postponed from 2022, India crossed the 100-medal mark for the first time, winning a record 106 medals, including 28 gold. It finished fourth in the medal standings, behind the continent's traditional sporting giants China, Japan and South Korea.

That fourth-place finish is significant. China, Japan and South Korea have for decades represented the gold standard of Asian sport. Their sporting ecosystems, infrastructure, coaching systems and Olympic traditions are deeply established. India breaking into that group, even if a little behind the top three, is an important marker of its changing sporting profile.

The significance of Hangzhou



was not simply that India won 106 medals. India had been winning respectable numbers of medals at the Asian Games for several editions. What changed was the scale and particularly the number of gold medals. Twenty-eight golds helped India finish ahead of Iran, Uzbekistan and Indonesia and firmly establish itself as the fourth-ranked sporting nation in Asia at the Games.

This improvement has not happened by accident. An improved medal tally since the 2006 Asian Games is a reflection of progressive investment India has made in a group of sports that have become the backbone of its international ambitions: shooting, wrestling, boxing, badminton and athletics among them. Athletics, in particular, has traditionally been an area where India performs considerably better at the Asian Games than at the Olympics.

The competition should also not be dismissed simply because the Olympics remain the ultimate benchmark. In sports such as shooting, wrestling, boxing and badminton, the Asian Games bring together an extraordinary concen-

tration of world-class talent. China, Japan and South Korea, among others, are formidable opponents. A gold medal in such an environment is therefore not merely a continental achievement; it is valuable preparation for the Olympics.

But there is another dimension to this success that deserves greater attention: soft power.

Sport has always been one of the most visible expressions of national capability. Countries use sporting success to project confidence, organisational capacity and national identity. The Asian Games are particularly important for India because they provide a stage on which it competes directly with the countries that dominate the wider Asian geopolitical landscape.

China's sporting supremacy reinforces its image as a global power. Japan's Olympic tradition and sporting infrastructure complement its technological and economic standing. South Korea's success in sports sits alongside its extraordinary influence in technology, entertainment and culture.

India's rise is not confined to its economy, technology, space pro-

gramme or diplomatic influence. It is also becoming visible on the sporting field and that can be further sustained by a strong performance in the Asian Games.

The Commonwealth Games provide another indication of this trajectory. India finished fourth at Glasgow 2026 with 39 medals, despite a heavily reduced programme that excluded several of its traditional strengths. The Asian Games, however, are a much more meaningful test of India's standing because the field represents its own neighbourhood and includes the sporting powerhouses against whom India must ultimately measure itself.

There is, nevertheless, an important caveat. India has established itself as a significant power at the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games, but it has not yet converted that strength into equivalent Olympic success. The Olympics remain a different level of competition, both in depth and pressure.

That conversion must ultimately be the objective. A short-term Olympic target of 12-15 medals and a place inside the top 20 over

the next 2-3 editions would represent a significant breakthrough.

Nagoya, therefore, should not be viewed simply through the question of whether India can surpass 106 medals. That would be an important achievement, but the larger question is whether India can consolidate its position among Asia's leading sporting nations.

A strong fourth-place finish or, better still, a move into the top three would have significance beyond the medal table. It would demonstrate that India's emergence as a major Asian power is increasingly visible in another arena.

The Olympics remain the pinnacle of sport. But the Asian Games are Asia's sporting mirror. And if India can continue to see itself near the top of that mirror, it will strengthen not only its sporting confidence, but also the image of India as one of the continent's leading powers.

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

Men's badminton team beat Bangladesh to enter Asiad quarters



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Ichinomiya (Japan)

The Indian men's badminton team blanked Bangladesh 3-0 to enter the quarterfinals of the Asian Games here on Monday.

The trio of Lakshya Sen, Ayush Shetty and K Srikanth did not drop a single game in a domineering performance to set up a clash with hosts Japan on



Tuesday.

The women's team will also be playing Japan in the last-

eight stage. Lakshya was the first to take the court on Monday, up against Iln Ayman Jaman, and it took him less than half an hour to clinch a 21-4 21-12 win, which set the tone for India. Next up was Ayush Shetty against Gourab Singh and he too got the job done in 25 minutes, closing it 21-4 21-13 in another facile

win for the country.

Srikanth then made sure that the doubles matches need not take place as he romped to a 21-15 21-9 triumph over Jumar Al Amin in a 23-minute contest.

Lakshya said the match may have been a lopsided but was important in the larger scheme of things.

"It was important for me to get to know the conditions. Yeah, on paper it was not a very tough match, but the first match can be very tricky. So I just came in with the approach to just get a good start and then find my rhythm and adjust to the court. Once I knew I was winning the match, it was more about getting to know the court better," he said.

Gold awaited but shooters deliver silver for India at Asiad



AJAI MASAND/PHILEM DIPAK SINGH
■ Nagoya

Gold eluded India but medals trickled in from the shooting range for the second successive day even as the country's first ever podium finish in mixed martial arts medal became more a tale of heartbreak than history in Asian Games here on Monday.

Suchika Tariyal wept on the mat as being just 700gm more than Singaporean Hui Hoon Teo in the morning weigh-in prevented her from making the summit clash after a bitterly-contested semifinal ended drawn. She had to settle for bronze, which was India's first ever in the combat sport but one that could have been bettered.

The Indian's slightly higher weight proved decisive as technical rules allowed the lighter competitor to move ahead in case of a draw. India's overall tally stood at six medals, four silver and two bronze.

The focus was shooting range where three medals — two silver a bronze — were added to the kitty. Himanshu Dhillon and Rudranksh Patil held their nerve in a gripping shootout to win the individual silver and bronze in men's 10m air rifle after combining with Parth Mane to fetch team silver. (PTI)

Public should ask why I did weight cut alone: Varun

PHILEM DIPAK SINGH
■ Nagoya



India's Mixed Martial Arts fighter Varun Sanyal on Monday revealed that his blackout during a sauna session at the ongoing Asian Games was probably caused by a "foolish" solo attempt at cutting weight but hinted that he did not do it out of choice.

Sanyal was on Sunday forced to withdraw from the Asian Games MMA competition without competing even once after exhaustion and dehydration caused him to pass out during a sauna session. He was declared medically unfit for event.

"I came here on two

weeks' notice, I found out relatively late. I obviously had a bunch of accommodation issues, and then I was all by myself on a weight cut. In retrospect, that was quite foolish of me to do," Sanyal, son of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Economic Advisory Council member Sanjeev Sanyal said. (PTI)

Indian women's, men's TT team advance to quarterfinals of Asiad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Toyota



India's women's and men's table tennis teams advanced to the quarterfinals of the Asian Games following identical 3-0 wins over their respective Pakistani rivals, here on Monday. The women team swept aside Pakistan 3-0 in a one-sided tie to top Group F for its third win in a row while the men's team also bounced back for the same scoreline.

At the Sky Hall here, Sutirtha Mukherjee, who won a bronze medal in the women's doubles event at the last edition in Hangzhou, got India off to a flying start, beating Aleena

Khan 11-3, 11-3, 11-4 in just 10 minutes. Rising 17-year-old Syndrela Das then made it 2-0 with an 11-6, 11-7, 11-5 win over Kalsoom Khan.

Currently ranked 99th in the ITTF women's singles rankings, Syndrela was rewarded for her

impressive form on the domestic circuit with a call-up to the senior side for the Asian Games. Sreeja Akula sealed the tie, breezing past Fatima Khan 11-4, 11-4, 11-5 in 11 minutes to power India into the last-eight stage.

DAILY SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

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

SOLUTION (21.9.26)

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

DOUBLE CROSSWORD

TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

ACROSS

1 In London, place a hundred on account (5)

6 Clean up for the lubbers! (5)

9 Go down as the originator (7)

10 Tenor and doctor, unusually fit (5)

11 The overseer's poetic part (5)

12 A stony mug (5)

13 The leaseholder's occupation (7)

15 A little cough, merely marginal (3)

17 Travellers' game (4)

18 The charm of a cash incentive (6)

19 Discuss the toss? (5)

20 Canter around in a dream (6)

DOWN

2 Timely restriction on a cad having more than a couple! (6)

3 Brief absence when one is below par (3,3)

4 Nothing in the New Testament is negative (3)

5 Opportunity to finish in concert (5)

6 Check out some villas in town (7)

7 Laurence's bird (4)

8 Entertainer without a roof over his head (6)

12 Hit twenty (5)

13 Too nice to be tatty, exactly? (5)

14 Formerly, in India, a form of "bwana"? (5)

15 Indian lake (5)

16 It measures a short line, not the whole underground (5)

18 Anything that upsets a thug (5)

19 Injury leading to a lively second half in keen style (7)

21 Go round with a list at half term (6)

22 Pinch the nose (6)

23 Never accept rubbish (6)

25 Resembling the pansy, it has yellow flowers (5)

26 Drinks very little (4)

28 It's wrong when you take an exam (3)

22 Rose can be very tender (4)

24 Bad boy? (3)

25 Comparatively slight bit of bother outside the pub (7)

26 Is in an ermine coat at times (5)

27 She takes me out for fresh air (5)

28 Drink a saint unconscious! (5)

29 Easily impressed by credit cards, say (7)

30 Confused, at some times outwardly shy (5)

31 There could be a number (5)

SOLUTION (21.9.26)

ACROSS

3, S-coo-t

8, Meths

10, Rider

11, Coo

12, Groat

13, Crow-Ned

15, C-link

18, Ma-n

19, S-L-edge

21, NE-p-time

22, Moon

23, Pa's-T

24, Get well

26, Lath-es

29, Dr-y

31, Ether

32, Forward

34, AM-man

35, Ova

36, Garda

37, Po-Ems

38, SN-OO-p

DOWN

1, D-EC-ry

2, Show-mey

4, Co-R-d

5, O-racle

6, Title

7, Being

9, To-o

12, Gent-Les

14, Nap

16, Ideal

17, Keats

19, SNowdo-N

20, Emile

21, North

23, Plywood

24, German

25, E-rr

27, Atlas

28, Heads

30, Frame

32, Far-o

33, Ave